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VOLUME 13  
ISSUE 2

Feb. 24 – March 23, 2023





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New apartment complex coming to La Mesa




La Mesa City Council has approved the original design plans for the Palm Street Ventures LLC apartment building. **Page 3**

**EDUCATION**

Clubs quite popular at Grossmont High School



There are plenty of activities to keep students busy and giving back to the community. **Page 7**



**Sights set on winning spring sports seasons at Helix Charter High School**

Spring does not officially begin until Monday, March 20. Even though it is a few weeks away, spring sports are in the air locally. A number of Helix Charter High School spring athletic teams have been practicing of late and even having games during a new season. Boys' tennis members Anthony Ledezma Jauregui (front) and Lucas Fonseca focus during a recent tennis outing. For some more HCHS spring sports pictures, see page 5. (Photo by Gabby Keopuhiwa)

**FOOD & DRINK**

Is sushi on your menu today?



You can sushi together or alone at La Mesa's Banbu Sushi Bar & Grill. **Page 12**

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**8181 Allison under construction; will bring nearly 150 apartments to La Mesa**

By **DAVE THOMAS**

A vision in the works for years in La Mesa is finally coming to fruition. Construction through USA Properties Fund is underway on 8181 Allison, billed as an affordable apartment community in the heart of La Mesa.

The development, located at 8181 Allison Avenue, is situated on the southeast corner of Allison and Date avenues, close to University Avenue and Spring Street.

According to the developer, the property will provide ideal access to various amenities nearby. Among them would be a sizable grocery store and pharmacy, several dozen restaurants, City Hall, the local library and more. There is also a trolley station nearby and multiple bus stops.

In a statement on the company's website, USA Properties Fund President Geoff Brown noted, "It's a development that checks the boxes in so many ways, from providing affordable housing to cost-effective and environmentally friendly public transportation options for getting around the community. It's an excellent location for affordable housing, with easy access to so many businesses and services."

Once finished, the complex will have one-bedroom and two-bedroom, two-bath apartments.

It is projected that rents will vary from around \$700 to \$1,675 each month for one-bedroom

**SEE 8181 ALLISON, Page 2**



Construction is underway on what will ultimately become a nearly 150-apartment community in La Mesa. (Image courtesy of USA Properties Fund)

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A strong effort is being made to make sure fewer people go hungry. The Ascension Lutheran Church Food Pantry distributes food in the parking lot of the Ascension Lutheran Church, at the corner of Zion Avenue and 51st Street, on Tuesdays and Saturdays between 8:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. and in the parking lot of the Latter Day Saints Meetinghouse, at the corner of 51st Street and Greenbriar Avenue, on the first Friday of each month during those same hours. The guest may drive their vehicle through the parking lot or walk up to receive their food. Pick up a copy of the February Mission Times Courier issue to read more. (Courtesy photo)

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8181 Allison

CONTINUED FROM Page 1

units, with two-bedroom apartments going anywhere from \$835 to \$2,000.

Among amenities mentioned for the complex will be a community room offering a kitchen, a fitness center, computer stations, onsite laundry, a spa and more. The complex will also provide an 117-space parking garage that comes with EV-charging stations. The apartments come with energy-efficient appliances, light fixtures, ceiling fans and more.

The planned date for construction to finish is late next year.

HOW THE APARTMENT  
COMMUNITY CAME  
TOGETHER

The 147-apartment community was conceived through a public-private partnership including the California Housing Finance Agency (CalHFA), the City of La Mesa, KeyBank and WNC. KeyBank Community Development Lending and Investment put forth a \$42.78 million construction loan for the project.

8181 Allison site dates back a number of years to when the location was the headquarters for the La Mesa Police Department.

Some 15 years ago, the City sold the former police station site to the La Mesa Redevelopment Agency. Following the dissolution of redevelopment agencies in the state in



La Mesa Mayor Mark Arapostathis addresses the crowd during ceremonies for the new complex. (Photo credit: Melissa Jacobs/sandiegophoto.com)

2012, La Mesa retained the location and it would continue being looked at as an affordable housing project at a later date.

WHAT'S BEEN THE FEEDBACK  
ON THE PROJECT?

La Mesa City Manager Greg Humora, who said he's gotten positive feedback on the project, noted, "The City solicited proposals from developers for a multi-family affordable housing project. The project is critical to providing affordable housing to the La Mesa community and will assist in meeting our state-mandated housing targets."

When asked if City officials are looking at additional housing projects in the area, Humora stated, "The City has a few small parcels that could be developed in the future but nothing specific has been determined at the moment. "The bulk of development is expected to be on private property."

Not everyone is giving a thumbs up to the project as it takes shape.

La Mesa Councilmember Laura Lothian remarked, "I found the speed of approval of this large, jarring, boilerplate, freeway apartment project confounding. The City of La Mesa has a justified reputation for being difficult to build and obtain permits."

According to Lothian, "Whereas other Downtown La Mesa projects take years to go through our arduous process, this went from submittal to approval in months. Additionally, though not exactly hidden from public scrutiny, the project definitely remained under the radar until it was too late for public input. This project is not important to the City's development, it is detrimental. We will have increased traffic, decreased parking, and

SEE 8181 ALLISON, Page 6

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# Council ratifies Design Review Board’s approval for Palm Street Ventures LLC plans

By LAINIE ALFARO

After delaying their decision in the fall, the La Mesa City Council has approved the original design plans for the Palm Street Ventures LLC apartment building, despite mixed opinions from business owners and residents.

The plans for a mixed-use building located at 4757 Palm Ave. was on the agenda in the city’s consent calendar on Jan. 10. And the council voted unanimously in favor, 4-0, with councilmember Luran Lothian abstaining. Multiple residents came forward during the meeting to voice their opinions — some in favor, most opposed.

Lauren Cazares, a La Mesa resident, spoke in favor of the design during the public comment opportunity.

“Community character’ is used as a cop-out for not building these affordable and mixed-use housing,” Cazares said. “We need to move this forward so that we can move forward with affordable housing in the City of La Mesa. There is nothing that is going to take away the character of La Mesa Village. La Mesa Village is not being threatened. This is an empty lot that we are building on.”

However, Christine Miller, a business owner whose acupuncture



Plans are moving ahead to fill this empty lot at 4757 Palm Ave. with an apartment complex. (Photo by Kendra Sitton)

office is across the street from the location, said she is concerned.

“I thought, ‘This can’t be for real,’” Miller said. “We were hoping it would stall out [in the fall]. We were hoping it would still stall out in January, but, evidently, that wasn’t the go.”

The number of parking spaces is one of the main concerns business owners like Miller have. The plans include 29 parking spaces which is less than one parking space per unit.

However, the parking and infrastructure of the plans were already settled by the planning

commission last year, and the appeal process to request any changes have closed, according to La Mesa’s Director of Community Development, Kerry Kusiak.

“The design and review considered it back in August or September,” Kusiak said. “The planning commission, about that same time, looked at the site development plan. The planning commission approved the project and that’s the actual entitlement. That’s what says under law you can build the project.”

SEE PALM DEVELOPMENT, Page 4

## 27 Quick and Easy Fix Ups to Sell Your Home Fast and for Top Dollar

LA MESA- Because your home may well be your largest asset, selling it is probably one of the most important decisions you will make in your life, and once you have made the decision, you’ll want to sell your home for the highest price in the shortest time possible.

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## Palm development

CONTINUED FROM Page 3

Moreover, due to California state legislation, specifically the State Density Bonus Law, developers are able to utilize certain incentives such as less parking and increased height which might otherwise be in contrast to local orders.

“By the time it got to the council, because it had been approved by the planning commission and there had been no appeal, the council’s discretion on whether or not to allow the project was pretty constrained,” Vice Mayor Colin Parent said. “It’s using California’s State Density Bonus Law. When projects include affordable homes, the applicant gets extra certainty and assurances that the government will approve the project.”

Another concern business owners and residents had about the approval process of these plans was the city’s communication.

Craig Maxwell, owner of Maxwell’s House of Books in the Village, said he didn’t know these plans were in the works until it was too late to voice his disapproval.

“By the time I heard about them, it was a fait accompli,” Maxwell. “It was obvious that the project was already slated to go and the council was going to approve it.”

Miller said she also would have appreciated notification.

“If the city wants to do things, I think they need to be a little more forthcoming even if they’re not required to let everyone know,” Miller said. “Whether we like it or not, just tell us about it.” However, the plans have been updated online throughout the process on the Active Developments Project website and an interactive map which contains the project’s renderings.

Since the project’s technical plans were approved by the planning commission, the city council could only review and vote on the design plans, according to Parent.

“There’s two different committees that have to approve it — the planning commission and design review board,” Parent said. “The planning commission approved it, but the only thing that came to the council was the design review question.”

When the initial design was presented to the council in October, various concerns were voiced which resulted in an alternative design being brought forward in January with minor color changes, according to Kusiak.

“The city council wanted to know information on how it was they were able to support the ratification of the design review board’s approval. In particular, they had some questions about climate action, health, some public and safety things about sidewalks and such, and somewhat the colors and appearance,” Kusiak said.

“[The developer] came back with some modifications to the project that addresses the council’s questions.

Brian Garmo, Palm Street Ventures LLC partner, said that the changes that were made were minor.

“We did propose some lighter colors/alternate colors,” Garmo said. “More or less, the design of the project has stayed pretty consistent. There’s been no drastic changes.”

The original design ended up moving forward.

Joel Christman, a resident living near the Village, said he was disappointed that the minor changes weren’t approved.

“I was disappointed for two reasons. The first one was that it was approved. The second one was that there was a proposal to change some of the colors of it to make it blend in a bit more with the city, and that wasn’t even accepted,” Christman said.

While some residents retain their dislike of the plans, the developer, Jason Meram, said in the council meeting that the goal with this building is to build up the village, not disrupt.

“We’re not an outside agency,” Meram said. “I want you guys to understand that we are not an outside organization that’s coming in here and trying to disrupt the downtown. We’re looking to help rebuild it.”

Garmo also said that these plans have the potential to address the lack of housing La Mesa is currently experiencing.

“The city has identified the fact that they need more housing so we’re trying to fill that void,” Garmo said. “We are offering some affordable units as well which I think will bring some opportunity for people that weren’t able to move into La Mesa before.”

Parent said that even with the nuanced issue of housing in La Mesa he would like to see the community welcome the new building.

“The one thing I would say is there’s lots of different perspectives about how much housing we should build or where it should be located,” Parent said. “I think those are fair questions for debate. But I’m really hoping that La Mesans can embrace our new neighbors when we have them and welcome them into our community.”

The next step in the process requires the developers to create construction drawings and present those to the city for a building permit.

To stay up to date on these plans, you can visit the Active Development Projects website and the interactive map. Residents can also sign up to receive alerts regarding agendas for any of the City’s boards and commissions, including the Design Review Board and Planning Commission, through the City website.

Additionally, all city council agendas are available online for the public.

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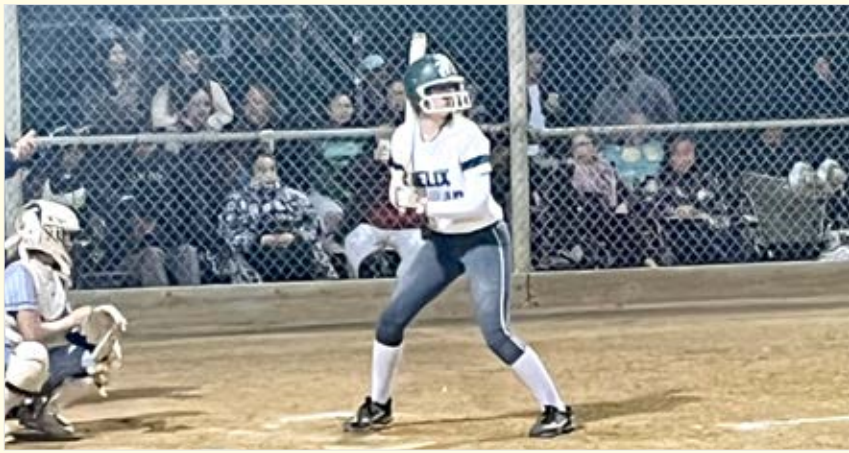
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# Helix Charter High School spring sports take aim at championships



Helix Charter High School spring sports teams have been busy looking forward to a new beginning in 2023. The boys' tennis team was off to a 3-0 start heading into action this week. Meantime, sophomore Katelyn Woodland (at bat) and her teammates were slated this week to meet West Hills, Clairemont, and Southwest in softball action. (Photos by Gabby Keopuhiwa and Darren Emory)



# LMPD hosts annual KIDZWATCH Academy to promote childhood safety

By NATALI GONZALEZ

The La Mesa Police Department will be hosting their annual KIDZWATCH Academy in March to help children learn how to become safer individuals.

The KIDZWATCH Academy helps empower today's child to become tomorrow's successful adult. Children, along with their parents, attend a series of six weekly classes and learn important topics.

Classes begin every Thursday, March 9-30 from 6 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. and one Saturday, March 18. This year's KIDZWATCH Academy registration filled up in record time, but families can still join the waitlist.

"The program is important because children are the eyes and ears of our neighborhoods and they see and experience a lot," said Mayor Mark Arapostathis.

Each of the six classes will focus on a different safety topic. One lesson will be about using 911 and reporting accurate information. In this class, kids will have the opportunity to use a simulator to practice talking to a dispatcher.

Participants will also learn about nature safety, such as identifying potential plant hazards, water safety, internet safety, and fire safety, including how to "stop, drop, and roll" and develop a family evacuation plan.

"A key takeaway from the program is that children's safety plays an important role in their development into adulthood and that they can empower themselves to contribute to their own safety in our community in an active but safe way," said Arapostathis.

Classes will be taught by experts on each topic. Teachers will include representatives from the police and fire departments, lifeguards from the City of La Mesa, and park rangers from Mission Trails.

"We often hear from parents that the KIDZWATCH Academy enabled them to have meaningful conversations with their children on topics that are so important to their safety," said Katherine Lynch, public information officer at the La Mesa Police Department. "These topics are also taught by experts in respective domains, and therefore can serve as life-long lessons for these kids as they grow up."

Lynch began working in the KIDZWATCH Academy when she joined the La Mesa Police Department in 2005. She said she is often approached by adults that remember their experience in the program, which shows her the positive impact it has.



The annual KIDZWATCH Academy is set to begin in March and run until the end of the month. (Photo courtesy of La Mesa Police Department)

"Also, from a law enforcement perspective, these lessons also provide us, the police officers, with the opportunity to engage with some of the youngest members of our community," said Lynch. "This can also allow kids to get to know the humans behind the badge and let me see that police officers are here to protect them and help them when they are scared or in need of protection."

—Natali Gonzalez is an MA student in rhetoric and writing studies at San Diego State University. See more of her work at: [thedailyaztec.com/staff/\\_name/natali-gonzalez/](http://thedailyaztec.com/staff/_name/natali-gonzalez/).

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# Protecting farmworkers from criminal wage theft

## DA Notes

By SUMMER STEPHAN



After the mass shooting in Half Moon Bay in January, the deplorable conditions in which farmworkers live, work and how they are paid came to national attention.

One of the points that was highlighted in the subsequent media coverage was the low pay the mushroom farmworkers were receiving. In his trip to Half Moon Bay, California's Governor saw firsthand the disgraceful working and living conditions of the farmworkers, noting that many were getting paid as little \$9 an hour — well below the state minimum wage of \$15.50 an hour.

California is often called the "breadbasket" of the world due to its bountiful harvests.

In San Diego County, there are also agriculture and field workers who contribute to the state's abundance of commodities. California is able to yield such abundance, in part, due to the hard work of a group that is often unnoticed and unappreciated: farmworkers.

Unfortunately, this group, which is so vital to our state, also includes some of our community's most vulnerable and

taken advantage workers. They are often underpaid. My office has been at the forefront of protecting workers' rights. In 2020, we started the Workplace Justice Unit to investigate and prosecute employers who steal labor from their employees. Recent legislation made it clear that wage theft can be a felony crime.

Overtime pay is one of the main issues that affects farmworkers.

In 2016, historic legislation was signed into law that gradually eliminated the farmworker exception that exempted agricultural workers from receiving overtime pay. These workers are now eligible for the same overtime benefits extended to all other California hourly workers. This new law was phased in over the course of a seven-year period to give agricultural companies time to adjust their business models to account for increased labor costs.

San Diego County is home to its share of agriculture including avocado groves, flower fields, citrus groves, tomatoes and various vegetable and nursery crops.

Here are quick facts for workers, employers, and consumers:

- Farm workers are entitled to the same protections as all other California workers.

- Farmworkers are entitled to paid 10-minute rest breaks for every four hours of work, and an unpaid meal break of at least 30 minutes if they work more than five hours.

- Failure to pay minimum wage, overtime, or to provide meal and rest breaks could amount to criminal wage theft.

- All employers are required to provide a pay stub to their employees upon request regardless of method of payment.

- Workers receiving cash pay are entitled to and should request a copy of their pay stub.

- A review of the pay stub would show the hourly rate, how the worker is classified and that the appropriate taxes are paid.

- Employees should keep records of hours worked, who they worked with, and any written documentation from their employer.

When it comes to which farmworkers would be most affected by employer theft, it can be anyone, but it's more prevalent in the murky quasi legal industries like marijuana grows. Those who work in large illegal grows are more likely to be victims of wage theft since there is less oversight of an illegal grow.

Although the focus of this column is farmworkers, wage theft

laws are applicable to other industries where exploitation is prevalent, including:

- Construction
- Janitorial
- Nursing homes
- Restaurants
- Massage parlors

When wage theft is accompanied by force, fraud or coercion, it can be elevated to the crime of labor trafficking.

If you suspect you have been the victim of wage theft, you can report it directly to our office on our Workplace Justice page at: sandiegoda.com/workplacejustice, by email at workplacejustice@sdca.org or by calling 1-866-402-6044.

As your District Attorney, I am committed to protecting all San Diego County workers, especially those in the agricultural industry, from criminal exploitation and wage theft. Only by safeguarding the rights of our most vulnerable populations can we ensure that those who help provide for us all can also provide for themselves and their families.

—District Attorney Summer Stephan has dedicated more than 29 years to serving justice and victims of crime as a prosecutor. Visit: [sdca.org/office/contact-to-contact-her](https://sdca.org/office/contact-to-contact-her).

## Letters to the Editor

### EXPOSING THE RIDICULOUS 'SOCIAL' REGULATIONS

Bravo to Laura Lothian (Jan. 27 *La Mesa Courier*) for exposing the ridiculous "social" regulations being imposed on American citizens and businesses by runaway politicians and regulatory agencies.

In the 1960's in my teens I read Orwell's 1984. That work has been a foreshadowing of things to come. The thought police, Thought Crimes, New Speak, etc. are all coming to pass. Big Brother is watching. Big Brother knows best. Very scary times indeed.

All I can do is replay this quote from Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged*:

"Did you really think we want those laws observed?" said Dr. Ferris. "We want them to be broken. You'd better get it straight that it's not a bunch of boy scouts you're up against... We're after power and we mean it... There's no way to rule innocent men. The only power any government has is the power to crack down on criminals. Well, when there aren't enough criminals one makes them. One declares so many things to be a crime that it becomes impossible for men to live without breaking laws. Who wants a nation of law-abiding citizens? What's there in that for anyone? But just pass the kind of laws that can neither be observed nor enforced or objectively interpreted — and you create a

nation of law-breakers — and then you cash in on guilt. Now that's the system, Mr. Reardon, that's the game, and once you understand it, you'll be much easier to deal with." — Ayn Rand, *Atlas Shrugged*

It's here and happening now before our very eyes. We, as a nation, are purposefully traveling full speed ahead into a field of icebergs while the band plays on.

Ed Emerson  
Spring Valley

### HAUNTED BY THE PICTURE OF THE HOMELESS WOMAN

I enjoy reading the *La Mesa Courier* for news of La Mesa.

However, I have been haunted by the picture of the homeless woman in the last issues' (Jan. 27) front page. It looks like she was objecting to being photographed by Laura Lothian. If it is as it appears, this is an example of treating the homeless as less than human and without rights afforded to most of the rest of us. We thought one would need permission prior to taking that picture as well as displaying it in the paper. Also, it seems in direct contrast to the accompanying article which had a message of moving forward with this sad problem. We would love to hear your or Laura's comments about the tone of this photo in relation to the article.

Esther and Mark Weber  
La Mesa

## 8181 Allison

CONTINUED FROM Page 2

a huge hit to our charm and small-town feel."

When asked what kind of feedback she has received from La Mesa residents and businesses and its impact on the City, Lothian responded, "The feedback I have received has been 100% negative. Locals are dreading it."

Fellow Councilmember Jack Shu noted, "Contributing the public property towards the development of affordable housing is one of the strategies we currently have to create more housing people can afford. Over the many years that the project was not moving at all, it was the unrelenting work of city staff that finally made it happen."

Asked about feedback he's gotten from La Mesa residents and business owners, Shu said he'd not heard much.

"I think like many developments, until people see the building near its completion and then see it become available for residents, most people will not learn the full story of the project. Affordable housing advocates in the region know this project very well because 100% of it's units will be for people making less than median income."

As Shu sees it, there are other opportunities to bring

additional affordable housing to La Mesa.

"Yes, there are other sites, using public property which are going through the system of finding developers and moving on to development," Shu remarked. "MTS (Metropolitan Transit System) has a such a site at the Spring Street Trolley Station. Unfortunately, under the current system of government partnering with the development industry to build affordable housing, we fall far short of what is needed. Especially housing for those in the very, very low income group. We need to find more resources and better ways to address the housing shortage for those who need it the most. Let's face it, if you have lots of money, you can find housing."


For Councilmember Colin Parent, the building of this complex is a welcome thing.


"I'm proud of La Mesa for using our old police station site to build much-needed homes for low and moderate income families," Parent said. "Not only did we meet our state obligations to use the site for affordable homes, but we went above and beyond, creating La Mesa's first 100% affordable development in decades."

As a resident and/or business owner in La Mesa, are you looking forward to this new project being completed in late 2024?



# GHS clubs bringing people together year after year

**Foothiller Footsteps**



By **LYNN AND CONNIE BAER**

From its beginnings, Foothillers found companionship and new interests through its school clubs. Quickly multiplying over the decades, the amazing diversity of GHS's clubs provide students friendships and support as well as opportunities to reinforce and intensify learning.

Alumnus Patty Bender, Class of 1953, recalls being a member of the Moonsweepers, a club for girls; its purpose was to serve the community and the school. "When I reflect on Moonsweepers, I realize how like a sorority it was. You had to be asked to join and voted on! We did social activities and service projects."

In the 1954 yearbook, there were 33 extracurricular clubs on campus including the Math Club, the FFA (Future Farmers of America), the GAA (the Girls Athletic Association), the Lettermans' Club, and the Artizans (art loving Foothillers).

Today's clubs number 40; many have a storied history and many are recent creations.

**INTERACT CLUB**

Retired principal Bill Ashman has been the liaison for the club for several years. After a

four-year absence, this year the La Mesa Rotary Club reinstated the Interact Club, which is a community and international Service organization.

Ashman shared some of their first semester activities: "The students were involved in several community projects. They started the year with a fundraiser selling cookies and popcorn balls at a football game; the funds were used on the school campus. Northmont Elementary School had a Halloween carnival, where the Interact students assisted helping the younger children. With several Rotarians, in October, the students painted, trimmed shrubbery, and removed trash at Sunset Park in La Mesa.

Several of the students are involved with Hands on San Diego. At the holidays, they helped local organizations collect, sort and distribute toys and food to share with families for the holidays."

This semester, with English teacher Todd Bell as the advisor, the students made 40 Valentine gift bags for the residents at Montera Senior Living in La Mesa, which included pens, tablets, safety pins, calendars, band aids, cookies, candy and more. The students met with the residents on Saturday, February 11th."

**CROCHET CLUB**

The purpose of this club is for students to knit and crochet

blankets for children in need such as shelters and children at hospitals.

According to advisor and science teacher Stephanie Laberge-Luhnow, "Our club is in the early stages. Many members are still learning how to knit or crochet. We do have squares, but no blankets yet. But squares and lots of crocheted or knitted rows are keys to learning."

**COMFORT CLUB**

This club's purpose is to become a safe place on campus for students to support each other, give advice, share, and learn positive affirmations.

Advisor and English teacher Laurie Jensen states that this year, "They meet every Monday in my room at lunch. The group talks, eats their lunches, completes puzzles, listens to music, and works on homework." Laurie's classroom provides a welcoming refuge for the club members.

**PEER LISTENING**

This club traces its roots to 1993 with the creation of the Human Relations/Peer Mediation Club. Two members of the counseling department serve as advisors for this club, Counselor Laura Dawson and Guidance Information Specialist Krista Santoro. While the club's name has changed over the past 30 years, its purpose has not.



Some members of the Interact Club at Grossmont High School paid a visit to residents at The Montera by MBK Senior Living earlier this month. Advisor Todd Bell's students made 40 Valentine gift bags for the residents, which included pens, tablets, safety pins, calendars, band aids, cookies, candy and more. To see more photos on GHS clubs and what they're doing around La Mesa, see [sdnews.com/ghs-clubs-bringing-people-together-year-after-year/](https://sdnews.com/ghs-clubs-bringing-people-together-year-after-year/). (Courtesy photo)

Santoro shares that "Peer Listening serves as a program, class, and club at Grossmont High School. Accepted juniors undergo a year-long training learning low-level psychology skills and protocols, culminating in a three day comprehensive camp to practice and hone these skills.

Once they are seniors, they have earned the title of Peer Listener; then, it is their job to provide a strong, extensive support system for all students. Peer Listeners conduct "listensings", one on one, which allow students to talk through their challenging situations. They also conduct mediations which grant multiple students the opportunity to resolve disputes.

Outside of the everyday services the peer listeners provide, they also lead and orchestrate "Where is The Love Week" and Mental Health Awareness Month. Both events strongly promote kindness and the acceptance of supporting mental health throughout campus.

In addition, the students give tours to all new students, and they participate in Freshman Showcase,

SEE GHS'S CLUBS, Page 8



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## GHS's clubs

CONTINUED FROM Page 7

Freshman Orientation, Club Expo, Homecoming Carnival, and more. It is evident that these students use this Peer Listening platform to try to make a positive difference in their GHS community."

### GREEN CLUB

Another club that can trace its origins to the 1990s is the Green Club.

In the 1990s, Club Green was created to create an awareness of the importance of recycling and caring for our environment. Its first year, a labor intensive recycling program was created which involved the club members putting the recycling bins out every morning and returning them to the storage area every afternoon.

Today, Science teacher and club advisor Marisa Alvarado states, "This year's Green Club officers are President Sophia Martinez, Vice President Maxwell Short, and Secretary/Treasurer Ava Curtis. They all do a great job every week of presenting different topics to educate our members on different issues such as invasive species, endemic species, recycling, reducing waste during the holidays, climate change, air pollution, etc.

They've held/participated in a few clean-ups this year including one on campus, one in Casa De



The Green Club focuses on the environment. Members work every week to present different topics to educate people on environmental issues. Among the members are Sophia Martinez, Nathaniel Tan, Thomas Iannacone, Ava Curtis and Sydney Luhnnow. (Courtesy photo)

Oro, and the CA Coastal Clean-Up day in Mission Beach. Our club members also just walked in the Lung Force Walk to help raise awareness of lung cancer.

This year's club strives to continue the tradition of learning more about the environment and their part in it while spreading awareness to others."

Grossmont's campus clubs create friendships, reinforce learning, and provide opportunities sometimes not available in class. In fact, there are so many clubs this year that our next column will highlight more of the wonderful

clubs advised by teachers and staff members and led by students at Grossmont. More to come...

For information about Foothiller history and the GHS Museum, email us at [ghsmuseum@guhsd.net](mailto:ghsmuseum@guhsd.net) or leave a message at 619 (668-6140). Learn more about Foothillers, past and present, on our website at [foothillermuseum.com](http://foothillermuseum.com) and our Facebook page at Grossmont High School Museum and Alumni.

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

## MTRP Foundation stages 29th Annual Photo Contest; entry deadline March 15

Every day, visitors to Mission Trails Regional Park (MTRP), one of the largest urban parks in the United States, capture photographs that feature its wildlife, seasons, and sweeping landscapes.

The MTRP Foundation's annual photo contest is an opportunity for non-professional photographers to share their unique photographic perspective with the community and possibly have their photograph on view at the MTRP Visitor and Interpretive Center.

The 29th Annual Photo Contest, organized by the

nonprofit Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation, is now accepting photo entries, and photographers of all ages are encouraged to enter (Deadline is March 15). The submission process is all online and there is no entry fee. Adults may submit one photo to the category of their choosing – Plants, Animals, Landscapes, or People – and teens and children 12 and younger may submit one photo of any subject to their age group.

This contest is for amateur/non-professional photographers only. Photos must be taken

within Mission Trails Regional Park from an authorized trail and have MTRP as their subject. Past submissions may not be entered.

The entries will be scored by a panel of judges, then selected entries will be on view at the Visitor Center from May 6 – June 16.

All qualifying entries will be featured on the MTRP website beginning on May 6 and winners will be announced at the Photo Contest's exhibition opening the evening of Thursday, May 11.

Learn more about the photo contest and enter at: [mtrp.org](http://mtrp.org).

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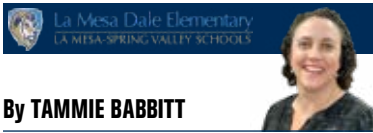
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# La Mesa Lions and their families reached for the stars



By TAMMIE BABBITT

It has been a busy first two months to the year at La Mesa Dale Elementary School. Among the highlights to date:

## LA MESA DALE LIONS SHOOTING FOR THE STARS

Counting moon craters and spying Jupiter's moons through telescopes provided by San Diego Astronomy association, LMD Lions and their families were able

to reach for the stars at Family Math and Science Night on Jan. 27. Thanks to the La Mesa community, STEM activities included building circuits, air blasters and trebuchets. Students enjoyed testing their creations. Microscopes provided by Anna Kremen, environmental health specialist from the County of San Diego, allowed beginner scientists to study the life cycles of mosquitoes up close. Volunteers at the math tables involved families in games such as math bingo and number climb. It was a wonderful way to show school spirit.



There was plenty to smile about during the La Mesa Dale Elementary School Family Math and Science Night last month. (Courtesy photo)

## LA MESA DALE'S GARDEN IS THRIVING

Ms. Aida has been busy cultivating LMD's love for gardening. Thanks to the Sage Garden Project and our wonderful parent volunteers, students are able to visit the garden monthly and they really dig it. Spring is starting to bloom with fragrant purple sweet pea's (Mrs. Babbitt's favorite) and student involvement. Recent visitors to the La Mesa Dale garden have baked seed cookies to start their very own pollinator gardens at home, pressed their own tortillas from cornmeal and investigated plant parts during a Plant Part-y!. February is cause for Saladbration where students will examine seeds and sample new salads, growing healthy appetites.

## LMD'S FAMILY READING NIGHT

Thursday, March 2, LMD will be holding a family literacy event with students and their families participating will play Sight Word HopScotch, Tongue Twister Challenge and participate in a twist on the traditional cake walk where books can be won instead. Thanks to La Mesa Community Welfare Association, \$600 worth of new books will be given to families attending the event.

*Editor's note: Tammie Babbitt is principal at La Mesa Dale Elementary School.*

## NEWS BRIEFS

### JONES TO SPEAK ABOUT NOTABLE CALIFORNIA WOMEN AT MARCH 11 AAUW MEETING

The La Mesa-El Cajon AAUW Branch is hosting the Women's Museum of California at their Saturday, March 11 general meeting. Melissa Jones, associate director of the Women's Museum of California will speak to the topic of Notable Women of California.



Melissa Jones

Jones started as a museum volunteer in 2015. She oversees all aspects of daily operations for the museum including program management, marketing, archives, and museum volunteers. Jones serves on the San Diego County Women's Hall of Fame Committee. Previously, she organized the Women's Film Festival, San Diego and was Director of Operations for Run Women Run.

She has a BA in history from Sonoma State University and a Master's in international relations from Kingston University in London.

According to the museum website, "the Women's Museum of California is dedicated to

educating and inspiring present and future generations about the experiences and contributions of diverse women by collecting, preserving, and interpreting their stories."

Additionally, the branch's Speech Trek finalist, Kyra Sharma, a sophomore at La Jolla High School, will present their winning speech. Sharma's speech has been entered in the State competition and she is awaiting the results.

The social hour begins at 9:30 a.m. and the meeting commences at 10. The meetings are open to the public and members are encouraged to invite friends and family, co-workers, and associates.

Meetings are held in King Hall at Foothills United Methodist Church located at 4031 Avocado Blvd. in La Mesa.

### AARP, CITY OF LA MESA TEAM UP FOR TAX PREPARATION AT NO COST

AARP and the City of La Mesa are offering tax preparation for no cost on Mondays.

All tax appointments will be held at the Adult Enrichment Center at 8450 La Mesa Blvd.

AARP Foundation Tax-Aide provides in-person and virtual tax assistance to anyone, free of charge, with a focus on taxpayers who are over 50 years old with low to moderate income. Tax-Aide volunteers, located nationwide, are trained and

SEE NEWS BRIEFS, Page 15



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# Artist of the Month Owen is committed to optimism



March Artist of the Month Bonnie Owen is committed to optimism.

In a world so full of stress and angst her art endeavors to relieve the viewer from the woes of the world and allow them space to breathe in the simple joys of life.

Owen focuses on moments of play, creativity and fun. She often used the naivete of children to allow us to experience a fleeting moment in a child's life and to remember one in ours.

A native of Southern California, Owen studied art at both California Western University and the University of Hawaii, earning a Bachelor of Art degree in Fine Art.

After working in the hospital-ity industry for several years she went back to school to study digital illustration and graphic design at the University of San Diego.

Owen then founded JO Design. Her clients included several uni-versities, corporations and online educational companies. Her work has been featured in magazines, online programs, and she has il-lustrated several books.

A painter at heart, Owen now works primarily in acrylic on can-vas. Her latest project "The Way We Played" is a series of paint-ings based on the games children played before the internet.

Owen said she is grateful to family and friends for their inspi-ration and support.

Her work can be seen in galler-ies around San Diego and Orange County, on FineArtAmerica.com, and at: BonnieOwen.com.



Bonnie Owens loves to focus on moments of play, creativity and fun when painting. (Courtesy image)

# La Mesa residents take a step back in time



La Mesa residents recently got the chance to take a step back in time. A time capsule dating back to 1992 was unearthed earlier this month near City Hall. Among the items included inside were a cassette tape of what people thought 2020 would be like, newspaper articles, a D.A.R.E. pin and City of La Mesa memorabilia. Members of the Youth Advisory Commission on hand for the event in bottom picture were (L-R) Jackson Banthrum, Grace Reagan, Elyse Wainscott and Zaida Donnelly. See related story on this event at: [sdnews.com/la-mesa-youth-advisory-commission-to-open-1992-time-capsule](https://sdnews.com/la-mesa-youth-advisory-commission-to-open-1992-time-capsule). (Courtesy photos)

## La Mesa Community Page

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# Sushi together at La Mesa's Banbu Sushi Bar & Grill

## What's on the menu?

By ROBIN DOHRN-SIMPSON



So you feel like some sushi? Great!

There are about a hundred places in San Diego where you can go, but what if you want to go to a special place? What if you have out-of-town company or a date that you really want to impress?

You need upscale sushi. You need "date night" sushi. You need Banbu Sushi Bar & Grill in La Mesa.

Tucked away in the Grossmont Trolley Center strip mall, Banbu Sushi is a beautiful restaurant with a circular sushi bar topped with Japanese artwork depicting mountains, Mt. Fuji, tempestuous ocean waves, pagodas, and cherry trees in full bloom. Large windows



Banbu Sushi Bar & Grill in La Mesa will whet your appetite. (Photos by Robin Dohrn-Simpson)



This meal and many other choices are waiting for you at Banbu Sushi Bar & Grill.

line the exterior walls. The patio is inviting and welcoming with many outdoor tables, a plethora of heaters, sofas surrounding a fire pit, the calming sound of water from a small waterfall, a large fire pit table and charming twinkling white lights complete the tranquil setting.

Many attentive sushi chefs (both male and female) are working behind the bar to take your order. They move swiftly providing patrons with culinary works of art.

According to the chefs a popular sushi roll is the Lemon Cilantro Roll which is Krab salad, cucumber and avocado roll with salmon, lemon, organic

cilantro, chili sauce and topped with ponzu. Another popular roll is the Ultimate Hamachi Roll which is spicy tuna, cucumber, cilantro, avocado and shrimp tempura topped with yellowtail, and topped with ponzu.

The Japanese Fusion cuisine menu is extensive. It will take you a while just to read it.

Not only is the sushi amazing, but also the regular non-sushi menu of entrees and appetizers offers unique dishes. Try the Tangerine Chicken. You're welcome!

If you enjoy craft cocktails, they offer an extensive bar menu as well as an Intriguing line-up of sakes such as a Strawberry/

Mango infused Sake or Sayuri Nigori Sake. You may even want to try a Japanese dessert plum wine after your meal.

Banbu Sushi Bar & Grill is located at 8555 Fletcher Parkway #106. Phone (619) 589-0071. Hours are Sunday through Thursday 11:30 a.m. - 9 p.m. and Friday and Saturday 11:30 a.m. - 10 p.m.

Reservations are recommended, it is very popular and no secret to La Mesa residents.

To pre-plan your menu go to: [banbusushi.com/](http://banbusushi.com/).

—Robin Dohrn-Simpson is a local food and travel writer. Reach her at: [robindohrnsimpsn.com](mailto:robindohrnsimpsn.com).



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# Grossmont High School kids make sure fellow students know they care



With a school club program known as Peer Listening, a number of students at Grossmont High School work to show they care about one another. According to Krista Santoro, advisor for the Peer Listening program over the last decade, “We did a pride lesson sent to all classes about what it means to be kind to others and how it can improve health and community,” Santoro said. “We also handed out free grams that were delivered to classes for students; we did a love meter where students could agree to show kindness.” Santoro noted the new thing done this year that had such a positive impact was their Kindness Trees. “We filled trees with random acts of kindness,” Santoro commented. “Students pulled them off the trees and filmed themselves doing an act of kindness, then sent it into our Instagram to be posted. We had a lot of participation and the kids were proud of pulling off the event.” (Courtesy photos)

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Prepping a house for  
sale on a budget

Real Estate Update

By LAURA LOTHIAN



Once upon a time, I sold a 1918 storybook, La Mesa Village Craftsman for \$279,000.

Before putting it back on the market, the buyer spent \$160,000 remodeling the house making it look like a Carmel Valley tract house. The new buyer spent \$160,000 reverting it back to a 1918 storybook, La Mesa Village Craftsman. More was spent on the two remodels than the house itself!

The lesson here is unless you are a professional house flipper buying and refurbishing homes at bargain prices, do not spend thousands, tens of thousands, or hundreds of thousands of dollars fixing up a house to go on the market because almost 100% of the time, what you do will not be liked by the buyer and you will decrease your profit or lose money.

Below are inexpensive suggestions I make to my clients to get their homes ready for sale.

The key is to work with what you've got making your existing home the best it can be. I *never* recommend remodeling, just cleaning, decluttering, and simple repairs.

EXTERIOR

1. Park in front of your home and look at the curb appeal. If your front yard is lawn, make sure it is green, not overgrown, and weed-free. If the yard is dirt, consider covering it in bark, mulch, or wood chips.

2. Battered or worn mailboxes should be replaced.

3. If the exterior paint is in bad shape (peeling or too faded), repaint.

4. If dry rot is visible, repair and replace. Most buyers will ask for Termite Clearance anyway, so you might as well remove the dry rot before going on the market instead of in escrow.

5. Make sure the doorbell works and looks right (not cracked or missing its cover).

6. It's not a bad idea to remove security/screen doors to expose attractive front doors.

7. If the security door is kept, make sure the screen is taut and the door painted nicely - no baggy screens or rusted doors.

8. Speaking of front doors, a color that pops will make a house stand out and look artsy. Pinterest is a great source of front door color ideas.

9. Potted plants or hanging plants can do wonders for charm and color.

10. Cool house numbers that suit the style of the house or adding address plaques can make a house look special.

11. Decluttering is not for the inside only. Remove construction materials, neglected toys, plastic flower pots, boxes, etc.

12. If there's a covered patio in the back, add an outdoor table and string lights - makes a huge difference.

13. If there's an uncovered patio in the back, consider staging the patio with a table and a bright umbrella.

14. Above-ground pools and trampolines are unappealing in house photos and showings; remove them.

15. If there's a pool, make sure it's clean and maintained. I do not recommend spending a fortune resurfacing pools.

16. Pool equipment needs to work.

17. Make sure all outdoor lights are operational.

18. On photo day, remove the cars and rubbish bins.

INTERIOR

1. Walk your home with fresh, objective eyes. Decluttering is the #1 advice I give my clients. Remove boxes, papers, magazines, and extraneous knick-knacks. Consider storing extra furniture in the garage or a storage unit. Don't block windows, sliders, and doors with furniture. Make sure it's easy to walk interior paths. Err on a room looking sparse over a room looking crowded.

2. Framed personal photos make a home look lived in, loved, and happy. No need to remove. However, the fridge should not be covered in taped photos, kids' drawings & pizza magnets.

3. Heavy, frilly, ruffle-y, old, dark, flowery, poofy, gaudy, kitschy curtains, draperies, valances, and swags can really date a house. If privacy is needed and drapes or curtains cannot be removed, consider simplifying drapes. Shades and blinds are almost universally liked.

4. Clean is not good enough. The house has to *sparkle*.

5. If a faucet is dripping, fix it.

6. Pay a professional to wash your windows. I had a client once who had lived in his home for years and had never had his windows cleaned. Upon seeing his startlingly clean windows, he said it felt like someone had Windexed his eyeballs!

7. Beautiful bedspreads and throw pillows are a great way to enliven bedrooms for not a lot of money.

8. Hang fresh new towels in the kitchen and bathrooms.

SEE REAL ESTATE, Page 15

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News briefs

CONTINUED FROM Page 9

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For more information, call (619) 667-1322.

HAVE A PAW-SOME TIME AT FIDO FEST IN SANTEE

The City of Santee's seventh annual Fido Fest will take place Saturday, March 11, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Town Center Community Park East, located at 550 Park Center Drive, Santee. Originally scheduled for Feb. 25, the event was moved to March due to inclement weather forecast for this weekend.

Join in for a dog-gone good time. This family and dog fur-endly event is an opportunity for attendees to adopt dogs, view exhibitors, and enjoy giveaways.

Canines can have a ball with agility course and off-leash tennis ball sections. "Arfs and crafts" activities such as Pawcasso, doggie temporary tattoos, and a treat finder will be available as well.

Attendees and their dogs can enter costume, smallest dog, largest dog, and best trick contests, and a doggie cake walk. It's the ultimate chance to show off.

The City of Santee will hold a shelter donation drive at Fido Fest to support local non-profit shelters. The most needed items include leashes, collars and harnesses in all sizes, soft type E-collars, new unopened food, new toys, pet store gift cards, washable potty pads, fish oil, and glucosamine supplements.

Donors who bring an item can enter an opportunity drawing to win a doggie gift basket.

In addition to the fun activities at Fido Fest, San Diego Humane Society will be providing micro-chipping and pet licensing (with a copy of a rabies certificate) services. These services do not require appointments and cash and card are accepted. Microchipping will cost \$10 and pet licensing prices will vary.

To ensure a fur-tastic time for all, view the list of rules and additional information at: SanteeSpecialEvents.com.

A special thank you to title sponsor, Camp Bow Wow, and other sponsors Allegiance Heating Air Conditioning & Solar, FURology Pet SPaw, GTM Discount General Stores, Tito's Handmade Vodka, and Veterinary Urgent Care by Ethos.

These businesses make events like this possible in the Santee community.

Editor's note: Do you have a local news brief regarding La Mesa or the surrounding area you'd like to get in print? If so, email: dave@sdnews.com.

Real estate

CONTINUED FROM Page 14

9. In lieu of replacing or reglazing tubs and showers, regrout. Much cheaper and very effective.

10. Keep wastebaskets empty.

11. Make sure every single lightbulb works (ceiling, stove, floor lamps, desk lamps, chandeliers, sconces, etc.)

12. On picture day and showings, hide the pet paraphernalia (food dish, water bowl, dog bed, litter box...)

13. Weather permitting, open windows for showings. Nothing like fresh air for a positive experience.

14. Closets should not be bulging at the seams. Thinning your wardrobe is a great idea before selling and moving.

15. If a home's flooring, counters, cabinets, fixtures, appliances, etc. are kaput, the best strategy is probably an 'as is' sale with the price reflecting the condition. You would be surprised how many buyers are looking for fixers and how often they overpay.

16. If just a small portion of the home is in disrepair, it can be worth it to fix a room's flooring, replace an old appliance, or install

a new countertop - depends on the rest of the house and can be a great question to ask your Realtor.

Most of the above suggestions can be tackled in a weekend and will make your home sell more quickly and for more money.

—Reach eXp Realtor and La Mesa City Councilwoman Laura Lothian at: Laura@LauraLothianRealestate.com.



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Laura Lothian  
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