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With Thanksgiving on the minds of many these last few days, the focus is also on the holidays coming up over this next month. Get out and enjoy the lights and more that La Mesa always has to offer this time of year. (Photo credit: CeCe Canton Photography - cecephoto.com/index)

La Mesa billboard proposal sparks confusion and mixed reactions

By JESSICA MILLS

Digital billboards have remained a hot talking point for La Mesa residents and the City Council.

Earlier this year at the March 28 City Council meeting, Mayor Mark Arapostathis appointed Councilmembers Patricia Dillard and Jack Shu to create a subcommittee in charge of recommending a negotiated development agreement with Clear Channel, LLC for the specific location and installation of digital billboards in La Mesa. A competing proposal was additionally submitted by OUTFRONT Media, LLC, which calls for differing terms and conditions in regards to the location and installation of the digital billboards.

Clear Channel Outdoor Advertising is a media company that creates roadside, airport and transit displays, with the goal of reaching their audiences as they travel throughout the day. OUTFRONT Media is also a large outdoor media company that operates both transit and billboard displays.

The subcommittee of Councilmember Dillard and Shu initially recommended to the Council to issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) but then voted against their own recommendation.

During the July 25 City Council meeting, the City Council voted to not advance with a proposal from the subcommittee to issue a competitive RFP for the placement and installation of digital billboards. The subject, however, was revisited during the Sept. 26 City Council meeting.

As outlined in Mayor Arapostathis and Councilmember Colin Parent's memo, they suggested revisiting the matter of proceeding with an RFP that guarantees the funding of public safety and public art by any generated revenues from a potential digital billboard agreement. The memo also detailed that an RFP would include a statement of facts for the authorization process of digital billboards and a list of questions and concerns raised by the Council's previous subcommittee.

When addressing the topic during the Sept. 26 City Council meeting, Councilmember Parent explained that, "We had a vote a few months ago to consider moving forward with issuing a request for proposals for potential digital billboards. That didn't pass and so what we're bringing back today is

Having digital billboards around La Mesa like this one in the Lemon Grove area has sparked mixed reactions. (Courtesy photo)

an alternative, also to move forward with the issuing request for proposals for potential digital billboards. But the big key difference is

SEE BILLBOARDS, Page 2

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Billboards

CONTINUED FROM Page 1

that I think when we had that discussion a few months ago, we didn't have any dialogue as to what sort of benefit would accrue to the public if we were to do something like this. And so what we're inviting the Council to do today is consider this new proposal to entertain potential proposals for a digital billboard."

Councilmember Parent additionally noted that this deliberation was not to confirm the location, placement or approval of any digital billboards, but whether to consider potential proposals.

Throughout the meeting, billboard regulations were a common concern among City Council and attendees.

As outlined in Municipal code 15.10.011 for the city of La Mesa, the billboard policy states, "the city completely prohibits the construction, erection or use of any billboards, as defined in this chapter, other than those which legally exist in the city, or for which a valid permit has been issued and has not expired." The code further maintains that signs displayed within the city "must comply with all applicable safety codes, such as building, plumbing, electrical, mechanical, grading, fire, etc." It is also illegal to display any sign within the city limits without a permit, unless explicitly exempt by a chapter provision.

However, potential RFP's would not create new billboards but replace already erected signs in La Mesa, complying with the above-mentioned code.

"Any proposals would contemplate filing the appropriate applications to authorize digital billboards," said City Attorney Glenn Sabine. "That would be an ordinance that would amend the municipal code. In addition, I contemplate that if that's the case, the ordinance would allow digital billboards by development agreements, which would also be adopted by ordinance. So you would actually see two instruments that would come before you before it was actually formalized to move forward with the proposal. Also, I'd like to point out that we're talking about the replacement of billboards. We're not talking about additional billboards. I think there's some confusion with that." The Highway Beautification Act further requires states to "maintain 'effective control' of outdoor advertising or else be subject to a loss of 10 percent of their Federal-aid highway funds."

Should a digital billboard proposal be approved, Councilmember Dillard raised various safety concerns and whether the Council had any data on accidents caused by signage.

According to Belsky Weinberg LLC, digital billboards create a

visual and cognitive distraction for drivers due to their bright lights and changing images. Even when drivers don't intend to take their eyes off the road, the signs' bright lights and changing images can pull their focus. Moreover, Soft Lights Foundation maintains that billboards "exist for the purpose of advertising and generating revenue for the owners, but they can cause glare and driver distraction, add to visual clutter and eye damage, emit large amounts of light pollution, steal individual liberties and provide no societal benefit."

City Attorney Sabine explained that the nature of the RFP process requests and evaluates any data gathered. Any proposal then recommended by staff would be presented and discussed to the public at a future Council meeting.

"What's proposed and submitted as a part of the RFP, would be subject to the public scrutiny."

**-CITY ATTORNEY
GLENN SABINE**

"What's proposed and submitted as a part of the RFP, would be subject to the public scrutiny," City Attorney Sabine said.

Councilmember Shu however, believed that flaws existed in this process.

"For some reason when things like this come up, we ended up going to Clear Channel to get answers and to me that's unfortunate," Councilmember Shu said. "Governing bodies, elected officials, should not be going to the entity that is making the proposal for the answers."

As the meeting progressed, City Council and community members weighed in on their differing opinions for safety, light pollution, location, aesthetics, resource allocation and more. San Diego resident Paul Krueger strongly urged the City Council to reject any efforts to move forward with the digital signs.

"I can't think of anything that would make that area look worse than these digital billboards," Krueger said. "They are just the epitome of garishness and ugliness. [City Council], you are intelligent enough to find other sources of needed revenues and I urge you to please stand by your votes from last time."

However, Jonathan Franklin, who has previously served on the City's planning commission, communicated his contrasting opinion.

"I do want to urge your support for the item this evening," Franklin said. "I do think it is very prudent and wise to consider all viable options to secure additional city revenue. Certainly, our police department, fire department and public arts are worthy causes. We are not made safer, or the city is not protected by not considering revenue that actually makes us safer — supporting our police department."

Commissioner for the Arts and Culture Commission for La Mesa Melissa Walter later thanked the City Council for finding ways to support public art.

"The Commission has many other possible projects that we want to bring to the city that can

support artists of all kinds," Walter said. "But, we really can't do that without your support. So, no matter how this agenda item goes, I hope that each of you continues to advocate for the arts and find ways that can support a sustainable arts and culture program for La Mesa."

Vice Mayor Laura Lothian also shared her remarks and reflected on her previous rejection of a proposal.

"I was initially on board because the areas that they were picking are very commercial," Vice Mayor Lothian said. "It's already signs and color and chaos. And so, to remove one sign and to replace with a digital to me is not a big deal. However, I famously advocate for retaining the charm of La Mesa. So, this is very very difficult for me. I do know last time, the reason I became a 'no' is because a commenter said there were 250 letters in opposition and that shocked me. But I do want you to know that supporting the arts, supporting the police, not wrecking the charm, is truly a big issue for me and the Council."

At the end of the meeting, Mayor Arapostathis called for a vote, which was carried with a 4-1 result with Councilmembers Parent, Dillard and Vice Mayor Lothian in support and Councilmember Shu in opposition.

"Visual signs, especially these gigantic ones, will change the look and feel of La Mesa," Councilmember Shu shared. "It will be a piece of Times Square that we drop into La Mesa. And for me, I don't want to go that direction and I don't think the people of La Mesa want to either. Additionally, we don't need to give [La Mesa's paramedics and first responders] more work. If we can reduce their responses to accidents we should. We shouldn't be adding to that load."

Many La Mesa residents were outraged by the City Council's vote. Keep La Mesa Beautiful, a non-profit organization that works to preserve and increase the beauty of La Mesa, expressed their concerns in a Letter to the Editor to *La Mesa Courier* (see Page 6).

"Mayor Mark Arapostathis and Councilmembers Colin Parent, Patricia Dillard and Laura Lothian ignore the well-founded concerns of La Mesa residents. They claim revenue from digital billboards will fund our police department and increase public safety, but conveniently ignore a mountain of evidence that digital billboards distract drivers and are a contributing factor to accidents. (The California Highway Patrol reports 1,642 collisions, 13 fatalities and 616 injuries along I-8 through La Mesa in the past five years.)"

The Councilmembers in support of the motion, voted to begin a process of reviewing prospective proposals prior to any decision making and weighing of costs and benefits.

Should further recommendations move forward, the La Mesa community will be able to continue sharing their voice.

As a resident of La Mesa, are you for or against digital billboards around town?

HOME Quarterly Report shares outreach efforts but Councilmembers say more support is needed

By LAINIE ALFARO

Starting in 2021, the HOME program in La Mesa re-conceptualized the ways in which the city and La Mesa Police Department would offer support and interaction with the unhoused community.

Inspired by the CAHOOTS program in Eugene, Oregon, the program is structured to dispatch trained specialists to respond to non-emergency calls for service. HOME also facilitates contact with anyone suspected to be experiencing homelessness and connects them to nutritional, medical, and financial support and housing options.

“Achieving positive outcomes with those who are unsheltered requires time and an understanding of the programs that exist to assist those individuals. The La Mesa Police Department and the City of La Mesa recognized the need to have specially trained individuals, who were not uniformed police officers, to engage with the unsheltered and achieve those positive outcomes,” Katherine Lynch, services lieutenant and police information officer, at LMPD, said in a joint email statement also from the City Manager’s Office and the HOME personnel.

During this quarter from July to September 2023, HOME reported that their outreach specialists contacted 71 individuals experiencing homelessness, enrolled 42 adults and one child in the HOME program and eight people were connected to temporary or permanent housing. The HOME Team also responded to 447 service calls. Previously, these calls would have been managed by emergency services and law enforcement.

While HOME is one part of the process to support unhoused individuals, Councilmembers Colin Parent and Jack Shu said a more cohesive response as a county is needed.

“The real issue is that the HOME program that we have, of course, does a very good job at what it does, but that’s only one niche of the services that the homeless need,” Shu said. “And it’s also very specific to what we see in the streets. There’s a much bigger problem in the lack of housing and so we know there are a lot of people who are, what we call, couch surfing. They’re going home to home or there may be others that we don’t know of that really need some kind of housing. That’s a housing issue.”

Through HOME’s work with clients in the program, they’ve found that housing is not just an isolated, case-by-case issue, it’s systemic due to the lack of short-term and affordable housing across the county.



There is still much work to be done in helping the homeless find housing around La Mesa. The project at 8181 Allison Avenue is but one way to go about doing this. (Courtesy image)

“For those who are unsheltered and want assistance, there are a variety of barriers. One of the most significant barriers is the price of housing,” HOME said. “Those working with the program, who are on a fixed income, have significant difficulty affording housing and their other necessary expenses. Another barrier for people in the County of San Diego is the lack of shelter and short-term housing solutions in East County, such as emergency shelters.”

There is zero short-term housing available in La Mesa currently. The nearest shelter is the East County Transitional Living Center located in El Cajon.

HOME said it is the hope to, eventually, have access to a low-barrier emergency shelter.

HOME has a Coordinated Entry System (CES) that places unhoused clients in a community queue for housing opportunities such as Rapid Rehousing (RRH) or Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH). The Regional Task Force on Homelessness (RTFH) informs outreach workers when they have matched someone in the CES to RRH or PSH.

“Other than putting people into CES and keeping their case current with CLS [Current Living Situation] assessments, the outreach workers cannot control how many matches are provided to the HOME Program,” HOME said. “If the HOME Team were provided more matches through the CES,

the HOME Team would have more successful exits to housing.”

BUILDING PERMANENTLY AFFORDABLE HOMES

Parent said the creation of housing through projects like 8181 Allison Ave. (sdnews.com/8181-allison-under-construction-will-bring-nearly-150-apartments-to-la-mesa/) could help address this housing problem.

“Ultimately, we need to be open to building homes, especially permanently affordable homes, that people can live in and to avoid falling into homelessness,” Parent said.

This development is a mixed-rate, multi-family and residential apartment project. According to the city’s website, the approved project includes 147 affordable rental units and rents would be restricted to incomes ranging from 30% to 70% of the area median income.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, La Mesa’s median household income as of 2021 was \$75,616. So, based on the bureau’s numbers, the income of residents in that development could be anywhere from approximately \$22,685 to \$52,931.

“The real problem though is that we don’t have enough transitional housing in east county,” Shu said. “We’re not building any low-income housing that would

SEE HOME, Page 4

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Read more

HOME

CONTINUED FROM Page 3

be for the low-income residents who are in our community. So, if you can only afford \$500 or \$800 for rent, we don't really have that kind of housing available and we're certainly not building it."

Developments like 8181 Allison Ave. may help those who have jobs and are living out of their car or moving from home to home, but Parent said there's still more that needs to be done.

"It's worth acknowledging that it's not enough. We still have a challenge," Parent said. "There's still people who are falling into homelessness in La Mesa. We need to as both a city and society to do more, but we have some good progress to show from our investment in this program."

TAKING ON A PERSPECTIVE SHIFT

Addressing the street-level issues and the broader sentiment in the city regarding the unhoused community, requires a perspective shift according to Shu.

"There are some core approaches that we as a community, as a city, need to work with. My first

point is that seeing someone who is homeless on the street is the symptom of a greater problem we need to address," Shu said. "If our approach is, let's just do away with the symptom, move the person on, then I think we're going to constantly face the symptoms and not solve the problem itself. That core perspective needs to be developed in our communities. The homeless population are our neighbors and we need to see them as our neighbors. We should see them as our neighbors without shelter."

In 2022, the City Council adopted a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) establishing a foundation for a working partnership between the County of San Diego and east county cities to develop a regional network of housing options. Collaborative efforts like these are stepping stones toward solutions but not solutions themselves, according to Shu.

"That MOU really gave license for the city managers from the east county cities to try to find a solution to establishing sites for developing some type of transitional housing units," Shu said. "I don't know how successful that has been so far, but I am glad we are developing some collaboration

and cooperation between the cities. The bottom line though is as a society, our approach to the homeless population is failing."

In 2023, the city made a commitment to fund an additional two HOME positions from the city general fund budget, according to Parent. Lynch said there are now two clinicians, an intern and a housing navigation specialist.

The *La Mesa Courier* requested contact information of clients in the program, but HOME was unable to provide people willing to talk, citing privacy reasons.

According to HOME's quarterly report, "HOME program staff distributed \$7,560.47 in direct financial assistance, including vehicle repair, and funds used to secure new rental units." They explained that the funds are distributed on a "case-by-case basis."

"These funds were furnished in the form of 1x rental assistance," HOME said in their email response. "For clients that have sufficient income to afford a unit on an ongoing basis, the HOME Team is able to provide funding for the move-in costs (1st month rent, security deposit, etc.) for the client to be able to move into the unit and

SEE HOME, Page 6

La Mesa man finishes runner-up in U.S. Amateur Pool Championship

Josh Watson of La Mesa recently finished runner-up at the 2023 U.S. Amateur Pool Championship. Watson advanced undefeated to the championship match against a field of the top amateur pool players from across North America.

His only loss came at the hands of eventual champion, Brett Stottlemeyer of Pasadena, Md., in the championship final.

The U.S. Amateur Championship was produced and conducted by the American Poolplayers Association (APA) at the Wyndham Orlando Resort in Orlando, Fla., Nov. 2-5.

Watson was one of only 128 players who qualified for the Championship Rounds by winning one of several qualifying tournaments held across the country. Nearly 3,000 players attempted to qualify for the U.S. Amateur Championship.



Josh Watson

The double-elimination tournament offers the top amateur players the opportunity to showcase their skills through

SEE POOL RUNNER-UP, Page 9



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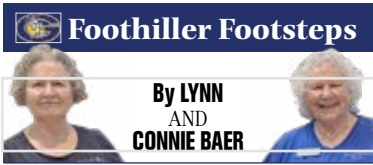
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Foothiller alumni and retirees have had tremendous impact on school over the decades



Since 1920, Foothiller alumni and retirees have had a tremendous impact on the students and staff in countless ways. In the past few years, the number of alumni and retirees who have created special scholarships has grown and continues to grow each year.

ALUMNI SPONSORED SENIOR SCHOLARSHIPS

Class of 1975 \$1000 Science Achievement: Senior Sarah Niskey

Alumnus Joy Stovall shares the class's motivation for creating the scholarship: "We started this scholarship in 2020 due to the Coronavirus stopping our plans for celebrating our 45th class reunion, but wanted to do something to commemorate it. After an email asking the Class of 1975 to contribute to a class scholarship, we received an overwhelming response. We chose Science for the scholarship due to it being a vital part of STEM and there currently wasn't a GHS Educational Foundation scholarship for that."

Audrey Seidel Backstage Pass \$500: Meka Vilallvazo

In 2020, in honor of Grossmont's historic Theatre Arts Program, a group of former Grossmont thespians partnered with the Tony Award-winning Old Globe Theatre, to sponsor a Grossmont theatre arts student for an in-depth look behind the scenes of professional theatre.

Drama teacher Amity Ecker shares, "This year's recipient was Meka Vilallvazo, who as a freshman has been involved in both our Fall, Spring, and One Act productions. She is passionate about design and tech theatre and is excited to continue her work in Technical Theatre at GHS!"

Donate to Backstage Pass at foothillfoundation.com on its "Happenings" page.

RETIREE SPONSORED \$1000 SCHOLARSHIPS

Coach Bill Gray Baseball Scholarship: Brayden Bennett

Bill Gray, GHS baseball coach from 1972-1987 and GHS English

teacher from 1972-2008 and department chairman for 14 of those years, created the scholarship to support a baseball player's transition to college since Bill himself was a player at Arizona State University. Even after he stopped coaching the team at GHS, his involvement with Foothiller baseball continued with the annual alumni game in December and with his many connections with players, ones he coached and ones mentored.

Jerry L. Lewis Art Scholarship: Yasmim Soares

Jerry L. Lewis taught art at Grossmont High School for 30 years, 28 of which he served as the Art Department chairperson. He also coached the Grossmont High School baseball and golf teams. An artist himself, for three years, beginning in 2020, Jerry has supported an outstanding art student as a way to promote the arts and reward a deserving senior who best exemplifies a commitment to continuing a path in the arts beyond their high school education.

Honoring George Gross \$2000 Scholarships: Sarah Niskey and Austin Mitchell

According to organizer Sandia Tuttle, "In 2007, the George C. Gross Memorial Scholarship was established by the Class of 1960 to encourage our fellow Grossmont graduates in their pursuit of successful college and life careers. The scholarship is awarded annually to the college-bound Grossmont graduating senior who best complements a record of superior scholarship with an equally impressive habit of active concern for humanity."

George C. Gross was a beloved teacher and mentor to Grossmont students in the 1950s. After serving in the U.S. Army 743rd Tank Battalion in WWII, George C. Gross completed his education at San Diego State College then entered the teaching profession. While teaching English at Grossmont High School from 1952-1961, Mr. Gross pursued his graduate studies in English literature, earning the Ph.D. from the University of Southern California in 1963. In



Winner of the Audrey Seidel Backstage Pass \$500 was Meka Vilallvazo. (Courtesy photos)

1961 he joined the English faculty at San Diego State, where he served as Professor and as Dean of Faculty Affairs. He retired in 1985 but continued to serve the university.

George C. Gross [1922-2009] was an inspiring instructor and mentor to his students. He introduced us to the voices of the past and inspired us to find our own. For all he gave us, we will always be grateful.

We are proud to have dedicated the George C. Gross Memorial Scholarship in his honor. Since its inception in 2007, the George C. Gross Memorial Scholarship – funded by Grossmont Alumni – has distributed a total of \$40,000 to twenty outstanding students. We suspended fundraising in 2022 and plan to award two scholarships per year, each in the amount of \$3,000, through 2026, funded from the remaining scholarship account. Our thanks to all donors who have made this 20-year program possible."

Obviously, these Foothiller alumni and retirees have had a tremendous impact on GHS culture and epitomize the gratitude and hope for the future that these scholarships represent.

For information about Foothiller history and the GHS Museum, email Connie and Lynn at ghsmuseum@guhsd.net or call (619) 992-1497; visit our website at foothillermuseum.com to read our newsletters.

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1621 Grand Ave., Suite C
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(858) 270-3103
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EDITOR

Dave Thomas x130
dave@sdnews.com

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Drew Sitton x136
Tom Melville x131
Dave Schwab x132

WEB & SOCIAL MEDIA

Dave Thomas x130
dave@sdnews.com

CONTRIBUTORS

Elaine Alfaro
Connie and Lynn Baer
Laura Lothian
Jessica Mills
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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Why are young voters so important?



By MOLLY BLAKELEY



Because of modern day media, the youth of my generation are fed one negative event after the other.

If you check any TV channel, social media app, or newspaper there is bound to be something controversial or political served on a silver platter. We have been taught that by sharing a post or reading a twitter thread we are being activists.

While staying informed is extremely important, as I am getting older I'm realizing I have one of the most powerful tools Americans have been given: A vote.

I recently turned 18; when picking classes last year, my senior class was informed that an American government and economics course was a graduation requirement.

None of us were particularly interested in the subject matter. Who could blame us? Why do I need to know about the government? I often have conversations and debates with my friends about

politics. Most of the time we have similar views and we are passionate about making positive changes for our country. However, not all young Americans our age are.

In the November elections of 2020, only 54% of people aged 18-24 voted. Out of the entire population of California only half of young registered voters put their constitutional right to use and voted for America's next president. The midterm elections for young voters were even lower at a staggering 29%. However, the youth of America can't be entirely blamed for this.

We are always told it's important to vote, but we are never taught how to register. We take government classes in high school, but we aren't informed where voting is going to take place.

If we want the youth of today to see the changes we talk about at lunch or in the classroom, we also need support. In order to encourage young voters we need to keep them informed.

Most people in our generation don't watch the news, they get their information through social media. By

posting times and dates of the voting polls Americans ages 18-24 will be more inclined to vote. We also need to stress the importance of voting locally to young adults. Ultimately your vote matters more when voting for your State's Governor or your District's Representative.

Eventually we are going to have to take the reins and join society as productive citizens.

It's better to start now than later; if we are unhappy with the way our country is heading we have the opportunity to change it but saying you want change and actually fighting for change are two very different things.

I have learned so much more from my government class than I thought I would, but if there's one thing I've taken away from my government teacher Mr. Jones it's that we the people have been given the power to choose who represents us.

Why let that go to waste?

Editor's note: This is a monthly opinion piece featuring takes in and out of the classroom from students at our area high schools.

HOME

CONTINUED FROM Page 4

cover the rent afterwards. Other expenditures, such as minor vehicle repairs, enable clients to leave the area and go to a different location where they have an existing network of resources. The majority of funding for this comes from the Community Development Block Grant

as well as Permanent Local Housing Funds."

Moving forward, council members Parent and Shu would like to see collaborative efforts go into effect across the county.

"La Mesa is a pretty small city and so while we're making some pretty big investments in dealing with homelessness from our own budget, we definitely need more help and support from the state of

California and from the county of San Diego because these problems really are regional in nature," Parent added. "We really need to have a statewide effort to really make a big impact."

If you are wanting to get connected with HOME, the HOME hotline can be reached at (619) 667-1475 to leave a message and/or set up an appointment with an outreach specialist.

Venture out Dec. 2 for annual La Mesa holiday celebration

With the holidays quickly approaching, the 8th annual La Mesa Holiday in the Village will once again be ringing in holiday cheer for everyone near and far on Saturday, Dec. 2 from noon to 9 p.m.

La Mesa Village friends and family will have the chance to take part in free festive fun with live music, cozy fires, craft vendors, food, holiday 360 photo booth, the grand return of "selfies with Santa", and a kids' area bigger than Santa's Toy Shop.

This year's locally loved La Mesa Holiday in the Village will bring guests more entertainment, more vendors, and an inclusive holiday experience for all ages to enjoy. Get in the holiday spirit while

playing carnival games, listening to carolers, and enjoying delicious food and drinks from La Mesa local favorites.

Walk the streets of La Mesa's historic downtown while exploring dozens of local craft vendor stands, then cozy up with artisan and craft food and snack specialties. Friends and family can relax by the fire pits while enjoying holiday caroling, cheerful holiday music, and fun live entertainment. La Mesa's free Holiday in the Village will offer a full lineup of entertainment including traditional holiday songs and music, local bands, and community performances.

Stop in and enjoy the holiday cheer at La Mesa's

Holiday in the Village for an amazing day that comes but once a year.

To apply to be a vendor or for more information, visit: lamesavillageassociation.org or email: info@lamesavillageassociation.org.

The La Mesa Village Association (LMVA) is a 501(c)(6) non-profit organization run by volunteers made up of local businesses and residents. The primary purpose is to advocate on behalf of all local businesses, as well as work in conjunction with the City of La Mesa, its Fire and Police Departments.

For additional information about the LMVA, or to become a member, visit: lamesavillageassociation.org.

Letter to the Editor

KEEP LA MESA BEAUTIFUL! SAY "NO!" TO DIGITAL BILLBOARDS!

Imagine driving on Interstate 8 as it passes through La Mesa and coming face-to-face with a huge digital billboard, blaring its tacky advertisements across both sides of the freeway.

It would be ugly, imposing, and most importantly, a very dangerous distraction along that busy stretch of I-8 between Lake Murray Blvd. and Severin and Fuerte Drives.

New billboards have been banned in La Mesa and most of the county for decades. Our lovely city enjoys a well-earned reputation for protecting our quality of life and beautiful scenery and shielding drivers from big intrusive roadside signs.

But a majority of our city council members have broken ranks with residents and taken the first steps to permit huge digital billboards overlooking the freeway at Grossmont Center. One proposal states the sign structures could be as high as 80 feet with an advertisement screen of 20 by 60 feet. They would flash ads every eight seconds, 24-hours a day, and could be seen for miles from Mt. Helix and other hillsides to Sharp Grossmont Hospital.

How would flashing lights in residents and hospital patients' windows day and night affect their well-being? How will a view of a digital billboard affect our property values? I'm sure you know the answers.

The new group "Keep La Mesa Beautiful" shares your concerns about the negative impacts of digital billboards on our safety, quality-of-life, and property values.

Keep La Mesa Beautiful is protesting the city council's blatant disregard of the public's concerns by its September 26th decision to reverse its previous rejection of the digital billboard proposal. (Council Member Jack Shu cast the only "no" vote in that regrettable 4-1 decision to seek a "Request for Proposals" from billboard companies.)

Mayor Mark Arapostathis and council members Colin Parent, Patricia Dillard, and Laura Lothian ignore the well-founded concerns of La Mesa residents. They claim revenue from digital billboards will fund our police department and increase public safety, but conveniently ignore a mountain of evidence that digital billboards distract drivers and are a contributing factor to accidents. (The California Highway Patrol reports 1,642 collisions, 13 fatalities, and 616 injuries along I-8 through La Mesa in the past five years.)

We know you share our concerns about this irresponsible proposal. Help us send a strong message to City Hall that we will not stand by quietly while our mayor and three council members try to impose this unnecessary blight on our city, endanger our lives, and harm our quality-of-life.

Please voice your opposition to council members by leaving a message at (619) 667-1106. If you want to sign a petition email us at: keeplamesabeautiful@gmail.com.

Together, we can pull the plug on this terrible proposal!

**Regards,
Keep La Mesa Beautiful**

"Keep La Mesa Beautiful" is a volunteer group of local residents.



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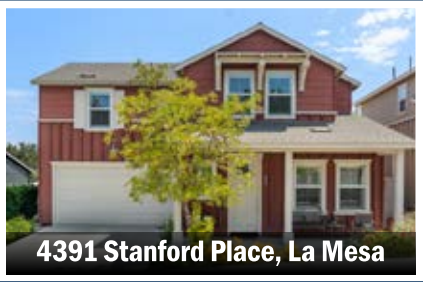


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Three cheers for Grossmont High and Helix Charter High athletic teams



Giving support to the various athletic teams at Grossmont High and Helix Charter High throughout the school year are countless cheerleaders. Their yells, acrobatics, spirit and more help to fire up the crowds and the players. With the fall athletic season all but wrapped up, attention now turns to the winter athletic teams. You can bet there will be many cheering on their favorite student-athletes as the school year soon heads into 2024. (Photos by Dylan Rowland, Amanda Monsavath, Sabrina Tungol, Helix yearbook staff.)

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La Mesa Branch Library to offer free events during holiday season



By DENISE SMITH

The La Mesa Branch Library will still be offering free events during the holiday season. If your child is struggling with homework, we have volunteers providing Homework Help every Thursday, 4 - 5:45 p.m. On Thursday, Nov. 30 at 1 p.m. the Japanese Friendship Garden will present a Kintsugi craft, open to all ages. Kintsugi is the Japanese art of repairing broken pottery with lacquer dusted or mixed with powdered gold, silver, or platinum. This traditional Japanese craft highlights the skill and effort

taken to rebuild while respecting the piece's original creation. Art in the Evening will be held on Wednesday, Dec. 6 at 5:30 p.m. for adults. This session, which requires advanced registration, will explore the ancient art of Chinese brush painting and calligraphy with the Chinese Brush Painting Society of San Diego's masters. This month we've got some small topics that make a big impact in the following "micro-histories." A micro-history is a historical deep dive into a small, well-defined topic that leaves you asking everyone, "Did you know...?" Something that most of us have never thought twice about is the development of how we carry our items on our person.

Hannah Carlson thought quite a lot about it and shares what she found in *Pockets: An Intimate History of How We Keep Things Close*. She covers when pockets first came about (not until the 1500s!) as well as examining the politics of pockets –many have probably noticed that only recently have pockets been included in women's high-end fashion. Carlson does a great job of exploring culture and sociology through a small part of the fashion world. Southern California is seen as the birthplace of car culture. Although cruising the roads is well-loved, parking spots are often coveted and disputed. *Paved Paradise: How Parking Explains the World* is an

investigation by Henry Greybar into this unexpected necessity. Readers find out how required infrastructure for parking determines almost every aspect of cities we live in. Greybar, with a large dose of humor, provides insights, through examples (San Diego makes an appearance) and illustrations, into the parking scene. Jamie Loftus's premiere, *Raw Dog: The Naked Truth About Hot Dogs*, is one for the road. Loftus took a year to travel our country and try the different tastes and preparation styles that adorn the beloved hot dog. She also gives us details about the Oscar Meyer Weiner mobile, the effects of COVID-19 on the hot dog industry, and the dog's relationship with baseball, all with a

wink to the reader. Let's round out this list with *Butts: A Backstory* by Heather Radke. This examination of one particular area of the human anatomy focuses especially on the changing cultural meanings of women's bottoms. Radke explores the discovery of the first hominid butt, and cultural attitude shifts from the Victorian bustle to the barely-there Kate Moss-look to the Brazilian butt lift. Don't let the fun cover and topic fool you, this is serious commentary and scholarship. To get your hands on these fascinating explorations or to see more information about our upcoming events visit the La Mesa Branch Library or sdcl.org.

Pool runner-up

CONTINUED FROM Page 4

a combination of 8-Ball and 9-Ball matches. Watson's semifinal round victory, which secured his spot in the championship match, can be viewed online at: Jacob Watson VS Joshua Watson - 2023 U.S. Amateur Championship. The APA, based in Lake Saint Louis, Mo., sanctions the world's largest amateur pool league, known as the APA Pool League throughout the United States and as the Canadian Pool League

in Canada. Nearly 250,000 members compete in weekly 8-Ball and 9-Ball league play. The APA is generally recognized as the Governing Body of Amateur Pool, having established the official rules, championships, formats and handicap systems for the sport of amateur billiards. The APA produces four major tournaments each year – the APA World Pool Championships, the APA Poolplayer Championships, the APA Junior Championships and the U.S. Amateur Championship – that, together, pay out nearly \$2 Million in cash and prizes annually.

Chicken Marbella is always worthy of a dinner party



By JULIE WHITE

If you are looking for a baked chicken recipe that is worthy of a dinner party, try this recipe. It is sweet and salty and you will make it over and over throughout the year! It was first seen in the famous Silver Palate cookbook of the 70's.

INGREDIENTS

- 8 boneless chicken thighs - (you can also use 1 whole cut up chicken)
- 6 peeled garlic cloves
- ½ cup pitted prunes

- ½ cup pitted green olives
- ¼ cup capers (optional)
- ¼ cup red wine vinegar
- ¼ cup good olive oil
- 3-4 bay leaves
- Salt and pepper (sprinkle on chicken)
- 2 Tbs dried oregano
- ½ cup white wine
- ¼ cup brown sugar
- Fresh parsley chopped for garnish

COOKING




Place all ingredients except the wine and brown sugar in a large bowl. Submerge the raw chicken in the marinade. (You can marinate

overnight or for just a 1/2 hour. It turns out pretty much the same). Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Spread the marinated chicken in a large roasting pan; chicken not overlapping. Pour wine over mixture and sprinkle with the brown sugar. Bake for 1 hour or until chicken is golden brown and temp reaches 165 degrees. Pour some of the liquid off of the baked chicken and simmer to thicken for a delicious sauce. Serve on rice or egg noodles.

Quote for November:
Being grateful unlocks the fullness of life. Melody Beattie



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Nestled in the scenic La Jolla area, Crown Point Clippers Tree Service caters to an esteemed clientele in La Jolla, Point Loma, Rancho Santa Fe, and across San Diego. The company's mission is to help clients rediscover the inherent beauty of their properties through meticulous tree trimming and a range of enhancement services. With a fervent belief in the transformative power of well-maintained trees, the company underscores their pivotal role in enhancing the visual allure of both residential and commercial landscapes.

David's extensive background in tree care and public safety positions Crown Point Clippers Tree Service as a premier provider. The company seamlessly melds proficiency and dedication to craft secure and breathtaking landscapes for its valued clientele. Recognized for their expertise in expert tree lacing and trimming, the company stands out as a beacon of quality in the industry.

For those seeking trusted and experienced tree care services in the Greater San Diego Area, Crown Point Clippers Tree Service emerges as a reliable partner. David Hingeley's journey from modest beginnings to a revered entrepreneur serves as an inspiring reminder that dedication, expertise, and a commitment to safety can pave the way to remarkable success.

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What are some extravagant features homeowners can add?

Real Estate Update

By LAURA LOTHIAN



I showed properties in Cielo to a La Mesa couple who wanted to swap their grand-but-older Mount Helix home for a more contemporary luxury home in Rancho Santa Fe.

The new construction homes at Cielo offered some pretty swank trappings my clients loved like rooms dedicated exclusively to gift wrapping and wine and cheese tasting, heated bathroom floors, state-of-the-art movie theater, Tesla charging stations, outdoor flat screen TV by the infinity pool and so on.

It got me thinking, especially during the gift-giving holidays, what are some extravagant features homeowners can add to their homes to indulge themselves or up the desirability for a future sale and the costs. *

Over my 22-year real estate career, I've seen every one of the items below:

SEE **EXTRAVAGANT FEATURES**, Page 11

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Extravagant features

CONTINUED FROM Page 10

- EXTERIOR:**
- Infinity Swimming Pool: \$55,000 - \$130,000
 - Hangar for your airplane, boat, tractor, RV, car collection: \$80,000 - \$150,000
 - Helipad // Heliport: Starting at \$15,000
 - Inground Spa: \$8,000 - \$25,000
 - Outdoor Framed Kitchen with Appliances: \$40,000
 - Lavish Outdoor Water Fountain: \$5,000 - \$45,000
 - Outdoor flat screen TV: Samsung, The Terrace \$20,000
 - Outdoor Pizza Oven: \$3,000 - \$15,000
 - Outdoor Firepit Table: \$2,000 - \$15,000
 - Electric Wrought Iron Gate: \$5,000+
- GARAGE:**
- Heated Garage Floors: Starting at \$4,000 for a two-car garage
 - Four Post Car Lift: \$5,000 - \$35,000
 - Tesla charging station: Tesla Gen 2 Wall Connector \$1,499
- LIVING ROOM:**
- Elevator \$28,000 - \$50,000
 - Zebra wood hardwood floors, 1,000 S.F. Room: \$25,000
 - Panoramic Vanishing Doors, 10' – 20' Opening: \$10,000 - \$30,000
 - Statement Ceiling Chandelier: \$5,000 - \$100,000

- Home Theater including \$2,000 leather chairs, quality projection, screen, acoustics: \$50,000
- KITCHEN:**
- Meneghini La Cambusa Refrigerator: \$41,000
 - Viking Tuscany Range: \$30,000
 - Custom-Built Kitchen Island: \$10,000
 - Marble Kitchen Counters 100 S.F.: \$20,000
- Miele MasterCool™ 24" Stainless Steel Wine Cooler: \$11,000
 - Stone Tile Floors. 600 SF Kitchen: \$10,000
 - Copper Farmhouse Sink: \$2,500
- MASTER CLOSET:**
- Island + Mirrored Doors + Built-in Laundry Bins + Motorized Shoe Rack + Purse Display/Storage + Drawers/Shelves/Inserts + Hanging Tie

- Rack + Upholstered Bench: \$30,000
- BEDROOMS:**
- Electronic shades: Up to \$1,000 per window
 - Wool Carpet, 625 S.F. Room: \$12,500
- BATHROOMS:**
- Contemporary Oval Freestanding Stone Resin Soaking Bathtub: \$3,600
 - Custom Steam Shower: \$14,500

- Heated Floors: Up to \$8,000
 - Vanity TV Mirror: \$3,200
 - TOTO Toilet: \$4,000 - \$18,000
- SEE FULL STORY AT:**
<https://sdnews.com/what-are-some-extravagant-features-homeowners-can-add/>
- Reach eXp Realtor and La Mesa Vice Mayor Laura Lothian at: Laura@LauraLothianrealestate.com.



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