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San Diego Community Newspaper Group

2024 welcomes in many opportunities to enjoy Mission Trails Regional Park



New programs and events are slated for 2024 at MTRP. See story on [Page 14](#). (Photo credit: Jennifer Sing)

Looking back at SCCG and a glimpse ahead

By JESSICA MILLS

As American Author Elizabeth Andrew once said, “Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they just have the heart.” This statement has held true for the San Carlos Community Garden (SCCG) since their inception in 2012.

Looking back at 2023, the year consisted of many firsts, new and renewed partnerships and an unwavering devotion to community service. Such acts have propelled the garden into another year of exciting potential. Here’s a look back on their notable achievements and hopes for the new year.

A LOOK BACK AT 2023

“Growing Community” continued to be the guiding theme for

the SCCG, which took shape in a number of new initiatives in 2023, beginning with the roll-out of its Garden Membership Program in February.

“For more than a decade, our goal has been to create a beautiful and enriching space that is welcoming to all, not just those who garden or lease a plot,” said SCCG Board of Directors Chair Kelly Wood. “To achieve this, we’ve created a variety of programs that fosters a sense of community and environmental sustainability and inspires others to get involved. For just \$35 a year, the Garden Membership program is a simple way for the community to invest in our mission-focused programs.”

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Those willing to give of their time can often make a difference in the lives of others. The San Carlos Community Garden Board of Directors are often found lending a hand on a variety of projects throughout the year. The Board of Directors includes: L-R: Gayle Mills, Carol Lockwood, Jeanne Bauer, Heather Craig, Leslie Nelson, Kelly Wood (missing, April Lowe). (Photo by Tony Gross)



Best of Mission Times voting underway

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

Let it be known what small, medium and big Mission Times area businesses owned and staffed by the families and people in the community you support. Go to: <https://forms.gle/S5KHv3ydRoAKPKJV7> to vote. The voting begins on Nov. 10. The deadline to vote is Feb. 2. The Best of Mission Times Courier will publish April 12.

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Turning the page on 2023 and zeroing in on 2024

By DAVE THOMAS

With the door closed on 2023 and 2024 now the focus, it is time to look back at some of the highlights over the last 12 months from the Mission Times Courier and College Times Courier circulation areas.

Among some of the reports that garnered attention:

JANUARY

The office of the District Attorney of San Diego County will not file criminal charges against several **San Diego State University football players** accused of sexually assaulting a minor in the College Area back in October of 2021. The DA's office announced they had completed their review of the case in a December 2022 release.

The **Patrick Henry girls' soccer** team captured the Parker Cup Finals with a 2-0 win over Francis Parker. It was Patrick Henry's second girls' soccer crown of the young season.

Three of four **Crusaders Soccer Club** teams won their respective divisions at the annual January Kick Off Soccer Tournament in Escondido.

FEBRUARY

With rising costs, many **San Diego State University students** are feeling a financial pinch with school expenses. Many students cited housing as taking up a majority of their budget. Shared bedrooms in off-campus student housing complexes can cost \$1,100 or more per month. This price often does not include parking fees or electric bills. On-campus housing can also be costly for students, which non-local students are required to live in for their first two years at SDSU.

The only dedicated park in the College Area is receiving much needed attention per the City's General Development Plan (GDP) Amendment for **Montezuma Neighborhood Park**. Located at 4941 Catoctin Drive, the park was built in 1974 and is documented



SDSU students were seeing rising costs impact their wallets. (Photo by Natali Gonzalez)

as being just 1.6 acres of open space. It has no amenities common to most neighborhood parks, such as play structures for children and sports courts. That's about to change. Proposed upgrades include separate playgrounds for children 2-5 and 5-12 years of age and off-leash areas for small and large dogs.

Mission Trails Regional Park (MTRP) Foundation was excited to share information on its new educational program for teenagers who love the outdoors and might want to pursue careers in nature-related fields.

The MTRP Foundation's Eco Ambassadors program will provide inspiring programming at the park to a cohort of 20 high school students on Sunday afternoons.

MARCH

With more than 4,000 San Diego State University students involved in 44 sororities and fraternities on campus, **SDSU Greek Life organizations** are able to make a significant impact in the community through their philanthropic efforts. Each sorority or fraternity dedicates their fundraising proceeds to a different organization.

A revamped **College Area Community Council (CACC)** has been formed, separate of the College Area Community Planning Board. The CACC is

now a non-profit, California public benefit corporation. It is a membership organization open to all residents, businesses and non-profits in the College Area.

The **Patrick Henry High School girls' soccer** team captured the CIF Division II title. The Lady Patriots tallied a 2-1 victory over Francis Parker. It was the team's first appearance in the Finals dating back to 2005.

Women's History Month proved a good time to celebrate the business contributions of a number of area women. The National Women's Business Council stated in one of its annual reports that 42 percent of all U.S. companies are owned by a woman. Women are also more likely to begin a business than are their male counterparts.

The seventh **San Diego State University Day of Giving** was slated for March 14. The 24-hour fundraising day is geared towards encouraging supporters and donors to come together as one to positively impact the school's programs, and build upon a tradition of excellence.

Following a three-year hiatus due to COVID, the **Jewish Family Service College Avenue Center** reopened to the public for in-person programming weekdays from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. The facility offers a wide-range of activities for the

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Year in review

CONTINUED FROM Page 2

mind and body, prepared lunch and social connection for adults of all backgrounds, over the age of 60.

APRIL

Viejas Arena was packed on April 3 as Aztec fans came out in support of their team in the NCAA men's basketball title game. SDSU ended up falling to UConn by a 76-59 score, but that did not dampen the enthusiasm of so many Aztec backers.

Rolando residents were still seeking help in regards to the homeless issue in their area. It hasn't been uncommon to see tents, shopping carts full of items, garbage and more on the streets as residents seek a solution from local officials.

In just a few weeks, thousands of seniors will graduate at **San Diego State University**, many of whom are feeling both excited and nervous about the prospect of leaving school. Other students will be continuing their education in post-baccalaureate or graduate school programs.

Martin and **Kathleen White**, co-owners of **Enhancery Jewelers**, are retiring after running their business for some 45 years. In 1978, Martin and Kathleen began the business as a young married couple. Maria Hopkins, who has worked for the business for 25 years, was set to move into the ownership position.

MAY

Patrick Henry High School seniors and teachers were preparing for graduation on June 14. Both COVID-19 and college applications had presented challenging situations for students in recent years.

A letter penned by local resident **Danna Givot** noted equity was missing when it comes to **College-Rolando Library**. Givot was asking Mayor Todd Gloria and Council President Sean Eo-Rivera to use the zoning leverage they have with developers at 6650 Montezuma Road to get the library the easement for permanent, exclusive parking spaces that equity demands.

Sandrien Mekany, a fourth-year political science student, has become the first Truman Scholar in San Diego State University history. The Truman Foundation, which offers graduate scholarships for students interested in public service, chose 62 new scholars from more than 700 candidates.

Winners of the 29th **Mission Trails Regional Park (MTRP)** photo were made public. The photos captured all over Mission Trails represented categories that included: Adults, plants, animals, landscapes, and people.

JUNE

With the school year finishing up, students and staff at **St. Katharine Drexel Academy**



SDSU fans cheer on the Aztecs from afar at Viejas Arena. (Photo by Jessica Parga)

have been celebrating a successful year. Among recent highlights would be the second annual diversity dinner, field day at SKDA, and graduation day for the 18 members of the Class of 2023.

The **Optimist Club of Allied Gardens** was highlighted for the many good things it does in the community. The club works primarily with youth up to age 18. They partner with schools in the Allied Gardens area such as Foster Elementary, Lewis Middle and Patrick Henry High School, doing all they can to help those schools.

Some 600 students were on hand for the **Patrick Henry High School** prom held recently at the Birch Aquarium in La Jolla.

JULY

Patrick Henry High School Principal **Michelle Irwin** announced she was stepping down to take on a job as a Middle School

Area Superintendent for the San Diego Unified School District. Irwin has worked in the SUSD for nearly 30 years.

Four candidates were set to vie for the District 4 Supervisor position in a summer special election. They were **Amy Reichert**, **Monica Montgomery Steppe**, **Janessa Goldbeck** and **Paul McQuigg**. Reichert and Montgomery Steppe would emerge victorious and ultimately face off in the fall, with the latter winning the office.

College Area and **Rolando** residents of all ages worked together late last month to paint a vibrant mural on the wall of **The Little Flower**, a well-established floral shop located at 5547 El Cajon Blvd. The public arts project was funded by the College Area Community Council and College Area Business District

SEE YEAR IN REVIEW, Page 4



Patrick Henry High students take a look at their new yearbooks. (Photo by Joe Perro)

How to Avoid Costly Housing Mistakes Before and After Divorce

SAN DIEGO - Divorce is rarely easy and often means a lot of difficult decisions. One of the most important decisions is what to do about the house.

In the midst of the heavy emotional and financial turmoil, what you need most is some non-emotional, straightforward, specific information and answers. Once you know how a divorce affects your home, your mortgage and taxes, critical decisions are easier. Neutral, third party information can help you make logical, rather than emotional, decisions.

Probably the first decision is whether you want to continue living in the house. Will the familiar surroundings bring you comfort and emotional security, or unpleasant memories? Do you want to minimize change by staying where you are, or sell your home and move to a new place that offers a new start? Only you can answer those questions, but there will almost certainly be some financial repercussions to your decision process. What can you afford? Can you manage the old house on your new budget? Is refinancing possible? Or is it better to sell and buy? How much house can buy on your new budget?

To help you know what questions you should ask and how to arrive at the right answer for your specific situation, a FREE special report has been prepared by industry experts entitled "Divorce: What You Need to Know About Your House, Your Mortgage and Taxes".

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Public Meeting

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers invites you to a public meeting regarding Camp Elliott/East Elliott Remedial Action Munition Response Site -01C, 01D and 01F, a Formerly Used Defense Site, located in San Diego. The site is part of the Military Munitions Response Program.

During World War II, the site was used for artillery training exercises. It has undergone the identification and investigation phases of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act process. A Remedial Investigation was recently conducted to characterize the nature and extent of munitions and other environmental hazards. The investigation was the basis for the remedial action, or cleanup phase, to be performed at the site.

The Corps will make a presentation about the details of the Camp Elliott/East Elliott Remedial Action, including the technical approach and project schedule. A question-and-answer period will follow. The meeting is scheduled:

From 7 to 9 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 8

City of Santee Civic Center

Building 8P, 10601 N. Magnolia Ave., Santee, California



US Army Corps of Engineers
Los Angeles District

Additional Information

Please contact the Corps' Public Affairs Office by telephone at 213-452-3920 or 213-509-4193 or publicaffairs.spl@usace.army.mil.

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Year in review

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in partnership with ArtReach, which provides in-class arts education and encourages community connections through its mural program. The mural design was envisioned by El Cerrito artist, Regan Russell.

AUGUST

The City of San Diego purchased the lot on the NW corner of Jackson Drive and Golfcrest Drive in preparation of building the new **San Carlos Branch Library**. On Saturday, Aug. 5, a special Navajo Area Community meeting was held, with Congresswoman Sara Jacobs, Mayor Todd Gloria, and City Councilmember Raul Campillo among the dignitaries. Branch Librarian, David Ege, was the MC.

The **Navajo Community Planners** scheduled a special meeting on Monday, Aug. 21 for a presentation and then to vote on, the All Peoples Church. The church wants to build a structure on land it owns near I-8 and College Avenue. NCP ultimately voted unanimously against the project.

Local treasure **Dr. Douglas Grosmark** was set to retire after 34 years of service to Del Cerro. Dr. Grosmark has served as a sole practitioner in the field of dentistry, serving everyone from two-year-olds to centenarians.

As summer winds down, **San Diego State University students and faculty** are preparing for the upcoming fall semester. The new academic school year, which starts on Aug. 21, will feature many of the same amenities from previous years, as well as some exciting new additions to the campus. One of the newest additions to the school is Ellen Ochoa Pavilion. Previously named "West Commons," the area pays tribute to Ochoa, who became the first Hispanic woman to visit space in 1993. The remaining ceremony for the La Mesa native and SDSU grad took place in early May.

SEPTEMBER

Five years ago, **College Area Business District** got the idea to serve the unrecognized local



The San Carlos LL 8/10's made it to the recent Southern California state championship game where they fell to Golden Hill. (Courtesy photo)

market of home-based businesses by offering an affordable co-working space. Since then, another market opportunity arose out of the pandemic, the remote workers in the College area neighborhoods. Last year, after four years of planning and coordinating and sweat-equity, this dream became a reality with the opening of **Firestation Innovation Cowork** in the College Area Business District's office.

The **Rolando Community Council (RCC)** recently hosted a very memorable movie night in Clay Neighborhood Park. By all accounts it was another great example of the valuable role community councils play in bringing residents together in positive ways. RCC members didn't just bring neighbors together, they were good neighbors themselves, inviting nearby College Area residents to join in the fun.

The **San Carlos LL 8/10's** made it to the recent Southern California state championship game where they fell to Golden Hill. A second loss in the tourney eliminated the local team. They were the first-ever team from San Carlos to have advanced to the state title game.

OCTOBER

From windshields to front yards, San Diego residents have woken up morning after morning to antisemitic flyers littering their property. At least eight separate neighborhoods, including **Del Cerro, San Carlos, and Allied Gardens**, have been hit over the past few months.

The San Diego Police Department is investigating two reports of assault from **San Diego State University students**. In both incidents, students said they got into vehicles in the College Area that they believed to be the ride shares they had ordered. The driver allegedly assaulted them and let them out of the car elsewhere.

Seven San Diego State fraternities have been placed on interim suspension as the university investigates reports of misconduct. The fraternities include Phi Kappa Psi, Sigma Alpha Epsilon, Sigma Chi, Phi Delta Theta, Kappa Alpha, Pi Kappa Alpha and Delta Sigma Phi.

NOVEMBER

During the academic school year of 2023-24, **Patrick Henry High School's** principal position has been passed from retired principal to retired principal after the previous administrator, Michelle Irwin, stepped into a new role as a Middle School Area Superintendent for the San Diego Unified School District in June. Originally, the *Mission Times Courier* reported that the school's goal was to have the position filled by Aug. 21, the start of the academic school year; however, the search continues.

The Israel-Hamas war prompts activism on the **SDSU** campus. On Oct. 9, approximately 100 students and community members made a peaceful walk around

SEE YEAR IN REVIEW, Page 5

THE LATEST MARKET UPDATE

7707 Hillandale Dr. 92120	4BR/2BA	1,529sqft	SOLD \$1,215,000
5274 Lewison Court 92120	6BR/4BA	2,380 sqft	SOLD \$1,315,000
6878 Deer Hollow PI 92120	5BR/3BA	1,941 sqft	SOLD \$1,200,000
6666 Norman Ln 92120	4BR/3BA	2,584 sqft	SOLD \$2,020,000
6352 Rockhurst Dr. 92120	3BR/2BA	2,168 sqft	SOLD \$1,000,000
6202 Rockhurst Dr. 92120	3BR/2 BA	1,700 sqft	SOLD \$1,150,000
6243 Camino Corto 92120	3BR/2BA	1,595 sqft	SOLD \$1,335,000

All data taken from SDMLS dated December 2023

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CENTURY 21
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Year in review

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campus in support of Israel, wearing shirts that said “Fighting with Love” and carrying Israeli flags. The march was organized by the Hillel Center, Alpha Epsilon Pi and Students Supporting Israel to show support for the Jewish and Israeli community. There were also events held in support of Palestine. A march was held on Oct. 11, where students gathered with Palestinian flags and signs, including a large banner reading “End U.S. Funds to Israel.” When the group reached Hepner Hall, they chanted “Free Palestine.”

The **San Diego State women’s soccer** team won its seventh regular season title late last month after a 2-0 victory over New Mexico at the SDSU Sports Deck. SDSU finished with a 9-1-1 record in conference play.

DECEMBER

Patrick Henry High ASB (Associated Student Body) donates more than 1,600 pounds of food during holidays. According to the San Diego Food Bank, an estimated 743,000 individuals are nutrition insecure – 23% of San Diegans. Of that percentage, 194,000 are children.

With the holidays upon us, giving back to those a little less fortunate oftentimes takes the spotlight. Between the 25 service-based student organizations and the large Greek life

community, **San Diego State University students** have contributed countless hours of community service to different causes. Service projects both here and across the border have taken place to help others out.

Ask any student today about their LinkedIn profile and they will most likely be able to list off skills they’ve been endorsed in, people they’ve reached out to for coffee and their hopes for growing their network. However, **SDSU students and alumni** may have a new outlook on social networking with the launch of an online platform. LinkedIn may have some competition. **Aztec Network** is a new platform created in partnership between Career Services and SDSU Alumni.

Have yourself a Merry Christmas at **Mt. Helix Park**. The Park is hosting a celebration, ‘Christmas on Mt. Helix,’ on Saturday, Dec. 9. The event is returning for the first time in five years. There was no celebration due to the rain in 2019 and shutdowns during the pandemic years.

History has it, the first home in **Del Cerro** was built in 1954. Our community is several weeks away from being 70 years old.

Editor’s note: Jessica Mills, Juri Kim, Lainie Alfaro, Natali Gonzalez, Noah Lyons, Tamar Caspi, Karen Austin, Jessica Parga, Joe Perro, Eugenie Budnik, David Frerker, Jay Wilson, Shain Haug, Mickey Zeichick contributed to this article.

Applications due soon: Leaders from diverse communities sought to shape green economy; SDSU part of the effort

The California Jobs First’s Southern Border Coalition is seeking members of the community to serve as leaders in shaping a resilient carbon-neutral economy in San Diego and Imperial counties. They will play a key role in creating an inclusive economic development plan focused on green jobs in disinvested communities.

The coalition is one of California Jobs First’s 13 High Road Transition Collaboratives (HRTCs) across the state tasked with putting disinvested communities at the center of the economic decision-making process. As the only awarded HRTC in San Diego and Imperial County, San Diego State University has teamed up with organizations across the region to form the Southern Border Coalition.

Between Jan. 22-25, representatives from 15 sectors in each county will be elected by coalition members to serve as sector leads.

The sectors include disinvested communities, California Native American tribes, youth, LGBTQIA+, and farmworkers; as well as education and training providers, labor, philanthropic, and community-based

organizations; environmental justice groups, government and economic development agencies, workforce entities, worker centers and businesses. Some 52 people will be elected to serve as sector leads.

Principal investigator for the Southern Border Coalition, Assistant Vice President of Economic Development John McMillan, said the coalition will provide training in the nuts and bolts of economic development planning through workshops and other training opportunities, so sector leads do not have to be experts in this area before joining. However, they should demonstrate a commitment to serving disinvested communities and have experience serving members of that sector.

“We think there are a lot of good ideas that are potentially untapped in the region,” said McMillan. “What we’re looking for more than anything is somebody that’s committed to making an impact for their community.”


For example, education and training providers should have experience working with students who may face systemic barriers to educational attainment.

Youth sector leaders should be between the ages of 15 and 24, come from disinvested communities and be actively involved in youth activities, said McMillan. He added that students from SDSU and across the region are encouraged to apply.


Once elected, sector leads will work together to analyze the labor market and identify industries that contribute to economic viability in the region, keeping in mind climate goals, and then choose five of those industries as core priorities for California Jobs First to invest in over the next two years.

They will vote on which projects within those industries will receive a portion of a \$9 million pool of funding for capacity building and pre-development support, which could include feasibility studies and community outreach, for example, making them more competitive for funding to implement the actual projects. McMillan said sector leads will ensure that economic development projects align with the community’s vision of economic growth and workforce development.

SEE GREEN ECONOMY, Page 12



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News Release

For Release: Final Release
October 2023

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Corps to begin five-year review for Camp Elliot/East Elliot Formerly Used Defense Site

LOS ANGELES – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District will begin its first five-year review for Camp Elliot-East Elliot, Munitions Response Site 01B, which is a formerly used defense site. The project number is J09CA006705.

More information about this site can be found at: <https://www.spl.usace.army.mil/Missions/Formerly-Used-Defense-Sites/Camp-Elliot/>

Camp Elliot-East Elliot is located about 12 miles northeast of downtown San Diego. Munitions Response Site 01B comprises 523.3 acres and is a sub-area of the overall East Elliot MRS 01, which comprises 3,035.5 acres. Most of the 523.3-acre is an active landfill, known as the Sycamore Landfill.

The landfill was opened in 1962 by the County of San Diego and is permitted to remain in operation until 2045. Fencing around the landfill restricts access to the site and “no trespassing” signs are posted. Once the landfill has reached capacity, its surface will be revegetated with native plant species and the area will become part of the Mission Trails Regional Park. Records indicate Camp Elliot was previously used by the U.S. Marine Corps for live-fire training exercises from 1942 until the end of World War II. During WWII, the range associated with Mission Response Site 01 was comprised of nine overlapping ranges, two of which fired into Mission Response Site 01B. These include Range U and Range V, which were maneuver, combat, and musketry ranges.

Following WWII and up until 1953, Camp Elliot was used as a U.S. Navy Training and Redistribution Center, where, reportedly, live-fire training was not conducted.

The Department of Defense ended its use of the entire Camp Elliot-East Elliot area in 1960. East Elliot was declared surplus in 1961, and the land was transferred to the General Services Administration, or GSA. Between 1962 and 1974, under transferred ownership to the GSA, the land was sold to real estate developers, private parties, and municipalities. Various investigations and removal activities were conducted at Camp Elliot-East Elliot from 1984 to 2014. In 2019, a decision document was prepared for the site, describing the final remediation to remove Department of Defense military munitions from the surface.

Los Angeles District

The Corps’ formerly used defense team continues to educate and inform the surrounding community about the potential dangers. The agency implemented the Explosives Safety Educational Awareness program to keep the public educated and informed about the potential dangers of unexploded ordnance and munitions.

The munitions response site is now under long-term management. The Corps investigates the site every five years to evaluate if the remedial action activities are still protecting human health and the environment. The five-year review process involves a technical assessment of the remediation and activities designed to inform the community about the five-year review process, which also allows them to provide feedback.

The technical assessment includes a site inspection and interviews with people working or living near the area and those with knowledge or concerns about the site’s remediation. The site inspection is scheduled for November 2023. The five-year review will be completed by September 2024.

The findings and conclusion of the five-year review, including recommendations, will be presented by the Corps in a five-year review report, which will be made available to the public after finalizing the report in the East Elliot project repository, located at Mission Trails Regional Park Visitor’s Center and San Diego County Public Library, Santee Branch. The administrative record also can be found on the Corp’s project website at: <https://www.spl.usace.army.mil/Missions/Formerly-Used-Defense-Sites/Camp-Elliot/>.



What can schools do to improve reading and writing standards for students?
(Photo credit: Pixabay.com)

Reading between the lines: Youth are suffering with lowest literacy rates in decades

In the community
By JESSICA MILLS

Youth literacy rates are the lowest they've been in decades, according to a recent National Public Radio (NPR) report. And while the stats are concerning around the nation, the data closest to home remains particularly frightening.

Non-profit literacy advocacy, resource and partnership organization San Diego Council on Literacy revealed that 46% of third graders throughout the San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) are not currently meeting reading and writing standards. They further detailed that countywide, nearly 70% of White students in grades 3-8 and 11 meet their ages' language standards, compared to 40% of Black students and 44% of Latinx students.

These reading and writing merits are upheld by the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) — to which 45 school districts, including the SDUSD, voluntarily subscribe. The CCSS provide teachers, parents and students with clear educational expectations that are aligned with the caliber of higher education institutions and professional organizations, according to the SDUSD website. The site further contends that under the CCSS, "students gain knowledge systematically through reading,

writing, speaking and listening." Additionally, the CCSS website claims to promote equity and ensures that "all students, no matter where they live, are well prepared with the skills and knowledge necessary to collaborate and compete with their peers in the United States and abroad."

Based on the above-mentioned statements from the CCSS curriculum, it begs the question, why then are nearly half of our youth and marginalized students failing to meet their grade's literacy standards?

The gut reaction has historically placed the blame on the heads' of teachers. As part of a bureaucracy, however, teachers neither control the curriculum nor testing. They simply do their best with the materials and resources they're provided.

Youth literacy is a large topic and contains numerous moving parts and consequences. To better understand the issue let's break down just two of the many components that make up the educational system (as a whole) that have contributed to the declining reading and writing scores: systemic racism and funding.

DEALING WITH SYSTEMIC RACISM

Systemic racism — which ensures that the road to success for marginalized communities is

SEE LOW LITERACY, Page 11

Vehicle Theft – A crime of opportunity

DA Notes
By SUMMER STEPHAN

Auto theft is a common crime in San Diego County that affects victims in many ways.

Across the county, there were more than 11,300 auto thefts last year, representing about \$140 million in losses, according to statistics from the San Diego Association of Governments. In fact, last year our office filed more than 850 cases against 900 defendants for auto theft-related charges.

Thankfully, our region has a Regional Auto Theft Taskforce (RATT), that works to reduce vehicle theft in San Diego County. They have taken down many criminal auto theft rings that have led to prosecutions and ultimately jail time for criminals.

Auto theft uniquely disrupts the victim's life, especially in a vehicle-centered city like San Diego where almost every aspect of your daily living revolves around your vehicle. From being unable to get to work, school and doctor's appointments to buying food, the theft of your vehicle can be devastating. But there are ways to be proactive, so you do not become a victim of auto theft.

Here are some simple tips that can reduce your probability of becoming a victim of auto theft:

- Do not leave your vehicle doors unlocked. Criminals are opportunists and they will find their way into an unlocked vehicle sooner or later.
- Do not leave items of any value in plain sight in a parked vehicle.
- Do not leave your keys in your vehicle.
- Do not leave keys hanging on a hook in your garage.
- Do not leave your garage door open.
- Do not store a spare key in your garage or second vehicle.

- Do not leave your vehicle unattended while it is running.
- Do not assume your vehicle is safe to be left unlocked because you live in a gated area or have an enclosed parking garage.
- Do not leave car keys in a lockbox attached to your vehicle while at the beach or on a hike.
- To avoid becoming a victim of identity theft in addition to auto theft, do not leave valuable items in your vehicle.

The harm to victims is compounded when valuables, wallets, checkbooks, or phones are left in a vehicle, and it is stolen. If a thief gains access to the personal identifying information such as your driver's license or credit card, they can illegally use your personal information to make purchases and steal your identity. Some thieves may try to re-sell your vehicle, and if you leave the vehicle title in the vehicle, the bad actor can attempt to transfer title or sell your vehicle to an unsuspecting innocent buyer.

Earlier last summer, RATT completed a two-year investigation involving 50 defendants. The undercover operation recovered 172 stolen vehicles, drugs, and firearms. RATT's mission cannot be fulfilled without the help of the public.

If you have tips or information on vehicle thefts, let RATT know on the anonymous tip line: 1-888-TELLRAT (888-835-5728).

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

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

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College Times Courier to cease print publication

A changing year oftentimes means new doors opening and some closing.

With that in mind, San Diego Community Newspaper Group has decided to cease printing the College Times Courier after this month's issue.

We will continue covering events related to the College Area online and when warranted in the Mission Times Courier print issues. If you have a story

of interest in the College Area, email me and we will follow up on it.

Thank you to all the readers in the College Area for having welcomed us into their homes and businesses over the years.

Dave Thomas
Editor
Mission Times Courier/College Times Courier/La Mesa Courier
dave@sdnews.com



Ending 2023 with hopes of a great start to 2024

Allied Gardens/Grantville
By SHAIN HAUG

Ending the old year with holiday lights and festivities is really a great way to begin the new year.

The Community Council did that with the lights over the bridge and at the tree at Triangle. Our neighbors tell us how much the lights brighten the darkness at the onset of winter as they travel to and from the Navajo communities.

The Holiday Festival at Lewis Middle School was again a great success.

Under the direction of Music Director Josh Prout the band led us in traditional holiday songs. We were reminded of the meanings of the season with readings by Jonah Charney, Bailey Smith, and Landon Vu. My personal favorite of the evening was the Marvin Elementary School choral renditions of “Sweet Dreams” and “Rockin’ Around the Christmas Tree” under the direction of Sharon Johnson. The affair ended with drawings for Barnes and Noble gift cards.

The day after the Festival the community gathered at the Waring/Zion Triangle for the 22nd annual Holiday Tree lighting.

The ceremony began with comments by Councilmember Raul Campillo whose attendance at our community functions and concern for the neighborhood is deeply appreciated. The tree and the background lights were turned on by Outstanding Students Ximena Flores (Marvin Elementary) and Niko Mareno (Foster Elementary). We closed the event with holiday songs led by a clarinet duet from Lewis Middle School.

We had the joy of tree and lights at the Triangle for only a few nights.

A couple of days before Christmas Day the tree and lights were stolen. If it was because the thieves could not afford decorations for their home, it was only necessary for them to let us know



The tree and the background lights were turned on by Outstanding Students Ximena Flores (Marvin Elementary) and Niko Mareno (Foster Elementary). (Courtesy photo)

- we would have provided for their lack. But let us be honest, the reason for the loss our holiday cheer was most likely a mean mind and evil spirit.

On Sunday, Dec. 10, 2023 the same folks who brought us the Fourth of July festivities held the Third Annual Holiday Block Party.

The Reindeer Dash Parade was led by Engine 31.

It began at Marvin Elementary and wound its way through the neighborhood to Elgin and Forbes. More than 300 participants celebrated the season with a hot dog barbecue, popcorn, arts & crafts, a giant inflatable slide, face paint, and even a visit from Santa.

For all the festivity, the highlight of the event was the Toys for Tots collection of gifts for those in need. Our thanks to the organizers and contributors for reminding us that even in these fraught times we can do so much for one another.

A little over a year ago Gary Blume installed his first Total Altruism Project (T.A.P.) at the Allied Gardens Community Park.

This project, and those that have followed, include installed grabbers with tethered nets for patrons to remove and dispose of

trash. T.A.P. has been installed in the Lake Murray Community Park & Little League Fields, the Princess Del Cerro Community Park, and the San Carlos Recreation Center. The project is welcomed by City Ground Maintenance Workers, multiple Girl Scout Troops, the San Carlos Little League, preschools and daycares, Mesa College's Bio 200 class, and even by the City of San Diego (in the form of a City of San Diego Proclamation recognizing the project).

In addition to a means for help in keeping the parks clean it is being used as a tool to teach good environmental practices. The pristine fields and overflowing trash are proof of the value of T.A.P. The Allied Gardens/Community Council endorses this project and hopes to see its expansion to all public areas.

Because of increased personal and family issues the president, secretary, and treasurer of the Community Council are leaving their long tenures in those roles. This follows the losses of our website management and the leadership of Friends of Navajo Canyon in 2023.

Can you, will you, help us keep this organization going?

County awards more than \$40M to nine affordable housing developments

The County of San Diego has awarded \$42 million to nine affordable housing developments that will provide about 872 new homes.

Those selected developments came from a pool of 24 proposal requests totaling more than \$89 million for affordable housing across the region. The distribution of the funds was previously approved by the County Board of Supervisors.

Of the nine developments, three will be on County excess land and two on publicly owned land belonging to the MTS.

Below is a breakdown of the allocated funds and number of affordable units:

Navajo Family Apartments

- 7005 Navajo Rd., San Diego
- Total units: 45 (8 for extremely low income)

- Developer: Community Housing Works
- Funding: \$2.72 million

Terrasini (Mt. Etna's fourth development)

- 5255 Mt. Etna Dr., San Diego (County excess property)
- Total units: 95 (10 for extremely low income)

SEE COUNTY AWARDS, Page 10




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SCCG

CONTINUED FROM Page 1

One of those mission-focused programs has been the SCCG's Education Workshops.

In 2023, the garden hosted 10 workshops led by some of San Diego's most recognized garden experts such as local botanist, author and gardening instructor Chuck McClung; Sarah Boltwala-Mesina from Food2Soil and Sam Tall from City Farmers Nursery. Those in attendance experienced hands-on technical instruction and collaborated with other like-minded individuals eager to learn and improve their gardening knowledge. Participation in the workshops was free for all Garden Members, or \$10 for non-members.

Another accomplishment in 2023 was the creation of a Food Pantry Garden — which dedicated a portion of the garden for the sole purpose of increasing the capacity of growing food for those in need. The SCCG partnered with the Good Shepherd Ministry's Food Pantry, donating fruits and vegetables and other collected non-perishable foods throughout the year.

"Our food pantry partnership was established just in time for our Spring Celebration event, followed by our first-ever 'Stuff the Pantry' Summer Concert Series and Fall Festival," said Wood. "Our cost of entry to these events was a non-perishable food item. So, in addition to the organic food grown in our garden, we were also able to support the Good Shepherd Food Pantry with other food necessities throughout the year."

Playtime in the Garden — a weekly, summer-long, free event designed to spark the curiosity of young children — was another 2023 initiative. For nine weeks, kids took part in arts and crafts, nature exploring and educational lessons from SCCG volunteers and local early-childhood education college students.

A SNEAK-PEEK AHEAD

Piggybacking off the progress and momentum of 2023, the SCCG is preparing for a busy year ahead.

"The SCCG leadership team is always looking for ways to improve our operations and the value we offer to the community," said Wood. "We are excited to offer a superb line-up of monthly



Heather and Leslie with some of the kids in the patch. (Photo by Kelly Wood)

Education Workshops from seed starting to do-it-yourself fruit and vegetable preserving to tool sharpening. There really is something for everyone."

In addition to their year-round programming, weekly open house; monthly story time events, workshops and produce swaps, the SCCG is also continuing with seasonal events such as, Yoga in the Garden, Spring and Fall festivals, Playtime in the Garden and the Stuff the Pantry concert series.

"What we continue to accomplish is all thanks to the people in this community who have

volunteered their time to make it all happen" said Wood. "From those who show up to weed, mulch, prune and plant, to those who share other talents like hosting a yoga class, leading a workshop, designing our website, or organizing a summer concert series, we simply could never pull this off without a diverse range of talents."

Among the dedicated helping hands is SCCG volunteer James Hyde, who began leasing a plot in 2023. He has since taken a lead role in maintaining the Food Pantry Garden.

"From the moment my family and I first stepped foot into the garden we felt welcomed," Hyde recalled. "We immediately bumped into a local gardener who wanted to show off her plot. I'm absolutely amazed at the good energy and active involvement of the board, the volunteers and the members to make so many good things happen, for the good of the Garden, the community and self."

Heather Craig also began volunteering in 2023 and has since become one of the organization's newest board members.

"It's not just the garden, it's the community of the garden that honors, respects, teaches and inspires people like me to help our community come together and grow together," Craig explained. "I'm privileged to be a part of this community and will continue to support the SCCG and its mission to make San Carlos and San Diego a better place to live."

With the heart and help of their volunteers, the SCCG will surely have another eventful and prosperous year.

A complete list of the San Carlos Community Garden's events, activities, volunteer opportunities and more can be found at: sancarloscommunitygarden.com/.

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2022 BEST OF MISSION TIMES COURIER

County awards

CONTINUED FROM Page 7

- Developer: Chelsea Investment Corporation
- Funding: \$7.25 million

Spring Street Trolley Station

- 4250 Spring St., La Mesa
- Total units: 150 (33 for extremely low income)
- Developer: Affirmed Housing Group
- Funding: \$2 million

Beyer Boulevard Trolley Village

- 4055 Beyer Blvd., San Diego
- Total units: 100 (30 for extremely low income)
- Developer: Affirmed Housing Group
- Funding: \$3 million

Mission Village

- 213 & 225 W Elder St., Fallbrook
- Total units: 61 (30 for extremely low income)
- Developer: San Diego Community Housing Corporation and National CORE
- Funding: \$7.9 million

73rd Street Apartments

- 5001 73rd St., San Diego (County excess property)
- Total units: 120 (38 for extremely low income)
- Developer: Eden Housing
- Funding: \$6.9 million

Kindred

- 1501/1555 6th Ave., San Diego (County excess property)
- Total units: 124 (63 for extremely low income)
- Developer: BRIDGE Housing
- Funding: \$4 million

Paseo Del Rey Apartments

- 610 Paseo Del Rey, Chula Vista
- Total units: 96 (33 for extremely low income)
- Developer: Wakeland Housing and Development Corporation
- Funding: \$8 million

Southwest Village

- 323, 333-335, 337-338 Willie James Jones Ave., San Diego
 - Total units: 81 (23 for extremely low income)
 - Developer: Related California
 - Funding: \$854,322
- County Housing and Community Development Services provides affordable housing opportunities to more than 40,000 people each year through various housing programs and affordable housing efforts.

Since 2017, the County has invested more than \$235 million in affordable housing, including using County excess property and its Innovative Housing Trust Fund.

Since 2017, 1,660 new units have opened. There are an additional 2,926 units on the way.

When all the developments in the pipeline are complete, the total number of affordable units supported by the County will reach nearly 7,600. This is expected to provide homes to more than 16,700 people.

The development plans align with the County's Housing Blueprint, the County's guide and ongoing response to the regional housing crisis.

Editor's note: This article was provided by Cassie N. Saunders, County of San Diego Communications Office.

Louisiana Purchase serving up Southern flavors

What's on the menu?

By ROBIN DOHRN-SIMPSON



If you live in Louisiana, you know the year's four seasons: Crawfish, Hurricane, Football, and King Cake. If you are from New Orleans, you know there's no long "e" sound anywhere in it.

If you're from San Diego and ask where you can get good Cajun food you will soon know the name Louisiana Purchase.

In 2018, Chef Quintton Austin, affectionately named Chef Q, relocated to San Diego from New Orleans. Chef Q was the executive chef at Cinclare Rustic Southern Cuisine and Chop House in Louisiana. After achieving many accolades, he headed west and set his sights on infusing Southern flair into the San Diego culinary scene. He was voted Best Soul Food Restaurant in 2022 and 2023 by San Diego Reader Magazine.

Chef Q serves Art as food. His menu items are meticulously crafted and thought out.

One of the house specialties, called Chef Q's Neighborhood Tastes, is a most intriguing Alligator Andouille Cheesecake, a savory cheesecake covered in a Crawfish Cream Sauce. Other uniquely Southern tastes include Acme Chargrilled Oysters with garlic lemon butter and parmesan cheese, and Gator



Food choices such as shrimp and grits are waiting for you at Louisiana Purchase. (Photo by Robin Dohrn-Simpson)

Bites (lightly battered gator tail) served with Cajun fries.

Other modern interpretations of French Quarter entrees are called The Big Easies (a slang name for New Orleans) include Dragos, a chick lobster topped with lobster pasta, Blackened Gator Carbonara, Lemon Pepper Catfish plus some old standards like Shrimp and Grits and Jambalaya are also on the menu.

Every few months they have some specialties and in December, it was the Oxtail Dumplings, Dirty Oxtail Rice, Gumbo Chicken Plate, and Stuffed Beignets, featuring three candied yam-infused beignets with cream cheese topped with toasted marshmallows.

Inspired by the charm of New Orleans, the decor is indoor/outdoor—heavy in woods and various NOLA voodoo-inspired wall art such as a giant Ouija Board.

Stay warm with a voodoo potions cocktail and be transported to the French Quarter, such as a famous Hurricane.

It's Laissez Les Bons Temps Rouler (Let the Good Times Roll) for brunch on Saturdays and Sundays.

Praline Pancakes should make your sweet tooth very happy. For a savory option Catfish Monica with a catfish filet, crawfish, and Cajun cream.

With so many items on the menu, it will be hard to pick just one or two. Come hungry.

Open for dinner Tuesday through Sunday and brunch on Saturday and Sunday.

Louisiana Purchase is located at 2305 University Ave (oddly enough on the corner of Louisiana Street). Call for reservations at (619) 723-2880.

For a current menu go to louisianapurchasesd.com.



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City council votes 6-2 against All Peoples Church project

Friends of Del Cerro

By JAY WILSON

On Tuesday evening, Jan. 9, the City of San Diego's Councilmembers voted 6 to 2 against the All Peoples Church (APC) project as presented, which was to build a 900-seat church, parking structure and a large multi-purpose room. The church had hoped to build along the east side of College Ave north of I-8 in Del Cerro.

The major concerns have been traffic on College Avenue, an additional traffic signal and the number of cars entering the parking lot. The concerns by the councilmembers are the number of cars daily entering the parking lot. The numbers estimated

by the church are less than what seems viable in reviewing all the proposed activities. Our Councilmember, Raul Campillo, stated in reviewing everything, it appears an additional and a more thorough traffic study was required.

Michael Livingston, a principle with Save Del Cerro, noted, "We worked so hard - six years- and here we are tonight with a victory. It's just exhilarating."

Like Livingston, many in the Del Cerro community were concerned about traffic safety issues. "Too large, too intense," Livingston added. "College Avenue's very busy. It's a major arterial. There [are] way too many



(Photo credit: savedelcerro.org)

uncertainties. Uncertainties lead to safety issues. And safety issues is what we don't need more of; we have them."

I was able to contact a member of the APC committee who provided the following statement:

"Of course, the church is sad and disappointed after the vote

today. Yet we are choosing to trust God and His provision for them in their mission to bless the city. We will continue to move forward and prayerfully consider the next steps to take."

FODC CONTINUES TO REQUEST INPUT FROM RESIDENTS ON COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENTS

Meantime, Friends of Del Cerro (FODC) continues to request input from Del Cerro residents regarding what they would like to see improved; from street repairs to landscaping adjacent to city streets.

To gain additional information, FODC will be conducting a

survey. The plan is to mail a letter to every fifth home in Del Cerro in February.

The letter will explain the survey and include a link and QR code to an on-line survey. The survey will allow residents to rank their priority of potential projects and a section allowing responders to include additional items to be considered. Responses will remain anonymous.

If you would like the FODC to submit a city-related Del Cerro issue to the city's Get It Done APP for you, send us an email at info@friendsofdelcerro.org and include a brief explanation of your city-related issue.

For more information about FODC and/or to join our growing membership, go to: friendsofdelcerro.org.

Low literacy

CONTINUED FROM Page 6

difficult and frequently impossible to reach — is not a new infiltration into education.

The Center for American Progress, a public policy research and advocacy organization, explains that the CCSS "hold promise for low-income students, students of color, English language learners and students with disabilities, who traditionally perform significantly worse than their peers. The Common Core helps address inequality in education by ensuring all students are taught at the same high standards and held to the same rigorous expectations."

Despite this insurance, kids are still left behind. Nearly half of them, in fact.

Not only are many students underprepared for their present grade's literacy levels, but they'll likely be even further

undertrained to meet college and professional merits.

Systemic racism begins at the earliest grades.

Black preschoolers, for example, are 3.6 times more likely to receive suspensions compared to their White counterparts, says a recent California Department of Education (CDE) report. Black preschoolers represent 18% of the student population but make up nearly half of the out-of-school suspensions, explains NPR.

Suspensions and expulsions mean missed opportunities for a structured learning environment. In the same report, the CDE affirms that younger suspended students are more likely to have trouble keeping up academically and feel unwelcome at school. For older students, they're more likely to drop out altogether.

Disparities in disciplinary measures are just one illustration of systemic racism — inequitable funding, lack of diverse curricula

and an underrepresentation of teachers and staff from diverse cultures are other common occurrences of this problem.

Despite recent literacy reports, the SDUSD has made steps toward combating racism.

In 2020, the district voted unanimously to change their grading systems to focus on the mastery of the material rather than a yearly average, which penalizes students struggling throughout the year. The district's report increased and ensured enrollment in at least one ethnic course, enabled students to take AP courses not offered at their school, provided teachers with opportunities to earn micro credentials that certify the depth and quality of their work and a lengthy list of additional action plans.

Teachers and staff are a necessary cog in educational systems — for it's difficult to leave or make imperative change without negatively impacting students.

Nor are the changes' effects seen overnight.

BUDGET CUTS AND PROJECTED DEFICIT

Now, let's address the green and monstrous second half of this issue.

The *San Diego Union-Tribune* reported that as of this month, the SDUSD faces drastic budget cuts and a projected deficit of \$100 million. Furthermore, non-profit education equity newsroom EdSource says that the SDUSD, as well as other San Diego districts, have experienced yearly enrollment drops, which further depletes state-funding contingent with the number of attending students.

Non-profit high-education research organization Learning Policy Institute says that "improvements in the adequacy and equity of per-pupil spending are positively associated with improved student outcomes." In short, money matters. They also

maintain that additional resources for early childhood programs, instructional supports and more competitive teacher compensations cultivate stronger positive outcomes for students.

It's not just about more money, but how the money is distributed.

By dis-serving our youth and marginalized communities, we can expect higher rates of unemployment, low self-esteem, workplace accident, the misuse of medication and a plethora of troubling issues, according to early literacy organization, the Governor's Literacy Foundation.

No one person, including myself, has the answers.

But, by engaging with communities, spaces, programs and organizations that promote literacy and diversity, hopefully the kids have a chance.

Editor's note: Jessica Mills is a freelance writer for San Diego Community Newspaper Group.

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Green economy

CONTINUED FROM Page 5

Then, sector leads will sign off on all project proposals before they are submitted to the state in a competitive process for a portion of a \$268 million pool of CJF implementation funding.

During the two-year process, sector leads will connect with stakeholders from their respective sectors to share information about the Southern Border Coalition and encourage community participation, and survey sector members on their priorities.

“This is an opportunity to collaborate with other people and organizations that have the same interests in mind that you do, advise on inclusive policies and practices, and focus on disparities that are happening in your community,” said McMillan. “You get to help decide on both regional planning processes and projects that will benefit your community and shape that future, which is not something that community members get to do in a very direct way very often,” added McMillan.

McMillan expects the time commitment for sector leads to be about eight to 12 hours per month, from Jan. 30, 2024 through Sept. 30, 2026, with several of those hours spent attending sector meetings and other community events. Each sector

SEE GREEN ECONOMY, Page 15

San Carlos Area Council annual potluck social and open house prove successful

San Carlos Area Council
By MICKEY ZEICHICK



Happy New Year!
I am happy to report that the SCAC annual potluck social and open house was a big success!

We had representatives from most of the elected officials in our area, including in person Congresswoman Sara Jacobs (pictured).

Congresswoman Jacobs serves on the following committees: House Foreign Affairs Committee (Subcommittees: on Africa [Ranking Member]]; and on Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations). House Armed services Committee (Subcommittees: on Intelligence and Special Operations also Seapower and Projection Forces, and Quality of Life Panel).

She is a member of the following caucuses and organizations: Animal Protection Caucus; Bipartisan Taskforce for Combating Antisemitism; California Democratic Congressional Delegation; California Coastal Caucus; Caucus on Homelessness; Congressional Equality Caucus (Vice Chair); Congressional

Ghana Caucus (co-Chair); Congressional Future Caucus; Gun Violence Prevention Task Force. There are more caucuses and organizations but I am running out of room. But you get the idea, ask a busy person to do just one more thing and somehow, they will and they will do it well.

During our meeting we were able to meet, greet, and welcome some new members to the neighborhood and some that haven't been to one of our meetings in a long time What an event! I really enjoy this traditional get together and look forward to December 2024.

Our scheduled speaker for our Jan. 17 SCAC meeting is County Board Supervisor Joel Anderson.

He has been busy over the past few years with helping make San Diego County and our area better.

“Not only do I represent your concerns at the Supervisor's board meetings, but my job and priority is to serve as a resource to you. If you have any County issues with which you need assistance, please contact my office, as we are here to help. I want to make County government work or you!”

You can call the Supervisor's office at (619) 531-5522 or go to his email “joel.anderson@sd-county.ca.gov”.

How to live longer? Just live longer!

Seriously, though find what inspires you, makes you happy, find a passion.

My husband loves to read, as do a lot of people, but that is his passion and he reads two or three books a week. My passions are humor, music, and live theatre. We get along swell, he tells me about the books he reads, and I take him along to the plays I am involved with. Being President of ACT-SD there are a lot of community theatres in our San Diego County area. Whatever your passion – go for it if it doesn't hurt you or anyone else.

This year is an election year, and I am encouraging everyone who is at least 18 years old and qualifies to vote, to please vote.

It is not my business who you vote for but our Democracy depends on our voting, and making our concerns known. We live in



Congresswoman Sara Jacobs (Photo courtesy of sarajacobs.house.gov)

the best country in the world and our Democracy works. I know we are all busy, but I am asking you, the busy person, to do one more thing.

If you would like to be on the Board of the SCAC let me know. My contact information is san-carlosareacouncilpres@gmail.com.

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100 “Happy New Years” for local veteran and volunteer

By JOHN CRAWFORD
Grantville-Allied Gardens Kiwanis Club

Dec. 31, 2023 marked a special, once-in-a-lifetime milestone for San Carlos resident Gene Elmore.

The former Navy pilot and long-time member of the Grantville-Allied Gardens Kiwanis Club turned 100 years old on New Year's Eve.

Owen Eugene Elmore (or just “Gene” for short) was born in Danville, Indiana on Dec. 31, 1923 – the last baby born in Danville that year.

At the age of 18, less than a month after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Gene entered flight school with the U.S. Navy and received his wings in Corpus Christi, Texas. He flew a B-24 (four engine aircraft) in both the Pacific and European theaters during World War II. He would fly more than 160 missions as a pilot for the Navy, including six different flights over Normandy on D-Day, June 6, 1944: three at Utah Beach and three at Omaha Beach. After the war, Gene also participated in the Berlin Airlift of 1948 (a humanitarian effort to provide food and supplies to civilians living behind the Iron Curtain), and the Korean War.

The Navy brought him to San Diego, where he and his wife of 56 years, Wanda, opened a business building and selling security cameras for residential and commercial use. Gene also established his own publishing company, writing three novels.

While trying to promote his security camera business, Gene was invited to speak as a guest of the Grantville-Allied Gardens Kiwanis Club in March of 1969, and was invited to join the organization as a member shortly thereafter. He quickly became one



San Carlos resident Gene Elmore hit the century mark back on Dec. 31. (Courtesy photo)

of the club's most dedicated, active, and respected leaders, as he developed a passion for volunteer work and philanthropy within the club.

His accolades in Kiwanis – serving as Club President in 1974-75, Division 21 Lt. Governor in 1985-86, and earning the coveted Kiwanian of the Year Award in 1982-83 – only scratch the surface of his remarkable influence on those around him. Gene has been the driving force behind many of our club's projects over the years, perhaps most notably the Allied Gardens SpringFest and Parade from 2000 to 2013.

After more than 54 years as a Kiwanian, Gene has done it all, earning his status through the decades as one of the club's most dedicated and respected leaders, and representing the Grantville-Allied Gardens club at numerous Kiwanis International conventions. Since 1979, the Kiwanis Clubs of Division 21 (Metro San Diego) have presented the Gene Elmore trophy to its top performing clubs year after year.

Gene is the first active member of the G.A.G. Kiwanis Club to reach the century mark -- and he's still driving himself to club meetings every Thursday, proving that age is really just a number.

SEE GENE ELMORE, Page 15

Students, staff head into second half of SKDA school year



By KELLY BONDE



The second half of the school year is off and running at St. Katharine Drexel Academy. Among some of the highlights:

Advent/Christmas Program - On Wednesday, Dec. 13, the SKDA Courtyard was transformed into a Winter Wonderland. We happily hosted our annual Advent/Christmas Program for all students and families under the twinkling lights and gathered afterwards to enjoy Christmas cookies and fellowship. Each year, our Student Council representatives take us through the Nativity scene of Jesus's birth and follow it with a reading of *Twas the Night Before Christmas*. Throughout the readings, our students perform songs that they've spent many hours practicing. It is a wonderful annual event to put us all in the spirit of Christmas. This year, we ended with the entire audience and students singing Mariah Carey's “All I Want for Christmas is You” with some of our bubble snow. It was a great send off into the holiday season.

Open House - On Sunday, Jan. 28 from 10 a.m. until 12



There is much to smile about as students and staff headed into the New Year. (Courtesy photo)

p.m., SKDA will be hosting its annual Open House for all returning and prospective families. All classrooms will be opened, teachers will be on campus and there will be a small scavenger hunt for children. It's a great way to tour the campus, meet other people and ask any questions about the school you might have. It will also be the first day that the Scholastic Book Fair will be open to all, so come by and visit SKDA and check out all of the wonderful things we have to offer.

Catholic Schools' Week - At the end of January and beginning of February, all Catholic schools across the country celebrate Catholic Schools' Week. Each day

of the week is devoted to celebrating a different group in our community, whether it be our nation, parents, teachers, students, etc. Each day also has a fun theme and activity for the students to partake in, such as Favorite Color Day, Pajama Day, etc. It is a wonderful way for us to celebrate how special it is to be a Catholic school and what makes our school unique. We look forward to the festivities and celebrating SKDA.

Editor's note: Do you have exciting things going on at your school in the Mission Times Courier/College Times Courier circulation areas? If so, email us to get your school noticed. Dave@sdnews.com.

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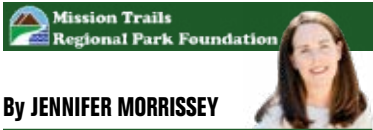
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Looking ahead to 2024 at Mission Trails Regional Park



By JENNIFER MORRISSEY

Thanks to support from the community and our partners at the City of San Diego and grantors, the Mission Trails Regional Park (MTRP) Foundation made big strides on major park initiatives in 2023.

From continuing to build out our educational offerings to staging Mission Trails' 30th photo contest and making progress on a land acquisition program, to

hosting a holiday marketplace that brought 1,100 charity-minded shoppers to the Visitor Center, the MTRP Foundation had quite a year.

As we look ahead to 2024, we are excited by what's to come and some of the new programs and events on the horizon.

Later this year, we will mark the 50th anniversary of the purchase of Cowles Mountain.

In 1974, thanks to a group of involved citizens, Cowles Mountain was spared from development and acquired for public use. Since then, it's become the most popular

hike in San Diego. Be on the lookout later this year for events organized to mark Cowles Mountain's 50-year milestone.

In May of 2021, the Bridge for Max project was unanimously approved by the Mission Trails Regional Park Task Force and Citizens' Advisory Committee.

A few months later, a \$1.5 million grant from the State of California was allocated to the Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation to help fund the construction of a pedestrian bridge across the San Diego River near the San Diego River Crossing Trail. Environmental studies and planning are well underway, and much progress toward

its construction will be made in 2024.

For those who enjoy learning, there will be many opportunities for you.

Families with toddlers will be pleased to know that the MTRP Foundation will be adding four more Trail Tykes sessions each month, beginning February 2024. The new sessions of this immensely popular program will take place every Wednesday afternoon from 3:30-4:30PM at the Mission Trails Visitor Center. The expansion of the program has been made possible through a grant from the Dr. Seuss Foundation. While free, registration is required; sign up through the MTRP website.

We have an exciting roster of lectures and film screenings coming this spring, and they will be announced first to those who receive the Mission Trails eNewsletter and follow the park's Facebook and/or Instagram accounts.

You can always find out about the park's events the events calendar at mtrp.org/events. You may sign up to receive email communications at mtrp.org.

There are many ways to enjoy Mission Trails in 2024.

Whether you choose to volunteer at the park, work towards your fitness goals, learn to identify birds, or simply spend time in nature, we look forward to sharing Mission Trails with you.

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San Carlos artist wins Best of Theme award

Wanda Honeycutt, an artist and resident of San Carlos, won the Best of Theme award in the San Diego Watercolor Society (SDWS) Member's exhibition "Emerging Free", an in-gallery show of the SDWS at 2825 Dewey Road in Liberty Station.

Honeycutt's painting titled "Winged Expression" was selected by prominent local artist and juror Carol Mansfield for this honor.

Mansfield commented, "This portrait of two of our proud feathered friends encourages us to examine the sharp details in pattern and texture closely. The strong shapes and color contrasts of the avian subjects make a strong statement superimposed on the distant urban setting. It's fun to see and enjoy."

Honeycutt's art education began in college and has continued post-grad by taking classes and workshops with prominent water media artists. Her unique and colorful paintings have been shown, given awards, and sold in galleries throughout San Diego and many are held in private collections in several foreign countries, and throughout the United States.



San Carlos resident Wanda Honeycutt won for her depiction of two feathered friends. (Courtesy image)

Keenly intuitive, Honeycutt rarely paints what she actually sees in the physical world.

She creates from a different perspective, a deeper connection to the Universe. She feels that her art is co-created and inspired from this level. Honeycutt often has a specific idea or inspiration for a painting; but many times, she freely applies paint to paper or canvas and allows her intuition to guide her. Admirers of her art

enjoy searching for her signature items which appear in each piece: a hawk and a heart. Honeycutt is also a sought after and experienced art juror.

More of her art can be found at: wandahoneycutt.com.

The SDWS Gallery Exhibit will run through Saturday, Jan. 27, at the SDWS gallery at 2528 Dewey Road in Liberty Station, and is free to the public. Paintings can be viewed and purchased directly

from the gallery, and are also available to view and purchase on the SDWS website at: sdws.org/galleryart.php?cat=7037.

The San Diego Watercolor Society, a 501(C)(3) non-profit organization founded in 1965, is dedicated to expanding the appreciation of and involvement in watermedia painting through education, exhibition and promotion.

More information can be found at: sdws.org.

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What does 2024 have in store for the real estate market?

Real Estate Update

By SARAH WARD



Last year was a particularly rough one for the San Diego housing market.

The steadily rising mortgage rates caused buyers to drop out of the home search, and sellers didn't want to sell causing unusually low inventory available. Mortgage rates hit a 20-year high in October causing payments to increase and affordability to drop. When mortgage rates neared 8% and beyond in the fall, the market really slowed down, with buyers sitting on the sidelines and throwing in the towel, hoping for a better 2024. Days on market ticked up.

So what to expect in 2024?

With rates down nearly a full percent in the past 2-months, affordability is expected to improve causing more buyers to emerge.

San Diego is actually loaded with high-income workers currently renting and greatly desiring to own a property. If rates stay steady and perhaps even drift lower with the slowing economy, expect multiple offers again on well-priced properties and I believe, prices to again increase steadily.

When you drive around San Diego County, do you see large housing developments being built? No.

There is little new construction coming to market, other than the occasional condo or apartment building and nowhere near enough construction to satisfy demand. San Diego County is an island, surrounded by the Pacific

Ocean, Mexico, the deserts and Camp Pendleton. San Diego has a serious housing shortage, some say a shortage of over 100,000 units. And with the vast majority of mortgages in the 3's, people just don't want to sell. Expect available inventory to remain low in San Diego, buyer demand to increase, and prices to tick up again in 2024.

One unknown factor though is the average mortgage rate.

Mortgage rates follow the ten-year U.S. treasury rate. As a rule of thumb, add 2.75% to the ten year rate for a typical mortgage rate. Back in October, the ten-year exceeded 5% with mortgage rates approaching 8%. But the ten-year has since drifted back down near 4% with mortgage rates falling to around 7%.

The issue is the national debt of

\$33 trillion, increasing at \$2 trillion per year.

The federal government needs to continue selling trillions of dollars in new treasuries to fund the deficits and if global demand for U.S. treasuries wanes, rates will need to increase in order to get those treasuries sold. This is why I don't see rates falling much further in the near term. A rate in the 6's or low 7's I believe is a pretty good deal (especially historically!) and we are close to that now.

So I would encourage buyers to start making moves, getting pre-approved for a loan, and looking at new listings. If rates ever drift into the 5's buyers could refi, but if rates again touch 8% and beyond, the window of opportunity will be reduced.

If you are buying or selling in 2024, give me a call for a no

obligation chat to discuss your options.

MARKET REPORT (Single Family):

- **College Area (92115):** December median price up 2.2% year over year to \$915,000 and with 18 new homes for sale (a 50% decrease from last December).
- **San Carlos (92119):** median price down 2.3% to \$977,500 with 8 new homes for sale (a 38.5% decrease from December 2022).
- **Del Cerro/Allied Gardens (92120):** median price down 1.4%, year over year to \$1,045,000 with 13 new homes for sale (an 18.2% increase from last December).

—Sarah Ward is a REALTOR with Fine & Coastal. Reach her at: sarah@fineandcoastal.com.

Gene Elmore

CONTINUED FROM Page 13

As a Navy veteran, a war hero, a business owner, an author, a publisher, and an adventurer, Gene has led the quintessential American life. Whether retracing the steps of Lewis and Clark along the Columbia River in Oregon, "roughing it" in the depths of Death Valley National Park, or relaxing

at their vacation home in Palm Springs, Gene and Wanda Elmore are never too busy to give back to their community.

We congratulate our phenomenal leader and inspiration, a living piece of American history, and a true treasure of our local community. Congratulations, and Happy 100th Birthday, Gene.

The Grantville-Allied Gardens Kiwanis Club meets

every Thursday, 5:30 p.m., at Palisades Presbyterian Church, 6301 Birchwood Street. Meetings are always open to the public, and we always welcome local residents (like Gene) who want to give back to their community.

For information, visit: alliedgardenskiwanis.org.

Editor's note: This article was written by John Crawford, Grantville-Allied Gardens Kiwanis Club.

Green economy

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lead will receive a monthly stipend of \$1,000.

Interested parties may apply using the Sector Lead Nomination & Application form, which describes the 15 sectors as well as sector lead responsibilities. Prospective sector leads must apply or be nominated by 5 p.m. Jan. 12 to

be eligible for the election, which will take place Jan. 22-25. Candidate applications will be available for public comment Jan. 15-19 to allow coalition members and the public to provide comments regarding candidate qualifications prior to sector lead elections.

The first convening of sector leads — which will include those from both counties — will take place virtually on Jan. 30.

Community members who do not wish to be sector leads, but want to contribute to inclusive and sustainable economic development within one of the 15 sectors represented by the Southern Border Coalition can become involved by completing a Coalition Member Commitment form. They will be eligible to vote for sector leads in January.

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FEB 3	FEB 10
FEB 17	FEB 24

10am Rain or Shine

Free Admission

- Suggested arrival time 9:30AM
- Free parking, coffee, and donuts
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- All ages welcome!

WHAT TO BRING

- › Binoculars (if you have them)
- › Jacket or other layered clothing
- › Sturdy shoes for uneven terrain
- › Folding chair (if you have one)

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3 New Year's Home Resolutions

At the beginning of the year, it's common to set personal goals and make resolutions to improve upon last year. But have you thought about resolutions for your home? Here are some ideas to get you started:

1. IMPROVE INDOOR AIR QUALITY

Routine HVAC maintenance and filter changes help your system work optimally and improve your home's air quality. A more advanced resolution to fill your home with clean air is to install a whole home air purification system.

2. SAVE ENERGY

Replace your tank water heater with a high efficiency tankless water heater and save up to 40% on your energy bill. Another energy saving idea is to switch your light fixtures to LEDs.

3. PREPARE FOR AN EMERGENCY

Learn how to turn off gas, water, and power to your home. Find out what to do if your water heater leaks. Check angle stops around your home to see if they're working properly. Plan ahead by getting familiar with your home now.

5 SIGNS YOU MAY NEED A NEW FURNACE

- 1 Older than the average 15-year lifespan
- 2 Energy and repairs bills are increasing
- 3 Uneven temperatures throughout your home
- 4 Dirt, dust, and rust particles on your heat registers
- 5 Rattling, popping, or screeching sounds

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