

Feeding people in O.C.



How the founder of Bracken's Kitchen keeps the hungry fed and stays full

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

Bill Bracken, founder and culinary director at Bracken's Kitchen, always felt called to feed people. But after spending nearly 25 years cooking in posh five-star hotels, he found himself interested in feeding a different crowd.

"In 2008 our economy really tanked, and I watched a lot of really good people lose their jobs," Bracken recalled. "I saw them struggle to put a meal on the table."

Then in 2011, he found himself unemployed.

"The only thing I knew how to do was cook, so I knew I wasn't going to open up a food pantry or food bank," Bracken said.

He liked the idea of a restaurant that would open to the food insecure on certain days of the week, but he knew securing a location for such an ambitious project would be difficult. It also would be a challenge for those who

See **Bracken**, page R6

TOP: Bracken's Kitchen workers serve food. Courtesy of Bracken's Kitchen



Cal State Fullerton's permanent food pantry lets qualifying students 'shop' with dignity

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

The Cal State Fullerton food pantry isn't just about feeding hungry students. It also aims to empower them.

"This has always been a project that the student leaders really wanted to offer. It gives more dignity to the students to

select their own food items," said Cristina Truong, assistant director of Titan Student Union Services & Food Pantry.

Cal State Fullerton's permanent food pantry opened in late August, and the ex-

See **Pantry**, page R6

ABOVE: Dairy products stored in a refrigerator at the newly opened Titan Student Union food pantry at Cal State Fullerton established by Associated Students Inc.

Kevin Chang | Staff Photographer

Santa Ana hits center with \$40K tab

The city is seeking reimbursement from El Centro Cultural de México for the cost of clearing a homeless encampment.

BY BEN BRAZIL

At the beginning of the pandemic, homeless people started living in the parking lots of a Mexican cultural center in Santa Ana.

The leaders of El Centro Cultural de México decided to allow the more than 40 people to live on the property with the hopes of trying to connect them to housing and other services. Then the city started fining the center for not keeping the area clean. Eventually, the city received more than 100 complaints from surrounding neighbors about refuse and public-safety issues. It threatened to seek an abatement court order to clear the encampment.

El Centro, which is a linchpin for the local Latino community, agreed in mid-March to work with the city to clear the encampment within 45 days. Once that deadline passed, the city obtained an abatement order and cleared the lots of refuse on May 13. According to city data, 28 people were connected with a homeless shelter prior to clearing the encampment.

Now, the city is seeking reimbursement of the funds it used to carry out the warrant, including the city staff time needed for the legal proceedings and to clear trash and other debris from the property. But El Centro's leadership contends the \$39,604 will be a difficult financial obstacle for the nonprofit.

"We handle our building right, we will maintain, but \$40,000 is 10 months of our mortgage payment," Ben Vazquez, a longtime volunteer and board member with El Centro, said to the City Council on Tuesday night. "Like every nonprofit, we're working month to month, grant to grant. We don't have big donors. Don't charge us the \$40,000."

After several El Centro members asked for lenience, the City Council narrowly approved the

See **Center**, page R5

Historic Orange gas station stays put after development dispute

Preservationists have fought to have the 1928 site nominated for the National Register of Historic Places.

BY GABRIEL SAN ROMÁN

A small Storybook-style building residing on an Orange street corner has seen better days. Its windows are boarded up. Patches of grass and weeds sprout from broken concrete. And the grounds have been dormant for years since last seeing business as a flower shop.

Still, the slim, two-story edifice's blue-trimmed, steep-sloped and curved roofs remain whimsical enough to attract curious looks from commuters on Main Street.

Nearly a century ago, the former gas station would have invited now-classic cars to pull up to fuel pumps off of what was once was a stretch of Highway 101, an arterial road connecting Los Angeles to San Diego through Orange County.

That the longtime gas station, which first opened for business around 1928, is historic and charming is no haggle. But property owners and preservationists have competing visions over its future — and how it gets there.

For Krista Nicholds, executive director of Preserve Orange County, the gas station is one of four local historic sites on the nonprofit's "endangered" list. Property owners had eyed moving the building over to an empty plot on Glassell Street, which they also

own, to clear the way for development on Main.

But Nicholds' group first responded when learning of the Northern Gateway project earlier this year; original plans for the proposed retail center on Glassell included relocating the gas station there.

"With this little building, there was so much interest from the community at large," she said. "We also felt that we were seeing a trend in Orange, which traditionally has been stalwart with respect to the protection of historic resources. Taking a stand was important in this case for those reasons."

In November 2020, a cultural resources assessment sponsored

See **Station**, page R4



Scott Smeltzer | Staff Photographer

THE NEARLY century-old gas station building in Orange was recently nominated for the National Register of Historic Places by preservationists.



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Anaheim police mistook plastic bottle in bag for a gun in fatal shooting of councilman’s cousin

BY BEN BRAZIL

Police mistook a water bottle in a black bag for a gun when they shot and killed a Santa Ana councilman's cousin in late September. That information was revealed in a video recently released by Anaheim police that addresses the killing of Councilman Johnathan Hernandez's cousin, Brandon Lopez, who was shot after a car chase and hours-long standoff at a construction area in Santa Ana. Lopez, 33, was suspected of driving a stolen vehicle and had warrants for armed robberies, domestic violence and driving on a suspended license. Hernandez has said Lopez was suffering from a mental health crisis and Anaheim police unnecessarily escalated the situation. He was shot by Anaheim police officers Catalin Panov, Kenneth Weber, Paul Delgado and Brett Heitmann, Anaheim police spokesman Shane Carringer confirmed. The California Department of Justice is investigating the shooting under Assembly Bill 1506, which requires the department to investigate all police shootings resulting in the death of an unarmed civilian in the state. The shooting sparked outrage in City Council chambers, with Santa Ana Mayor Vicente Sarmiento comparing Anaheim police to "a firing squad." He also questioned the Anaheim police's

"provocative decision" to fire flash bangs into Lopez's car. Members of the community have also mourned Lopez's death. Scores of people honored him at a vigil late last month that featured a performance from Aloe Blacc. According to the police video, police chased Lopez for 35 minutes on Sept. 28 through Tustin, Irvine and Santa Ana until his car became stuck on tracks being constructed for the O.C. Streetcar in the 1200 block of West Santa Ana Boulevard in Santa Ana. Lopez was in the car for several hours as police commanded him to exit. Sgt. Jacob Gallacher said in the video that a Santa Ana police officer who was monitoring Lopez's movements in the car, reported to other officers that Lopez was reaching under car seats and had a gun. The video had an audio recording of the Santa Ana officer. "417 right hand," he said. Police code 417 means "gun." Less than an hour before the fatal shooting, Anaheim police took command of the incident from Santa Ana. The video shows that about 30 minutes before Lopez was killed, a Santa Ana officer reports that he spoke with a member of the Lopez family, and they said he intended to commit suicide by cop. Gallacher explains in the video that Anaheim police decided to shoot a "chemical agent" into the car "with the hopes that it would

encourage him to surrender." After a nearly four-hour standoff, police deployed gas and a flash bang at the car. Body camera footage of the shooting shows Lopez leaving the car after the flash bang was fired and the car filled with gas. Within a few seconds, police shout "Hands up!" and "Gun!" Several shots ring out and Lopez falls to the ground. Gallacher said Lopez had a "black object in his right hand," and officers were still concerned about a potential gun after he was shot because he was lying on his hands. A nonlethal projectile was fired at his body, but he was unresponsive. He was dead at the scene. Gallacher said that a gun was not found. Instead, police found an empty plastic water bottle inside a black Guess bag underneath Lopez's body. A note from Lopez was found in the car, along with a knife and drug paraphernalia. In addition to the state investigation, Anaheim police Internal Affairs and Major Incident Review team will be investigating the incident as well. "As with all critical incident investigations, we withhold judgment and do not draw any conclusions about whether or not our officers acted within our policies and in accordance with the law until after all the facts are known and the investigations are com-



Screenshot by Ben Brazil

BODY CAM footage of the fatal police shooting of Brandon Lopez.

plete," Anaheim Deputy Chief Rick Armendariz said in the video. Jennifer Rojas, policy advocate and organizer with the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California, criticized Anaheim police during a phone interview this week for escalating the incident after being notified by Lopez's family that he was suffering from a mental health crisis. "Roughly 30 minutes after both departments were informed by the family that Brandon was experiencing a behavioral health crisis, he was suddenly and violently killed by Anaheim PD," Rojas said. "When SAPD and APD respond with armored vehicles and multiple armed agents and chemical agents and flash bangs, it just

once again illustrates that police are not equipped to respond to people experiencing a mental health crisis." Rojas said too many unarmed people suffering from mental health crises have been killed by police in Orange County. The California Department of Justice is also investigating the fatal Tustin police shooting of Luis Manuel Garcia, who was homeless and reportedly suffering from undiagnosed mental health issues when he was killed. Garcia was also unarmed, so the department is investigating under AB 1506, which took effect in July.

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DISNEY WORKERS ARE SPLIT ON APPROVING FIRST MAJOR POST-SHUTDOWN CONTRACT

BY GABRIEL SAN ROMÁN

Thursday marked Mickey Mouse's 93rd birthday, but not all Disneyland Resort workers woke up that day in a mood to celebrate. After months of negotiations, thousands of employees represented by the Master Services Council cast their ballots the day before on a contract primed to raise wages to a minimum of \$18 an hour by 2023 while providing seniority-based bonuses.

When all ballots were tallied, Disney's California Adventure workers voted to ratify the contract while Disneyland Park workers rejected it, an unprecedented split decision as the two theme parks form separate units.

"We are proud of the tentative agreement we reached with the Master Services Council, which was unanimously endorsed by union leadership," said a Disneyland official. "We are certainly disappointed in the overall outcome and will continue discussions with union representatives."

The Master Services Council, which is comprised of four unions, represents 9,500 workers or more than a third of the resort's post-reopening workforce.

The collective bargaining agreement is the first major one to go before workers since a 14-month pandemic shutdown of the Disneyland Resort sent tens of thousands of them on furlough.

"We have returned more than 25,000 cast members and are hiring hundreds each week," a Disneyland official added.

It's also the first split vote since the theme parks became separate units 20 years ago. What that means going forward caused immediate confusion among workers — from ride operators, to bakers, to ticket takers — the following day.

"People don't know what to think, at this point," said Michael Wain, a Disneyland custodial worker for 22 years. "How can one park pass the contract but not the other? I don't know what to think myself. It's all new to everybody."

Wain felt torn about the contract but voted against it even as, in his view, the proposed raises were substantial without much in the way of concessions by the unions.

"This is the best contract that I've seen in my years working here," he said. "This is the first time they've ever acknowledged senior cast members by giving bonuses. By all means I should've been happy and ecstatic. But at the same



Associated Press

VISITORS WALK toward Sleeping Beauty's Castle in the background at Disneyland Resort in Anaheim.

time, I know people can go to a fast food restaurant and still get a better starting wage than what our cast members are going to make."

Under the contract, Wain would qualify for a \$2,000 bonus as a full-time worker that began his tenure with the company before June 16, 2001. It also offers \$1,000 bonuses for those whose start dates are between June 17, 2001, and June 16, 2011, as well as smaller bonuses for senior part-time staff in those same time frames.

The ballot described a "no" vote as one that authorizes the Master Services Council's bargaining committee to call a strike or take another economic action, if deemed appropriate.

Disney's California Adventure's unit, which includes some Downtown Disney union workers, voted to ratify but it remains unclear at the time of this reporting if the split decision affects the contract from taking immediate effect as it otherwise would have.

David Stilwell, a former SEIU-USWW assistant to the president before retiring in 2016, always wondered when he'd see a House of Mouse divided during his time working on several contract campaigns. In the leadup to Disney's California Adventure opening to the public 20 years ago on Feb. 8, 2001, he recalled how the two theme parks became separated by more than just an esplanade.

"The company offered to be neutral on the union organizing drives as long as there was the understanding that they would be separate units," Stilwell said. "That was the devil's bargain."

On Nov. 5, the Disneyland Resort and the Master Services Council reached a tentative agreement. Plans for a Nov. 17 union town hall at the Sheraton Park Hotel in Anaheim were scrapped accordingly. The canceled event had invited

Sen. Bernie Sanders, Rep. Lou Correa, longtime labor activist Dolores Huerta and Professor Peter Dreier, who co-authored the 2018 "Working for the Mouse" study that preceded an Anaheim ballot initiative that year aimed at raising wages at the Disneyland Resort, as special guests.

Workers spent the day casting ballots at the Opera House on Main Street U.S.A. within Disneyland, instead.

The three-year contract calls for hourly wages to be raised by a dollar a year through 2023, topping at \$18 an hour.

Earlier this month, an Orange County Superior Court judge ruled against Disney workers in a class-action suit alleging that the Disneyland Resort violated Anaheim's subsidy-specific living-wage law and undercut pay.

By comparison, the ordinance proposed dollar-a-year increases for all workers, union or not, up to \$18 an hour by 2022.

But that was before the pandemic.

Working conditions at Disneyland after reopening from its hiatus on account of the coronavirus may have influenced some no votes. Custodial workers have been tasked with responsibilities that once belonged to a more robustly staffed overnight shift.

"From a custodial standpoint, it has drastically changed," Wain said. "We're now coming in approximately three hours before the park opens for one shift and staying 3½ hours after park closing for another. It's become a lot more labor intensive for us and it's forcing more people to call out. The callouts have been pretty vicious and we can't get anybody to hire in."

The longtime custodian thought Disney's offer on wages was an attempt to attract more workers, but then his theme park unit voted to reject the contract.

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Designs of a California Impressionist exhibited

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

Advertisements, particularly historical ones, often reflect the desires and concerns of the consumers they were designed for. Their appeal can stay with us too, long after the goods or services they sold are relevant.

The notable 20th-century California plein air artist, Sam Hyde Harris, was said to have drawn a distinction between commercial art, completed for clients, and art he did for himself.

Though widely known as an award-winning California Impressionist, Harris, who passed in 1977, was also responsible for some of the 20th century's most influential commercial designs.

"Sam Hyde Harris, Seeing the Unusual," presented by Casa Romantica Cultural Center and Gardens in San Clemente, focuses primarily on his relatively unknown commercial advertising work.

"Sam Hyde Harris is probably one of the only artists whose work has not been fully rediscovered since the California Impressionists gained critical recognition in the early 1980s," said Casa Romantica Executive Director Amy Behrens. "Winning over 100 awards in his career, this exhibition gives long-deserved attention to Harris."

The exhibition, curated by Maurine St. Gaudens and Joseph Morsman, includes brilliant and iconic designs Harris created from the 1920s to the 1950s for the Santa Fe, Southern Pacific and Union Pacific railroads.

The exhibition includes a rare collection of Gilmore Red Lion Gasoline advertising material.

St. Gaudens points out advertisements were particularly intentional in the past, with far fewer opportunities for them to reach their audience.

"In today's social media world, with our lives bombarded by visual messages in communicating ideas, we have a tendency to forget that in the past the ability to present commercial advertising to the masses was limited," St. Gaudens said. "Although Harris is widely known for the fine art plein air paintings he created during the course of his long career, few people realize the extent of Harris' work in the commercial advertising field."

No doubt, early to mid-20th-century consumers and travelers were influenced by his designs.

"It presents a startlingly fresh context to his life and the lives of many of his contemporaries: how they made their living and how their commercial work settled the West," Behrens said.

More contemporary consumers might recognize his work too, though unknowingly. Harris is responsible for creating the Van de Kamp's Bakery windmill logo.

"Seeing the Unusual" opened on Nov. 19 and is free to the public, although reservations are recommended.



Courtesy of Maurine St. Gaudens Studios

"SAM HYDE HARRIS, Seeing the Unusual" focuses on the California Impressionist's commercial advertising work. He is shown in 1945.

COMMERCIAL advertising for the Southern Pacific Railroad's Sunset Limited line, c. 1950, by Harris.



The show runs through Feb. 27 and entrance to the exhibition is free with admission to Casa Romantica Cultural Center and Gardens. Tickets are \$5 for ages 13 and older and free for active duty military and children under 12.

Casa Romantica plans to host some related events, like an exclusive preview night on Thursday during Casa Romantica's Living History Night.

Guests will be transported to the 1920s and are invited to experience Casa Romantica the way the Hanson family would have in 1927.

Free podcast episodes featuring subjects about plein air painting are also planned and a multiweek painting class in the style of Sam Hyde Harris taught by local San Clemente-based artist and educator, Kelly Gallaher, will be offered.



COMMERCIAL advertising for the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway Company, c. 1930.

For more information about art exhibitions and cultural events at Casa Romantica, visit CasaRomantica.org/Calendar or call (949) 498-2139.

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STATION

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by the property owners deemed the site ineligible for the National Register of Historic Places on the grounds of significant alterations to it, a conclusion at odds with prior evaluations dating back to 1982.

"We didn't want it put on the Register so that we could move the building," said Leason Pomeroy III, co-owner of the property. As part of the Northern Gateway project, Pomeroy envisioned the gas station serving as a "statement building" leading into Old Towne Orange.

Nicholds contends that while Preserve Orange County isn't opposed to moving the gas station, doing so while deeming it ineligible to be listed on the Register would be inappropriate and opens up a process that threatens the diminutive building with irreparable alterations, ones that could truly disqualify it.

"It needs a proper study to support the move," she said. "It needs to follow the correct guideline. Once it's moved, it needs to be oriented in a way that maintains, as best possible, its historic orientation. Those were things that were ignored."

In March, Pomeroy withdrew the Northern Gateway project's application with the city after the Design Review Committee recommended denying the project, but Preserve Orange County pressed onward with its efforts.

Since the gas station isn't within Orange's historic Old Towne or Plaza districts, the only recourse, as the group saw it, laid with the Register.

After teaming up with the Old Towne Preservation Assn., Preserve Orange County raised funds in order to hire a consulting firm to make the official case.

The 32-page application traces the history of the gas station back to two entrepreneurs, Fritz Johan Christiansen, a Danish immigrant, and Carl Emerson Grow.

They established the business at a time when



Scott Smeltzer | Staff Photographer

CONSTRUCTION CREWS use the historic gas station for parking while they work on an adjacent parking garage.

cars became more affordable. By 1929, more than 143,000 gas stations dotted the nation while, according to Department of Energy data, the average cost for a gallon of gas was 21 cents.

Christiansen and Grow bowed out of the business by the 1930s. Another proprietor, Donald Clark, turned the site into a Mobil station from 1952 until a dispute with the oil corporation in 1988 ended operations.

According to the application, the largely intact building is an "exceptionally rare example of a pre-1930s gas station in Southern California." In fact, south of Santa Barbara only eight gas stations from that era remain. Aside from the one in Orange, there are three in O.C., all in coastal cities.

After submitting the paperwork, a state historian recommended the gas station go before the California Historical Resources Commission.

On Oct. 29, the commission unanimously nominated the station for the federal Register alongside other O.C. sites such as St. Isidore Catholic Church in Los Alamitos and Santa Ana's Floral Park Historic District.

But it faces zero prospects of being listed due to the dispute with the property owners over the gas station's eligibility.

"Because the owners objected to formal designation, the Keeper of the National Register actually can't list it," Nicholds said.

Despite that, if the gas station is determined eligible, which the Register can formally do, the site will be added to the state's Register of Historic Places, which would give it enough status under the California Environmental Quality Act to warrant more rigorous reviews of any plans to demolish or move it.

Earlier this year, Pomeroy resubmitted the Northern Gateway project without the gas station as part of its plans. Orange's Planning Commission unanimously recommended it for approval during its Sept. 20 meeting. The project has yet to go before City Council, but Pomeroy is hoping that construction can begin before the end of the year.

For now, the gas station won't be moved anywhere as it stands alone while the rest of the plot is fenced off for construction crews working on an adjacent parking garage. The property owners have leased it for such purposes.

"The owners of the building have said that they have no intentions of demolishing the building," Nicholds said. "We have no reason to believe otherwise. However, we do think it's still threatened."

Pomeroy doesn't see the gas station as endangered, only idle as the lease agreement for the land around it carries through next year.

"It's just going to sit there for now," he said.

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Orange County Boys & Girls Club gets \$1.5-million grant

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

Students who are members of the Boys & Girls Club of Central Orange Coast can get closer to a college career thanks in large part to a \$1.5-million grant from the Pacific Life Foundation in support of the club's College Bound program.

"We are thrilled to be able to expand College Bound's reach and impact with this grant," said Robert Santana, CEO of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Orange Coast. "No matter what background, socioeconomic status or obstacle, every student we serve deserves a first-class mentoring experience and the empowerment to graduate from high school with a plan for the future."

The grant is the largest noncapital campaign gift the Boys & Girls Club of Central Orange Coast, which serves Costa Mesa, Irvine, Newport Beach, Orange and Santa Ana, has ever received.

The investment is part of a five-year partnership between the club and Pacific Life Foundation, which was established in 1984 by Pacific Life Insurance Co. and its affiliates. The funds will be used to scale the College Bound program from its current enrollment of 2,500 students to 4,450 students in the Newport-Mesa, Orange and Santa Ana unified school districts.

The goal is to make sure more teens graduate high school on time and with a financially sustainable plan for higher education.

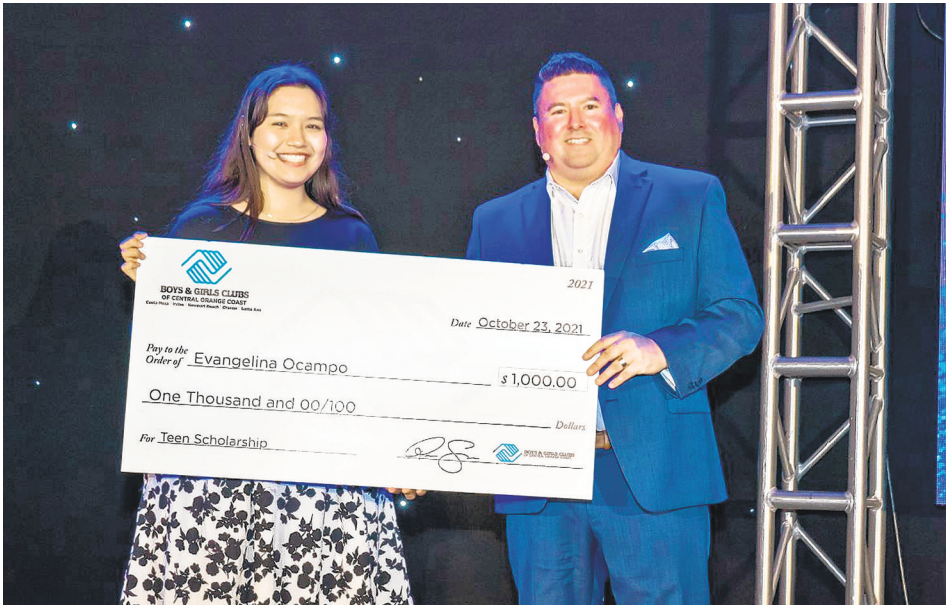
More specifically, \$1 million will be allocated to growing the program, and \$500,000 will go to supporting the College Bound Scholarship Fund which provides scholarships to students in the program as they move on to post-secondary education.

The program primarily targets at-risk Orange County youth, who are vulnerable to higher dropout rates and lack equitable access to resources. About 90% of College Bound stu-



Photos courtesy of Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Orange Coast

COLLEGE BOUND academic advisors meet with program members to provide academic case management through which students receive the individualized guidance and support to create a customized plan for their futures with the Boys & Girls Club of Central Orange Coast.



AT THE 2021 Boys & Girls Club's BE GREAT Gala, College Bound member Evangelina Ocampo is shown with Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Orange Coast CEO Robert Santana.

dents identify as Latino and are first-generation students.

A statement from the Boys & Girls Club pointed out that despite Orange

County's high concentration of wealth, the annual, per-pupil education spend-

ing is significantly lower than state and national averages.

"The College Bound program addresses a critical need in our community. The Pacific Life Foundation's investment will help expand the program, providing equitable access to resources for students as they complete high school and move on to college," said Tennyson Oyler, president of the Pacific Life Foundation.

Besides services for the students, the College Bound program includes workshops and support for parents that address challenges students might face, since many may be the first in their families to pursue higher education.

This partnership with Pacific Life represents the first lead gift toward the Boys & Girls Club's five-year plan to expand services to more

students in the cities they serve.

The partnership will also make it possible for Pacific Life employees to volunteer with the club and take mentorship roles in its programs by reviewing students' scholarship applications, participating in college and career panels and mentor days, helping with workforce development and other community engagement opportunities.

"We're proud to partner with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Orange Coast to help make an impact in these students' lives, and for Pacific Life employees to have the opportunity to contribute in a meaningful way through volunteer and mentorship opportunities," Oyler said.

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Raul Roa | Staff Photographer

ALEX BELTRAN, 47, of Santa Ana was living in a parking lot at El Centro Cultural de México.

CENTER

Continued from page R1

reimbursement with a 4-3 vote. Mayor Vicente Sarmiento and council members Jessie Lopez and Johnathan Hernandez cast the dissenting votes.

Councilwoman Thai Viet Phan said the center was ill-prepared to act as a homeless shelter.

Established by a group of migrant women more than two decades ago, El Centro Cultural de México at 837 N. Ross St. provides a link to important cultural customs for the local Latino community. Community members can learn traditional Mexican instruments, take dance classes and attend community meetings, art shows and exhibitions.

The center also features Radio Santa Ana, which plays a crucial role in advocating for the city's underserved Latino population, covering stories and playing music that wouldn't otherwise grace the airwaves.

"I hadn't heard of El Centro before this entire incident and obviously it has a lot of benefit and does really great things for the community," Phan said. "But that doesn't mean that El Centro didn't violate the municipal code. I'm very frustrated because you were not good neighbors — 170-something complaints in a year means we were getting complaints every

other day from your neighbors."

Lopez said the fee would be "devastating" for a non-profit like El Centro. Hernandez said he is not open to "penalizing a small community nonprofit" and that it has provided important services to children and families.

"I know that their intentions were well, I know that their heart was in the right place," Hernandez said. "The only area where I want to express very clear concern is I wish that they would have been more communicative with me, especially given that their building is in my ward. I'm here at service to you all, on my worst of days."

City staff said during the meeting that the reimbursement fee could turn into a lien on the property, which is owned by El Centro.

Sarmiento made a motion to reexamine the abatement costs and explore whether the city could seek any funds from the county. In February, the county closed its Courtyard shelter, the last walk-in shelter in Orange County. Santa Ana City Manager Kristine Ridge said in a prior interview that the growth of the encampment could "probably partially" be owed to the closure of the shelter. It was once home to 400 homeless people. The county opened its Yale shelter, but it is more restrictive, requiring referrals.

Sarmiento specifically

questioned whether the city could look at the cost to the city attorney's office in the reimbursement fee. The most substantial expenses in the city's bill are \$23,130 for Deputy City Atty. Jose Montoya's time and \$6,728 for the time of 12 Santa Ana police officers. A copy of the city's expenses can be viewed here.

"The county really did close the Courtyard without any notice at that time, and I do think that triggered a lot of problems in addition to this," Sarmiento said. "Maybe this is something that we can also talk about, is how we can maybe try to cost recover from them."

Sarmiento also proposed that the city could replace some of the hours included in the reimbursement fee to construct a fence around the property to prevent the encampment sprouting up again. Staff mentioned during the meeting that homeless people were still being spotted in the El Centro parking lots.

"Because if we continue seeing this problem, we're going to be back here again," Sarmiento said. "This amount ... it'll be \$45,000, it'll be \$50,000. And then it's just a never-ending problem."

Sarmiento's motion failed 3-4, with council members Phan, Phil Bacerra, Nelida Mendoza and David Penaloza casting the dissenting votes.

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MOST PPO INSURANCE PLANS ACCEPTED

Electric City Butcher's chef and CEO talk turkey with an eye on sustainability

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

As the Thanksgiving holiday approaches, you may be asking a lot of questions that involve turkey: to brine or not to brine? How long will it take to thaw? Where does the meat thermometer go?

Electric City Butcher's Chef Michael Puglisi and partner and chief executive Steve Sabicer suggest you also ask where your turkey comes from.

The owners of the sustainable butcher shop, located at 4th Street Market in Downtown Santa Ana, say they are committed to quality, transparency and the responsible sourcing of meat.

"If we are going to use a buzzword to identify who we are and what we do, it is responsible sourcing," Puglisi said. "Everything we do is about our responsibility to the community, the farmers and to ourselves."

Sabicer said that goes beyond certified organic meat.

"Really, organic only looks at the food that the animals are eating and that they are not getting any chemicals that would be unsafe or nonorganic," he said.

Sabicer describes three legs to responsible sourcing: environmental responsibility, social responsibility



CHEF MICHAEL PUGLISI, right, and CEO Steve Sabicer at Electric City Butcher in Downtown Santa Ana's 4th Street Market.

and respect for the animal. "Environmentally responsible farms, in most cases, are not only reducing their carbon footprint, but they are also placing carbon in the soil, they are reversing climate change on their farms," Sabicer said.

Respect for the animals ultimately means humanely raising them, Sabicer said. "That means giving them an environment they are naturally evolved to thrive in," Sabicer said. "That is outdoors, pasture raised,

eating food that they ate before we were domesticating them." Sabicer points out that pasture raised isn't the same as free range. "Free range just means access to open space. People also say 'cage free.' You

can have a free-range organic chicken that never leaves its cage, and that is actually legal. We don't do that. Our animals are out in pasture. And they are regenerating that pasture. "If you look at those pastures before they started us-

ing them and if you look at them now, they are lush green pastures that are now nutrient dense and healthy because that is part of this process."

When roasting your own bird, Puglisi offers this advice:

"Don't rush it. If you rush it, that is how you end up with a dry turkey," Puglisi said.

Puglisi recommends a low and slow method, to ensure the turkey doesn't cook too quickly.

"If you throw it in the oven at 400 degrees and just let it go, you are hitting it with a lot of intense heat, and remember it is cooking from the outside in," Puglisi said.

Puglisi said you can turn the heat up to 425 degrees after the internal temperature of the bird reaches 160 to 165 degrees to get crispy skin. And remember to rest your finished turkey for at least 45 minutes.

"While your turkey is resting, you have free oven space for almost an hour," Puglisi said. "That is when you heat up your sides."

Detailed turkey roasting instruction from ECB can be found at the company's website, electriccitybutcher.com.

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BRACKEN

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needed the services to find them. Bracken looked for a way to bring the food to the people.

"We landed on the idea of a food truck," Bracken said.

He launched his concept in 2013, and today Bracken's Kitchen is a 501(c)(3) organization based in Garden Grove, with two food trucks, dubbed Betsy and Babs, that mobilize food options for the underserved.

But Bracken said his organization does much more. "We were born out of the idea of a food truck bringing food to the people, and that's what we do," he said. "But that really is the smallest part of our feeding."

Bracken's Kitchen works through what Bracken calls its trio of services.

"We have our rescue food program, our community feed program and culinary training program," he said.

The food trucks fall under the community feed program, but Bracken said the majority of the kitchen's work consists of prepared meals supplied to various regional partners for later distribution.

"Everything from shelters to after-school programs for kids and churches that do food distribution," Bracken said.

The labor force for Bracken's Kitchen is made up of

students in the kitchen's culinary training program, which provides work experience and the opportunity for youth and young adults to work alongside professional chefs to learn skills for a career in food service.

"We have two blocks; the first block is mostly food education, food safety, sanitation, product development, ID, all those things," Bracken said. "At the end of the first block they will get into knife skills, and then the second block is fully dedicated to just cooking. The goal is to give them a really good basic foundation."

The culinary training program is tied to the food-truck feeding program and the rescued food program.

"The beauty of what we do is every day the students will be in the kitchen, and every day, what they do in practice and prep will flow right into our food program and feeding people in need," Bracken said. "Every onion they peel, every carrot they cut goes right into feeding people. So our programs work symbiotically together to really support each other."

The rescued food program was born out of what Bracken calls America's food-waste epidemic.

"We have rescued, year to date, 250 tons of food," Bracken said.

Rescued food comes from many places, including leftover food from hotels and restaurants.

Bracken said one of the

kitchen's biggest rescued food donations found its way from Costco.

"We had a phone call with someone who had a few thousand pounds of roast beef to donate," he said. "We had no idea what we were going get, but when the truck finished unloading, we had 10 to 12 pallets of roast beef."

The meat was packed in 2-pound packages for retail and didn't expire for six weeks but was refused at a distribution center because the boxes it came in were damaged.

"That was thousands of pounds of roast beef that would have gone into a landfill if we weren't able to rescue it," Bracken said.

Bracken has many stories of how his work has changed him. He is known for often saying, 'Feeding people isn't the same as nourishing them.' Compassion needs a place at the table too if you want to stay full."

Sometimes it's not easy.

Early on, he had a gig serving food at a local church on Tuesday nights, and there was always food left over.

Afterward, he would drive to Santa Ana's Civic Center and leave the boxed-up food for homeless people living there.

Bracken admits he felt uncomfortable and would drop off the food quickly, eager to get back to his kitchen to wash his hands and sanitize.

"I am embarrassed to say

that, but I tell the story because I think that is the problem with our country, we judge everyone so harshly," Bracken said.

The Tuesday-night drop-off became a routine, and the group at the civic center became more comfortable with Bracken and began to ask for more water or napkins, which he provided while still keeping his distance.

"This just went on for months and months, and I never got close to them. I just jumped back on the truck after," Bracken said.

Then one night as he was turning to leave, he heard a woman say, "Excuse me, Mr. Bill, can I ask for one more thing?"

"I turned around and she was right there, 6 inches away from me, and I said, 'Sure, what do you need?' And she said, 'Can I just get a hug?'"

Bracken was shocked.

"She just grabbed hold of me and hugged and I felt like forever, but maybe she only hugged me for 30 seconds," he said.

Then Bracken noticed there were others lined up behind her.

"I literally hugged everyone of them. I got back in the truck and realized that no amount of sanitizer would clean me from what I just experienced," Bracken said, though it didn't matter at that point.

"I just couldn't leave. Of all the things they needed, they just wanted to know



Courtesy of Bracken's Kitchen

BILL BRACKEN, left, discusses meals that need to get made with trainees at Bracken's Kitchen.

that someone cared about them."

He got back out of the truck and had dinner with the group.

"It was a moment that forever changed me, and I will never forget it," Bracken said.

The team at Bracken Kitchen is always working on ways to give back, and this Thanksgiving they are offering "Everything but the Turkey" kits, which include everything for a Thanksgiving dinner for four, except for the turkey, of course.

The kit includes stuffing, roasted sweet potatoes, a vegetable medley, mashed potatoes, gravy, an apple

cranberry sauce, bread and dessert.

"I don't brag about a whole lot of things, but man, I love making gravy," Bracken said. "And I will put up my Thanksgiving turkey gravy to anybody's in the world."

Kits can be purchased on the Bracken's Kitchen website, brackenskitchen.org/everything-but-the-turkey, and picked up at the kitchen's Garden Grove location with all proceeds directly benefiting its programs.

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PANTRY

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perience is designed to feel more like a grocery store than a typical food bank.

"They feel more empowered to come in to the food pantry to pick the food that they want, as opposed to giving them a bag that we made," Truong said.

Since opening, the pantry has had 2,400 visits, a number Truong said is conservative considering the campus is only at 60% capacity.

"Next semester we'll have 80% of the students back, so the need will be much greater," Truong said.

The pantry has been a longtime goal for the student body, who played a large role in making it possible.

"This is something that has been in the works for multiple years now, we are just the ones that get to see the fruits of the labor from admin way before us," said current Associated Student Inc. President Josh Mitchell.

Although CSUF has offered a monthly mobile food pantry outside the student union in the past, students found the food ran out quickly, and there was a pressing need for a more permanent solution.

ASSOCIATED STUDENTS

Inc. president Josh Mitchell, and board chair Mary Chammas stand inside the food pantry at CSU Fullerton.

Kevin Chang



In the fall of 2019, the Associated Students Inc. board of directors unanimously passed a resolution to establish a permanent food pantry on campus. The 2019-20 Associated Students president and vice president, Aaron Aguilar and Mansi Kalra, ran on the platform of establishing a permanent food pantry.

The pantry space, which formerly housed catering company OC Choice, was made possible by donations from the Kroger Co. Foundation in partnership with Ralphs and the National Assn. of College Auxiliary Services.

"After the resolution passed it was all about finding the location and getting the funding so we are thankful to Kroger for their donation for making this all possible today," Mitchell

said.

Now Mitchell and his colleague, Associated Student Inc. board of directors chair, Mary Chammas, are tasked with getting the word out.

"I am excited that we have this on campus, I think it's long overdue," Chammas said. "We are the last CSU to have it on campus, and I am excited with this year's leadership to sustain it, promote it more, work with other stakeholders on campus and get it to the best it can be."

Both Chammas and Mitchell recognize the effects food insecurity can have on a student's academic career.

"Those who are food insecure have a higher risk of diminishing academic returns," Chammas said.

She also points out that more than half of Cal State

Fullerton's students are nontraditional college students.

"So they are either single parents, they are financially independent, they have full-time jobs and are part-time students and because of COVID, food insecurity has doubled for our college students," Chammas said. "We are here to support our students, and this is just one of the many ways that we do that."

Mitchell agrees the food pantry can help elevate some of the stress nontraditional students carry.

"In a Utopian society, you would want a world where the only thing students have to worry about when they are on campus is what is going to be on their exam in a couple hours," Mitchell said. "You don't want them worrying about housing or food or mental health crises. This is just one step that we are proud of."

The pantry is open Monday through Friday and resembles a grocery store, with shelves lined with dry goods, snack and fresh produce that primarily comes from Second Harvest Food Bank, which makes weekly deliveries.

"We have a lot of staple food items, like canned vegetables, canned beans and

canned meats such as chicken and tuna. We also carry rice, pasta, occasionally we have cereal, oatmeal and lentils," Truong said.

Rather than getting a bag of selected goods or donations, students get a basket and walk through the pantry to select their items just like they would at a grocery store.

"You can tell they love that feeling of it being in a grocery store, they feel a little bit more empowered," Truong said.

The pantry offers milk, eggs and deli meat as well as fresh produce like bananas and apples. A freezer section has frozen vegetables and frozen meat.

"We also have a snack section, which has granola bars, little individual bowls of cereal and peanuts and such," Truong said.

The pantry is open to any enrolled CSU student.

"We have an appointment system online where students sign up and fill out a one-time questionnaire and from there can book appointments every week."

Shopping is done by appointment only, with no more than three shoppers allowed at a time to maintain anonymity for those using the service.

"Some students feel shame about being food insecure," Mitchell said. "And so here they have autonomy and privacy, while still using the services."

Students can take five to 10 items per week, depending on inventory.

"We still check them out to just check inventory, and we bag all their grocery and they go on their way," Truong said. "We also play music to make it feel a little bit more welcoming."

Truong said they still plan to host a mobile food pantry, which will be re-branded as a Pop-up Pantry next semester for students who still don't feel comfortable coming into the food pantry.

"We are going to be giving out food in front of the Titan Student Union on Thursday, just so we can reach more students."

Mitchell said he knows they still have work to do in terms of ending food insecurity for students, but the student body is proud of this progress.

"It is one small step, and I feel like there is a lot of potential for the future," Mitchell said.

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