



Photos by Don Leach | Staff Photographer

A SEGA MASCOT walks through the lobby during the grand opening of Sega of America's North American headquarters in Irvine.

'Gamer's Gateway' scores big

Sega of America opens a new office for its North American headquarters at Irvine's growing Innovation Office Park.

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

Sonic the Hedgehog joined local Sega of America employees on Dec. 7 as they settled into their new digs at Innovation Office Park in Irvine.

"We are here to commemorate the ongoing achievements of our amazing employees, and we look forward to entering a new phase of our business as we continue to evolve our company environment and culture," said Shuji Utsumi, co-chief operating officer of Sega Corp. and chief executive officer of Sega of America, in an address to the team at an opening ceremony on site.

The new 31,700-square-foot office for the company's North American headquarters is home to 235 employees in Sega's publishing departments and also the Atlus Games subsidiary.

Sega of America, Inc. is the American arm of Tokyo, Japan-based Sega Corp., which creates



IAN CURRAN, president of Sega America, **Shuji Utsumi**, CEO of Sega America, and **Irvine Mayor Farrah Khan** cut the ribbon to officially open Sega of America's North American headquarters in Irvine.

interactive entertainment experiences for console, PC, mobile and emerging platforms. Be-

sides Sonic, the franchise includes Yakuza, Virtual Fighter, Super Monkey Ball and

Phantasy Star Online, along

See **Sega**, page A8

A new voice emerges in L.B. politics

Alex Rounaghi was sworn in to the Laguna Beach City Council on Tuesday, nine days after his 25th birthday.

BY ANDREW TURNER

A packed house witnessed the changing of the Laguna Beach City Council at Tuesday's meeting, one that may well have represented the dawning of a new era.

Three council members participated in the swearing-in ceremony for four-year terms, Alex Rounaghi, a 25-year-old lifelong resident among them.

Mayor Bob Whalen, appointed to the position for a fifth term during the meeting, welcomed Rounaghi to the dais.

"When John Kennedy was inaugurated in 1961, he said in his speech, 'The torch has been passed to a new generation,'" Whalen said. "So, I just want to tell you that there's four of us up here that are still around, so the torch hasn't been passed, but the fuse has been lit. We're really excited that you are joining us and will bring a different perspective to us."

Rounaghi, who was elected

See **Politics**, page A8

ALSO FROM THE DAILY PILOT:



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

COTO DE CAZA PARENTS HONOR SON'S MEMORY WITH NEW NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION PAGE A2

EBENEZER SCROOGE RETURNS TO SOUTH COAST REPERTORY PAGE A6

C.M. affordable housing project to house 8 at-risk families

'The Bungalows' features 8 units built through a partnership of nonprofit organizations, elected officials and building industry professionals.

BY SARA CARDINE

As many as 36 individuals in eight families experiencing homelessness are likely to have a home for the holidays, thanks to a new affordable housing project that opened in Costa Mesa this week.

Built on a half-acre property on Pomona Street, "The Bungalows" features six renovated living spaces and two new accessory dwelling units (ADUs), built through a partnership of nonprofit organizations and building industry professionals.

Irvine-based Families Forward,

which provides unhoused residents with assistance and resources designed to eventually get them into permanent homes, purchased the property at 2039 Pomona Ave. for \$2.5 million in February 2021 and set about transforming the site into a small community of residences.

"We're here to help families secure safe and stable housing," Madelynn Hirneise, chief executive of Families Forward, said Thursday in a dedication ceremony. "With the critical shortage of

See **Housing**, page A8



HOMEAID O.C. and Families Forward hosted a dedication ceremony Thursday for "The Bungalows" on Costa Mesa's Pomona Avenue.

Don Leach
Staff Photographer

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Parents honor son's memory with new nonprofit

To continue their son's tradition of giving, Aron and Josette Rofer turned Bradley's Beautiful Bouquets into nonprofit.

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

When Aron and Josette Rofer talk about their son, Bradley, they remember a boy full of life and love.

"Bradley was just an old soul, he had this generous nature about him," said Aron. "He was a kind and giving person. I like to think that is because of us. We've instilled those qualities and values in him and our Jewish faith of *tikkun olam*, which is to heal the world."

Bradley's favorite book was "The Giving Tree," and his parents said he really took the lesson of the story to heart. Bradley understood it is not just the recipient that is blessed but the giver too.

"When Bradley was 6 years old he started Bradley's Beautiful Bouquets, which was a flower business," said Aron.

He sold flowers from his mother's garden for spending money, but even at his young age, he was compelled by a Facebook post about a sick child to donate his earnings instead.

"I was putting Bradley to bed and I had my phone and there was a GoFundMe page for a little boy. He had leukemia and he was 2 years old," Josette said.

Bradley decided he wanted to donate his flower money to the child's fund, and Bradley's Beautiful Bouquets became a charity.

Then in September, Bradley was struck by a truck on his way to school. He sustained major injuries and was taken to Mission Hospital, where he passed away at the age of 8.

"Children's Hospital of Orange County at Mission, they did a wonderful job of taking care of Bradley," said Aron. "He was in the hospital for five days before he passed away and they just treated him like he was their own son."

Bradley died just a few days shy of his ninth birthday.

In an effort to continue Bradley's tradition of giving, the Rofer family officially turned Bradley's Beautiful Bouquets into a nonprofit organization with the help



Photos by Don Leach | Staff Photographer

BRADLEY ROFER is shown in a poster during the Bradley Rofer Foundation Golf Tournament at Coto de Caza Golf Club on Dec. 12.

of the community. A mother of one of the recipients of Bradley's Beautiful Bouquets donations filed the paperwork to make Bradley's flower business an official nonprofit organization.

"She basically filed and filled out all the paperwork for the 501(c)(3) and handed it to us on a silver platter and said: 'Here, make Bradley proud,'" Aron said. "From there we recruited volunteers from the community who wanted to be part of foundation and part of the board of directors."

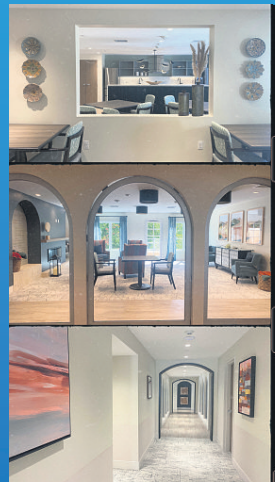
On Dec. 12 the nonprofit held the Bradley Rofer Foundation Golf Tournament at Coto de Caza Golf Club.

"When Bradley passed away,

See **Memory**, page A8



FOUNDERS ARON and Josette Rofer at their charity golf tournament and fundraiser in honor of their son, Bradley.



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THE DAILY COMMUTER PUZZLE

By Jacqueline E. Mathews

ACROSS

- 1 Waiter's hope
- 4 _ from; talk out of
- 9 Ashy residue
- 13 Large spades
- 15 Overact
- 16 Have an awful smell
- 17 Stink
- 18 Turner & Fey
- 19 Having mixed feelings
- 20 Playwright
- 22 Poplar or palm
- 23 Tic _; breath mints
- 24 Common verb
- 26 Once more
- 29 Fatherly
- 34 Anchors a boat
- 35 Ostrich or kangaroo
- 36 George Foreman's defeater
- 37 Weapons
- 38 Monetary penalties
- 39 Related
- 40 Seek damages from
- 41 Tries to lose
- 42 USNA newcomer
- 43 Burns without flame
- 45 Filthy
- 46 Dough for sukiyaki?
- 47 Tennis _; sneaker
- 48 Croquet setting
- 51 Postgraduate degree
- 56 Mountain goat
- 57 Acquired relation
- 58 Specks
- 60 Run off
- 61 Tend the hearth
- 62 "This food looks awful!"
- 63 DiBiase & Cruz

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| 60 | | | | | 61 | | | | | 62 | | | |
| 63 | | | | | 64 | | | | | | 65 | | |

SUDOKU

By The Mephram Group

Complete the grid so each row, column and 3-by-3 box (in bold borders) contains every digit, 1 to 9. For strategies on how to solve Sudoku, visit sudoku.org.uk.

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | | | | | | 9 | | 1 |
| 4 | 2 | | | 3 | 9 | | | |
| | 7 | 6 | | 4 | | | 8 | |
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| 6 | | 8 | | | | 2 | | |
| | | | | 1 | | | | |
| | 3 | | | 2 | | 5 | 1 | |
| | | | | 4 | 5 | | 2 | 3 |
| 2 | | 7 | | | | | | 4 |

For answers to the crossword and Sudoku puzzles, see page A4.

- 64 Had aspirations
- 65 Your
- DOWN**
- 1 Paving substance
- 2 _ Caff Mocha; Starbucks order
- 3 Social equal
- 4 Cut loose
- 5 Gives off, as fumes
- 6 Singer Tennille
- 7 Letters from Greece
- 8 Says in a different way
- 9 Large bird dog
- 10 Fragrance
- 11 Bogeyman
- 12 Tim Daly's sis
- 14 Sonja Henie & Michelle Kwan

- 21 Amherst's state: abbr.
- 25 "The Thin _ Line"; Sean Penn film
- 26 Accumulate
- 27 Public square
- 28 Shakespearean lover
- 29 Half-quarts
- 30 Makes fun of
- 31 In the raw
- 32 Excuse
- 33 Like school paper
- 35 Coffin holder
- 38 Diabolical
- 39 "So soon?"
- 41 Ike's letters
- 42 Destitute
- 44 Wild felines
- 45 Exhibited
- 47 At _; being risked
- 48 Elevate
- 49 Isn't _ to; can't
- 50 Unwanted growth
- 52 "_ bigger and better things!"
- 53 Clippety_
- 54 Make much of
- 55 Engrave
- 59 TV's "Big _"
- Tribune Media Services



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COLUMN | **PATRICE APODACA**

Are we ready for a post-lockdown Christmas?

While shopping at Fashion Island in Newport Beach recently, I passed Santa's Village and did a double take. Santa was alone. He was standing in the doorway, gazing outward. He noticed me noticing him and waved. I waved back. It all felt just a little ... sad. Why did Santa look so forlorn? Where was the line of excited kids? It was a weekday afternoon, but still — not one kid? And that, dear readers, felt like an apt metaphor for this holiday season. After years of pandemic-induced restrictions and loneliness, we're back, baby, and ready to celebrate! But not quite, not really, not like we might imagine. It's as if Christmas itself is suffering from PTSD and trying so hard to get back to normal but isn't quite sure how to make that



happen. Even before the pandemic, Christmas could trigger bouts of anxiety. I have always loved this time of year. The twinkling lights send bursts of endorphins to my brain. I get a kick out of choosing gifts, presiding over all-day bake-a-thons and pulling out my vast, eclectic collection of ornaments. Corny Christmas movies and songs feel like a warm, comforting balm for the soul. Everything glows a bit brighter and snuggles a little tighter. But along with the joy comes a heaping serving of stress. I make lists. My lists have lists. They are four pages long, single spaced, foot-noted, loaded with asterisks and parentheses. When too many items are scratched out I start again. But I keep the old lists because, you know, just in

case. Every event, each invitation, all the gift exchanges are met with equal parts giddy anticipation and slow-burning anxiety. The pressure to do it all and get everything right builds to the point where, as one wise friend recently observed, we try so hard to make Christmas perfect that we risk missing Christmas. I know that others feel it too. Their faces betray them. While roaming the corridors at malls and big-box retailers, in packs or alone, decked out in festive gear or not, many of my fellow shoppers appear slightly unhinged and dazed as they struggle with their own versions of get-it-done-itis. Eggnog lattes go only so far in relieving that syndrome. But in addition to the usual tripwires we en-

See **Christmas**, page A6



James Carbone

TWO-YEAR-OLD EVE and Remi, 5, of Newport Beach visit Santa Claus during the Corona del Mar Christmas Walk on Dec. 4.

CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU ANSWERS

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| F | L | E | E | | | | S | T | O | K | E | | | Y | U | C | K |
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| 3 | 4 | 5 | 2 | 7 | 8 | 1 | 6 | 9 |
| 6 | 1 | 8 | 3 | 9 | 4 | 2 | 7 | 5 |
| 7 | 9 | 2 | 6 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 8 |
| 8 | 3 | 4 | 9 | 2 | 6 | 5 | 1 | 7 |
| 1 | 6 | 9 | 4 | 5 | 7 | 8 | 2 | 3 |
| 2 | 5 | 7 | 1 | 8 | 3 | 6 | 9 | 4 |

MAILBAG

Leadership choices, audience members at H.B. meeting don't bode well for the future

I would like to thank equally esteemed local letter writer Lynn Lorenz for her kind words and always salient observations ("Reasons to worry and celebrate," Daily Pilot Mailbag, Dec. 4) and note that all of the fears of fellow writers Ben Miles and Mike Aguilar expressed in a preceding Mailbag (Nov. 19) were confirmed at the Huntington Beach City Council meeting of Dec. 6 when new City Council members Pat Burns, Casey McKeon, Tony Strickland and Gracey Van Der Mark were installed. Their right-wing supporters in the audience were boorish and uncouth in the same bad manners style of their heroes Tito Ortiz and Donald Trump. The civic insensitivity of this group is the worst in the 20-odd

years I have been attending City Council meetings here. It does not bode well that two new members (Tony Strickland and Gracey Van Der Mark) with no experience in serving on the council, were selected as mayor and mayor pro tem. We will see if their elevation to power improves their judgment or further confirms the dire straits our local government is now in. Now that Erik Peterson is gone, their hero has become City Atty. Michael Gates. It is up to Gates now to show some restraint as a city official to make sure the new council majority doesn't drive us off a fiscal cliff or land us in further hot water with the county or state government. I am not holding my breath. I have seen previous

councils of various political persuasions over the last 20 years build Huntington Beach into the modern, thriving, diverse, and well-run city it has become. I would hate to see it torn down and the progress we have made kicked to the curb by partisan ideological zealots who have little regard for the citizenry they were elected to serve.

Tim Geddes
Huntington Beach

Not a shot from the heart

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Ben Miles
Huntington Beach

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Daily Pilot

MANY WORD processing programs will create an em dash when the user types two hyphens — but the symbol above a hyphen on many keyboards is an underscore.

A look at the em dash, the hyphen and their rarely seen cousin, the en dash

For as long as I can remember, I've been giving this note to my editing clients: "Replace floating hyphen with proper em dash." It comes up when I'm proofreading images, like PDFs, and I see a hyphen with just a space on either side connecting two parts of a sentence — like



this. But it wasn't until very recently someone asked me about the term "floating hyphen." Is that a real thing? Of course it is, I said. Then I googled it and learned that, apparently, I had made the term up. But my point remains true: A hyphen is not an em dash. Nor is it an en dash. Each

of these three punctuation marks has its own special job. Em dashes, often simply called dashes, are sentence punctuation — a way to connect ideas and phrases and clauses. If you don't want to use them, you don't have to. Commas, parentheses and colons can

See **Hyphen**, page A6

N.B. man fulfills goal of riding Santiago Peak

“It felt like making a little boy’s dream come true,” Julian Doyle said of his 27-year-old friend, Spencer Buchanan, after finally skiing down Santiago Peak.

BY ERIC LICAS

Spencer Buchanan had been dragging his friends Julian Doyle and Charlie Beek up the Santa Ana mountains for the past five winters, through rain and bitter cold, in pursuit of an unlikely achievement: a ride through fresh powder down Santiago Peak.

His friends think he’s an idiot for it. But their patience and his perseverance paid off after a storm left just enough snow to dip their skis into last week.

“It felt like making a little boy’s dream come true,” Doyle, 26, said of 27-year-old Buchanan during an interview Thursday.

They and 26-year-old Beek have been skiing their entire lives, even though they live in Newport Beach, which is about 60 miles away from Mt. Baldy and about 100 miles from Big Bear. The three of them often travel to Colorado and the Midwest in the winter, or drive into the San Bernardino Mountains to find snow.

“I’ve just never heard of anyone skiing Saddleback before,” Buchanan said. “All our friends go out to Aspen and Switzerland and stuff, but nobody does it in their backyard. It’s just [for] bragging rights.”

Darryl Lombardi owns OC Snowsports in Costa Mesa, has been selling winter gear since the ’70s, and said he’s never had a customer walk in with plans to go to Saddleback Mountain.

“Maybe in the ’80s?” one of his employees was heard replying in the background of a phone call Wednesday when asked if anyone else had heard of skiers headed to Santiago Peak.

It’s not uncommon for the Santa Ana Mountains to receive a dusting of snow, and a few inches may accumulate on its slopes for brief periods of time, National Weather Service meteorologist James Brotherton said. But they rise to just under 5,700 feet at their tallest elevation, which typically isn’t high enough to form piles of fresh powder. And the range often receives warm winds coming from the south, unlike the San Bernardino Mountains,

which soar to 11,500 feet and are frequently buffeted by cold gusts from the north.

Santiago Peak received about 5 inches of snowfall on Monday, Dec. 12, the day Buchanan, Doyle and Beek trekked to its summit, Brotherton said. The last time it got that much was in February 2019.

The three Orange County skiers camped Sunday at a cabin in the foothills that belonged to a friend who, for obvious reasons, did not join them.

“When we left the night before, all of our dads were like ‘Yeah, you could do that, but why?’” Buchanan said.

Rain and cold temperatures persisted through the night. They only managed to get about an hour of sleep before beginning their expedition at about 6 a.m. Monday.

Low clouds and fog blanketed the mountainside. It was impossible for them to see if there was any snow at the peak from where they began their hike.

“We were just hoping when we set off first thing in the morning,” Buchanan said. “And me being the one who dragged everyone into it, I was like, ‘Oh no. We’re already up here, we’re just gonna go hiking in the rain for hours and nobody is ever going to hang out with me again.’ I just kept saying, ‘Let’s go check around this corner,’ for about five hours.”

Despite his outward show of optimism, Doyle said he and Beek weren’t expecting to find much on their trip. But they wanted to see their friend happy and had gone too far to turn back if they wanted to. Anyway, this wasn’t the first time they’d gone into the Santa Ana mountains to entertain Buchanan’s quirky aspiration.

“We’ve been hiking up in the rain in the middle of the night,” Buchanan said. “And we’re hoping that it’s going to start snowing, and it doesn’t, just keeps raining on us all night. We’ve been sitting there at 5 a.m. like, ‘Ummm, this is the worst thing we could possibly imagine.’”



Courtesy of Spencer Buchanan

NEWPORT BEACH resident Spencer Buchanan hoists his skis at Santiago Peak in the Santa Ana Mountains on Dec. 12. He was joined by friends Julian Doyle and Charlie Beek on the skiing adventure.

But this time, after slogging miles uphill on muddy paths, they reached the top of Santiago Peak and found the mountainside covered with fresh powder. They managed to ski cross-country style for about a mile, occasionally hopping over streams of quickly melting snow and often

dragging their equipment on gravel as they went over thinner patches of white. Their skis were ruined afterward.

“It sucked,” Buchanan said. “I can’t imagine anyone would have fun doing this at all. It was horrible. It was like the worst skiing of my entire life. It was really

stupid, but we did it. We did it!”

Lombardi noted that the three of them likely weren’t the first to ever ski up there.

“I don’t know why we didn’t just go to Big Bear,” Doyle said.

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Scrooge returns to South Coast Repertory

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

The Christmas season is a time for traditions, and among Orange County's most favored is South Coast Repertory's production of "A Christmas Carol."

"A Christmas Carol" resonates deeply with me. It inspires me on a professional level and has become a beacon to me on a personal level," said the theater's artistic director, David Ivers.

This year, the production celebrates its 42nd year of sharing Jerry Patch's adaptation of the Charles Dickens classic, with shows running through Dec. 24.

As holiday curmudgeons go, there are none as well known (with their own catch phrase, no less) as Ebenezer Scrooge, save for maybe the Grinch. In some ways, Scrooge is the father of Christmas. His dynamic of turning over a new holly leaf from "bah humbug" to embracing the true spirit of Christmas is one that can be found in nearly all subsequent Christmas stories that followed.

Dickens published his holiday ghost story in 1843, during a time when Britain was experiencing a resurgence in the celebration of Christmas and

traditions like Christmas trees were being popularized by Queen Victoria. "A Christmas Carol" contains caroling, feasting, gathering with family and of course, the spirit of generosity. It is returned to year after year, with many adaptations on the stage, television and film.

In Patch's adaptation, Ebenezer Scrooge's top hat and red scarf hold significance, and many audience members donned red scarves at a recent matinee performance at South Coast Repertory.

Among the boons of putting on a play annually for over three decades is an experienced cast, for which the production has become its own tradition of sorts. Hisa Takakuwa directs, after serving as assistant director for 14 years and also appearing in the production for 14 more. South Coast Repertory founding member Richard Doyle returns for his second year as Ebenezer Scrooge, bringing with him 37 years of "A Christmas Carol" experience.

"Everyone who saw Richard Doyle take the top hat and scarf and make it his own last year knew they were watching something special. When you combine that with Hisa Takakuwa's knowledge and artistry, an out-



Photos courtesy of Jenny Graham | South Coast Repertory

RICHARD DOYLE and Julia Ner in South Coast Repertory's 2022 production of 'A Christmas Carol,' by Charles Dickens.

standing cast and stellar creative team, you have a truly special holiday experience," said Ivers.

Doyle has played many of the shows characters, including the Ghosts of Christmas Past and Present, Fezziwig, Scrooge's nephew, Fred, and both soliticos.

"This year will be slightly different because this year, I will have an ownership of this amazing role I was charged with creating for the first time last year," Doyle said. "Now, rather than working to make it my own, it will be my story to tell."

Doyle's Scrooge encompasses literature's most miserable miser without being too nasty in the first act and exhibits contagious giddy joy by the last.

Preston Maybank plays Bob Cratchit, Michael Manuel is the ghost of Marley, Richard Soto is the Ghost of Christmas Present, and Jennifer Parsons plays the Ghost of Christmas Past. Melody



RICHARD SOTO and Richard Doyle in South Coast Repertory's 2022 production of "A Christmas Carol," by Charles Dickens, adapted by Jerry Patch.

Butiu is Mrs. Fezziwig, William Francis McGuire is Mr. Fezziwig and Larry Bates is Fred.

Dickens wrote other Christmas stories during his career, but none are

visited as often as "A Christmas Carol." Doyle said the reason South Coast Repertory returns to the story each year goes beyond tradition. "Actors are at heart

storytellers, and as stories go, this is a great one," Doyle said.

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Daily Pilot

A Times Community News publication.

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The Daily Pilot, established
in 1907, is published
Wednesday through
Sunday by Times
Community News, a
division of the Los Angeles
Times. Subscriptions are
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Mildred Hermiller Murphy
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Mildred Murphy passed away at the age of 102. Born in Glandorf, Ohio to Louis and Mary Hermiller, Midge was one of six children. She left Ohio to live in Chicago for several years, before returning to Ohio to complete her Registered Nurse's training at St. Rita's Hospital. She then moved to Santa Monica where she met and married Harold Murphy, an aerospace engineer. They made their home in West Covina, where they raised their children. After Harold died of cancer in 1977, she continued to work as a surgical nurse, and learned to be a keen and proficient investor, a skill she delighted in passing on to her grandchildren. Following her retirement, Midge traveled broadly, always interested in visiting new places and meeting new people. She cultivated friends wherever she went. An avid gardener, cookie baker, and practitioner of varied crafts from quilting to beadwork, Midge's home was always filled with her beautiful creations. She was an active parishioner at Sacred Heart Church in Covina and, after relocating to Newport Beach in 2015, at Our Lady Queen of Angels, where she was especially active in the Rosary Makers Guild. She is survived by her children Patricia (John) Lamb, David (Valerie) Murphy, and Gregory (Chantal) Murphy, and her grandchildren, Stephen, Sarah, Alexandra, Kate, and Olivia. The Funeral Mass for Midge will take place at Our Lady Queen of Angels Church, Newport Beach, on December 19 at 10:30 am. For those who wish, donations may be made in her name to the Our Lady Queen of Angels Pipe Organ Fund.
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CHRISTMAS

Continued from page A4

counter this time of year — dysfunctional family relationships, year-end work requirements, the temptation to overindulge in food and drink, etc. — the world seems to be in a particularly precarious place. Climate change, hate speech, economic woes and global conflicts were darkening our outlooks even before we were plunged into the COVID-19 abyss.

Then the pandemic robbed us of the stress-relieving activities that help get us through difficult times. Even though the restrictions have largely abated, kids are back in school and social activities have resumed, the experience left a mark, and we are far from full recovery.

"Kids atrophied during this," said Dr. Jerry Weichman a clinical psychologist and adolescent health specialist at Hoag Hospital's Pickup Family Neurosci-

ences Institute in Newport Beach. "Parents never got a break. There hasn't been a break for anybody."

Weichman observes the damage manifesting in high levels of apathy, impaired social skills, missing smiles and eye contact, sleep deficits and overthinking. He is particularly worried about this year's high school seniors, who started ninth grade in lockdown and still haven't recovered, emotionally or academically.

"My concern is we're going to start seeing surging depression, drug abuse and suicide attempts," he said.

Therapist Prerna Rao, clinical manager of the ASPIRE teen mental health program at Hoag, also sees spiking social anxiety and depression.

"I hate to sound like a Debbie Downer," she said, "but we're going to see the effects of the pandemic for the next five to 10 years with mental health."

Now that we're in the holiday season, she said,

"people are trying to make up for lost time. That sets us up to have unrealistic expectations, which can lead to depression and guilt."

Weichman and Rao both recommend managing expectations and focusing on being in the moment.

"Stuff occurs outside us that we can't control," Weichman said. "But we sure can control how we respond."

They also advise clients to engage in self-care. Daily exercise, sufficient sleep, healthy eating and a focus on gratitude and giving are all proven stress relievers.

Also, said Rao, "be gentle and kind to yourself. Make time for things that are important to you."

As for me, I knew what I needed to do: I went to see Santa again.

This time I visited on a weekend afternoon, and the experience could not have been more different. About 30 or 40 people stood in line outside Santa's Village.

Patient parents, babies in

strollers, children jumping and twirling about, and some adorable puppies — all were waiting to see the big guy. There was an abundance of velvet and sparkles, red and green tulle skirts and cheerful Christmas sweaters. I watched as Santa bounced a squirming toddler on his knees while the camera lens clicked open and shut, open and shut.

It was a magical, picture-postcard scene.

Was it real? Or was everyone masking an underlying reservoir of anxiety?

Probably some of both. As Weichman said, after all we've been through it's OK to engage in a little fake-it-till-you-make-it. Some genuine holiday spirit might follow.

Thank Christmas, it worked for me.

PATRICE APODACA is a former Los Angeles Times staff writer and is coauthor of "A Boy Named Courage: A Surgeon's Memoir of Apartheid." She lives in Newport Beach.

HYPHEN

Continued from page A4

usually get your point across in any spot where you might use a dash.

But if your sentence already has enough commas or if you want to create visual emphasis — like this — you can use em dashes to signal a change in sentence structure or thought. Or you can use em dashes to set off parenthetical thoughts — and who doesn't love those? — in a sentence. They can also set off lists of items — names, places, things — mid-sentence or at the end. You can even use em dashes for dialogue, datelines or taglines or to show that speech was cut off mid-sentence.

Personally, I consider it a mistake to use an em dash between complete clauses

— this sentence is an example. A period or possibly a semicolon would be better. But not everyone agrees with me.

News publications usually put a space on either side of an em dash — making it sort of float. Book and magazine publishing usually omit the spaces—their dashes touch the word on either side. Both are correct.

To make an em dash on a Mac computer, you type the hyphen key while holding down the shift and option keys. On a PC with a number pad, you can type the minus key while holding down the control and alt keys. In many word processing programs, you can just type two hyphens then the space bar and auto correct will make an em dash for you. All these systems offer other ways to make em dashes, too.

Unlike em dashes, hyphens are not sentence punctuation. They're word builders. They connect words with other words, numbers, prefixes and suffixes to create terms like "forward-looking" or "pre-1950" or "full-time" or "e-reader." You can use them to build your own multiword adjectives, as in a "true-crime obsession." Some terms already contain hyphens in their proper spelling, which you can find in a dictionary, as in "good-looking" and "jack-of-all-trades."

En dashes, which work more like hyphens than like em dashes, are rare. In most newswriting, they don't exist at all. Old-school newswires couldn't transmit them properly and so en dashes never became part of news editing style.

Book and magazine publishing will use an en

dash, which is longer than a hyphen but shorter than an em dash, as a sort of uber hyphen. For example, they can connect two terms that already have hyphens in them, like in a semi-private-semi-public entity. They're also used in place of hyphens to connect numbers with words or prefixes, like pre-1800, and for ranges and sports scores, like "the Dolphins won 10-7." But a hyphen can do all these jobs nicely if you're not working in an en dash world. To make an en dash on a Mac, hold down the option key then press the hyphen key. On a PC, hold down control and press the minus sign on a number pad.

JUNE CASAGRANDE is the author of "The Best Punctuation Book, Period." She can be reached at JuneTCN@aol.com.

Student recognized nationally in classical music

Aja Zou is one of four finalists selected by a nonprofit that highlights emerging high school artists.

BY LILLY NGUYEN

Aja Zou means it when she says practice makes perfect.

Zou, 16, was recently named one of four finalists recognized nationally in classical music by YoungArts, a nonprofit that focuses on highlighting emerging high school artists. Winners are spread across 10 different artistic disciplines and are determined by a panel of specialists in those fields and are given the opportunity to attend “National YoungArts Week” in Miami in January.

“Every year we are inspired anew by the talent, dedication and creativity of extraordinary early career artists,” YoungArts Artistic Director Lauren Snelling said in a statement.

“YoungArts is proud to support artists at critical junctures throughout their lives, and we look forward to providing community and professional and creative development opportunities that will empower the 2023 award winners as they embark on exciting careers in the arts.

“Now more than ever, it is essential to support artists so that their voices can be heard long into the future.”

Zou said she’s been playing the piano since she was 6 and practices for an hour every day, meeting goals she sets for herself after she finishes class at Sage Hill. Her favorite genres are classical and romantic with her favorite composers being Beethoven and Liszt. She said her interest in music came from her mother.

“When I was very young, my mom used to have these CDs with classical piano music in the car. She would play it every day



AJA ZOU, 16, a Sage Hill School junior, has been named a 2023 YoungArts finalist in classical music. She has been recognized for her artistic achievement, joining an accomplished group of four young pianists to receive the organization's highest honor this year.

Kevin Chang | Staff Photographer

when she was driving me to school or picking me up. She kept on playing it and I was able to hum the entire 40 minutes of [Beethoven's] Sonata No. 29, Op. 106,” Zou said. “My mom was like, ‘You really have musicianship.’ So, she signed me up for classes to see if I would enjoy it and, of course, I fell in love with the piano and continued playing.”

Zou said she heard about the YoungArts competition from her peers in school last year. She’d participated in other competitions before and thought that if she won it would greatly expand her opportunities to pursue a future career in

“The feelings just rushed into my body. It was the happiest I’ve ever felt and during that moment ...”

Aja Zou

on being named one of four finalists recognized nationally in classical music by YoungArts

music.

“I applied thinking I would get maybe merit or honor roll mention, but this is a really great opportunity,” said Zou.

She submitted a video audition in the summer and got the call about the decision last month while she was in her Spanish class.

“I was playing Kahoot,” Zou said, laughing. “So, I was on my phone. Suddenly, I got a call from

Miami and it said ‘YoungArts,’ and I thought the decisions came out in December. I thought they had a question about my application ... I asked [my teacher], ‘Can I pick up this important call? It could be life-changing.’ I picked it up and they went, ‘Congratulations.’

“The feelings just rushed into my body. It was the happiest I’ve ever felt and during that moment, I was thinking, ‘Oh my god. I’m

going to YoungArts Week’ and ... I was kind of questioning it. This is one of those times where my music has been appreciated so much. There were 7,000 applicants, and I didn’t even think the judges would watch the whole video and come to that decision that I was a finalist.”

Zou said she plans on pursuing music alongside a science or math major in college and encourages

other young musicians and artists to persevere and chase after their art.

She noted she had to stop playing piano for two years after breaking her elbow playing lacrosse but that she eventually practiced her way back up to her standard level.

“You’ll never expect the different perspectives [of the] people [who] view your art. Your art could be loved by professionals, but sometimes could be criticized. Art is never perfect, but make your best, and good things will always follow through,” said Zou.

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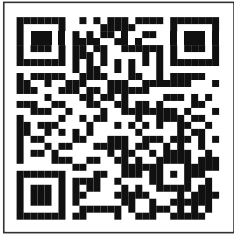
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SEGA

Continued from page A1

with Atlus' Persona and Shin Megami Tensei series.

Innovation Office Park is a new Irvine Co. office property meant to foster creativity and collaboration through its open-air office village design. It is located along the Irvine business corridor dubbed "Gamer's Gateway."

"Irvine has an amazing concentration of STEM talent, and I think gaming is one of those concentrations in particular that Innovation [Office] Park was really built for, trying to attract and retain the best talent," said Jonathan Brinsden, president of Irvine Co. Office Properties. "We are super excited about Sega as a leading gaming company kicking off their brand-new space here."

Innovation Office Park's campus makes up 1.1 million square feet across 73 acres and is being built in four phases, with phase two recently completed.

"The sense of place and the pedestrian connection is really important," said Brinsden. "You are not just standing in a sea of cars."

Central pedestrian pathlines are intended to draw employees to the roll-up doors that open to fresh air or the park's many amenities. An indoor/outdoor cafe with rotating cuisine and walk-up artisan coffee bar are available, as well as a private fitness center with a spin/yoga studio.

The space also includes a tech-enabled conference center and event space and an event-ready outdoor pavilion, where Sega's opening ceremony took place. The company's new home is intended to not only be a place for the team to grow but also to come together.

"We have been expanding greatly over the last six or seven years, we have seen real accelerated growth in the gaming business and we have outgrown our old office," said Ian Curran, the president and chief operating officer at Sega of America. "Everyone has been working from home for the past two years, and we wanted to bring everybody



Photos by Don Leach | Staff Photographer

A MURAL of Sega's cast of characters in an employee game room at the new Sega of America's North American headquarters in Irvine.

back and have a space that is going to be welcoming and safe for people to come back to and will prove to be a good collaborative space."

Utsumi shared similar hopes for Sega of America and its new home.

"Since the company's founding in 1960, Sega has harbored the spirit of quality, fun and ingenuity in all our works," said Utsumi. "This new space helps to foster a genial and team-oriented culture to reinforce that purpose and create new stories and worlds that will entertain gamers for generations."

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SEGA VIDEO GAMES at Sega of America's North American headquarters in Irvine.

HOUSING

Continued from page A1

housing, this may seem like a drop in the bucket. But I'm here to tell you, every drop counts."

To get "The Bungalows" built, Families Forward partnered with HomeAid Orange County, a Tustin nonprofit that coordinates with building professionals willing to offer materials discounts, labor and in-kind donations to reduce the costs of building projects for those at risk of homelessness.

Under the lead of a "builder captain" (in this case Irvine's W.L. Butler Construction), a team of roofers, electrical workers, interior designers and manufacturers collaborated to rehabilitate the '50s-era structures, constructing two new dwellings and a small community gathering space.

"The only way to build a future without homelessness is to build houses, and the only way we can provide homes for our unhoused is to do what we do," said HomeAid Orange County Executive Director Gina Cunningham.

The combined efforts of the companies, organizations, individuals and elected officials who either worked on the site or helped make it happen through donations and funding, were celebrated at Thursday's dedication event, which included tours of the new homes.

Units include two-bedroom configurations, ADUs with lofts where children might sleep as well as a three-bedroom unit that can house up to seven and features two garages.

Occupants are selected through an application process, with preference given to those with residential, professional or educational ties to Costa Mesa currently experiencing homelessness, living in a shelter or in temporary accommodations.

A total of 83 families signed up for spaces in "The Bungalows" in the first 24 hours, according to Hirneise. Most of those chosen were families with a single head of household, primarily women.

"These units are for our most vulnerable families, helping them



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

A LIVING ROOM with new furnishings in one of eight new units at "The Bungalows" affordable housing project in Costa Mesa.

get access to the resources when they need it most," she said.

Erika Lopez, who was able to move into another Families Forward property on Costa Mesa's 21st Street in 2018, said the opportunity to live in a stable environment changed the trajectory of her and her sons' lives.

Speaking Thursday, she shared how she was experiencing homelessness and domestic violence when she sought assistance from Irvine nonprofit Human Options. Through that organization, she learned of Families Forward and moved into stable housing.

"It wasn't easy, but with the resources Families Forward gives us, it makes it a lot easier if you really want it," she said. "Now, [my sons] are very proud of their mama. Money cannot buy the joy of seeing in their faces what you can do with a little bit of help."

Under the living arrangement, residents of "The Bungalows" will pay an affordable monthly rent, ranging from about \$1,150 to \$1,350 per month, while receiving ongoing assistance, education and services designed to help them regain financial self-sufficiency.

For example, one incentive program offers rent reductions for residents who meet certain financial benchmarks that allows them to "bank" those savings or reduce

debt, while another includes savings matches.

Hirneise said while most families in affordable housing programs live on a site for about six years, she hopes to cut that time in half as families transition from "The Bungalows" into permanent housing, making room for new occupants.

With in-kind donations reducing costs by more than \$500,000, the total cost of the project pencils out to around \$4 million — about 40% higher than what was initially budgeted.

To help bridge the gap, the Costa Mesa City Council in November granted \$975,000 in federal American Rescue Plan Act funding to Families Forward to complete the work.

Mayor John Stephens on Thursday called the collective effort of housing 36 residents "Herculean" but said more needs to be done.

"We have 30 people waiting right now to get into our homeless shelter. We have people who are underhoused ... who are living in difficult circumstances. How are we going to solve that problem?" he posed. "This is a start. This is what we need to be doing together."

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for Dec. 19, but the raffle and live auction went on as planned.

The Rofer's hope the organization will encourage other kids to be like Bradley.

"A big portion of the foundation for us is kids helping kids," said Aron. "We want to be able to inspire other children to start their own businesses or other fundraising efforts so they can raise money for our foundation."

"It is really about teaching the kids in the community to give," Josette said. "It doesn't matter if you are 5 years old or 10 years old."

The Rofer's say working to create something good out of their loss is one way the family is staying strong.

"It helps us get through the days. It keeps us busy and gives us a purpose," said Aron.

"And it is something we are working on as a family," said Josette. "To work together with something positive for Bradley, on Bradley's behalf, gives us a lot of strength."

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Don Leach | Staff Photographer

FAMILY SURROUNDS newly sworn-in Councilman Alex Rounaghi, 25, as he is presented with a certificate during the Laguna Beach City Council meeting Tuesday. Three generations of his family live in town.

POLITICS

Continued from page A1

along with Mark Orgill and now Mayor Pro Tem Sue Kempf, received the most votes among seven candidates running for the City Council.

He had added his name to the race at the deadline to pull papers. His election may result in the addition of new voices to the discussion with respect to city matters.

"I don't like ageism at all," Rounaghi said. "I think all of us from different ages have different perspectives, and we can make really good decisions when we're working together and kind of bringing those different perspectives to the table and coming up with solutions. I do hope that we get more people engaged at all ages in the civic process in Laguna Beach. ...

"It's important that people are engaged and involved. One of the things that I'm excited about is I was appointed by the council to the Leadership Laguna subcommittee, along with Sue Kempf, and so I'm really excited about bringing that program back, hopefully early next year, to get to expose more people of all ages across the city to how city government works."

Rounaghi, who has promised to prioritize public safety, the environment, affordable housing and data-driven government, said the incorporation of Zoom has made public comment participation more accessible.

A career in public service had often been on the mind of Rounaghi, he said, but the idea gained merit in high school, when he got involved in Model United Nations and served as a page for Sen. Dianne Feinstein.

Rounaghi graduated from Dartmouth College in 2020 with

bachelor's degrees in government and history. The coronavirus pandemic saw him return home.

Since doing so, he has become the vice president of the Laguna Beach Democratic Club, the chair of the city's housing and human services committee, and he has been working as a policy adviser for Orange County Supervisor Katrina Foley.

Foley, his proud mentor, congratulated Rounaghi after he was sworn in as the youngest council member ever to serve in Laguna Beach.

"I will tell you that he has a depth of knowledge that is well beyond his years," Foley said before presenting the three council members elected this cycle with certificates. "You all are really privileged to have his thoughtful consideration, and I'm just really proud of you, Alex. I really am."

Three generations of Rounaghi's family live in the small town. He waxed nostalgic with the audience when sharing the story of how his grandmother had decided to reside in the coastal community upon seeing the ocean from Crown Valley Parkway.

"I feel lucky to grow up in a place like Laguna Beach," Rounaghi said. "There's no place that rivals it in terms of our natural beauty, whether it's the ocean, which is our blue belt, or [the] green belt, our open space and hiking trails and all of that. I'm just really honored to be elected to serve this community that I love so much. I feel [it's] an honor to represent it well and keep what makes Laguna unique in place and also address some of the big challenges that we're facing."

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MEMORY

Continued from page A2

we wanted to honor his legacy and continue doing the work that he was doing while he was alive," Aron said. "The golf tournament is a great way to raise money to do that and raise awareness. We are going to be doing a lot of community events as well and we are going to be selling flowers similar to what Bradley was doing."

The golf portion of the event was rained out and rescheduled