

Daily Pilot & Times OC

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Model aircraft may be grounded

Harbor Soaring Society's use of Costa Mesa's Fairview Park, where some protected species live, may end unless City Council grants reprieve.

BY SARA CARDINE

For nearly 60 years, hobbyists have flown model gliders and motorized planes over the grasslands of Costa Mesa's Fairview Park, a recreation that has attracted generations of retirees and would-be engineers collectively assembled as the Harbor Soaring Society.

The site where they launch remote-control aircraft on the west end of the property was shuttered during the pandemic, but when COVID-19 guidelines allowed for the reopening of parks, no provisions were made for the resumption of flying.

Costa Mesa officials have been trying to determine whether and how such activity potentially impacts rare native plants and protected birds known to nest, winter and forage in Fairview's vernal pools, the last such ecosystem of its kind in Orange County.

Dry throughout most of the year the

See *Aircraft*, page A2



Scott Smeltzer | Staff Photographer

CHRISTINA BRODY-CHAPE, the owner of Christina's Confections, shows off a cookie with her logo printed in edible ink while standing in her Seal Beach home kitchen. By 2021 Christina Brody-Chafe found herself taking orders from well outside of Seal Beach.

Nursing a new baking career

BY ERIC LICAS

Seal Beach resident Christina Brody-Chafe loves being a nurse. But she had to spend more time at home after her husband, retired paramedic Steve Chafe, was diagnosed with

a brain tumor in November 2018.

Her mother died the day her husband came home from surgery. Her father died about two weeks later.

When COVID-19 cases started breaking out in California in 2020, she had to go on hiatus from her chosen profession

to avoid inadvertently spreading the virus to her family.

"I worked in the ER at St. Mary's. I worked at the ER in [Los Alamitos]. I saw nurses dying, and we didn't know

See *Nursing*, page A8

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Models used for illustrative purposes.

Cancer fighters urge others to get back in their boat

BY ANDREW TURNER

A cancer diagnosis is not something people are prepared to hear, but when Jack Marshall Shimko learned that he would have a second battle in August, he knew he was done letting the disease put him on the sidelines.

Shimko, the founder and director of the We Are Ocean cancer program at Newport Aquatic Center, has made it his mission to help those fighting cancer live life to the fullest by taking them on adventures and challenging them.

The latest endeavor will see a group of cancer fighters — Team We Are Ocean — enter the Puakea Designs Wild Buffalo Relay on Sunday, April 2. It will involve a 32-mile paddling race in an outrigger canoe, crossing the channel from Catalina Island to Newport Beach.

"I'm done letting this disease take over my life, and [that of] a bunch of people that are super close to me," said Shimko, who



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

WE ARE OCEAN paddlers Kelly Schwartz, JoJo Toepfner, Elaine Kaspar, Laura Ricker, Claire Kennedy, Sheila Conover Doyle and Jack Marshall Shimko and Newport Aquatic Center executive director Billy Whitford.

was first diagnosed in 2009 and is currently fighting chronic lymphocytic leukemia. "I'm done with it, and I just want to fight back the best way I can. The best

way that I can is I run this rad program that takes cancer patients and survivors on ocean adventures and [to] support camps. "I also want to show people

that cancer isn't going to take us out from entering a 32-mile, open-ocean, channel-crossing race with 235 elite paddlers. We will come in dead last, but we will have the biggest smiles on our faces."

Team We Are Ocean will be paddling out with members of Operation OpenWater, a Huntington Beach-based nonprofit that similarly focuses on enriching the lives of those who have served in the military and as first responders through adventures on the water.

Shimko said there will be paramedics on support boats, and members of Team OpenWater will be jumping in the six-man canoe at different times to help them complete the crossing.

We Are Ocean is looking to raise approximately \$30,000 to send 18 individuals to a cancer support camp. The camp is available to those between the ages of 15 to 39. About \$18,000 has been raised so far, Shimko shared.

"There are 18 participants and 12 staff," Shimko said of the camps. "We spend a week out on [Catalina] Island, and the number one thing that's most important is that they're able to connect with other people that have gone through similar things."

"We take them stand-up paddling, we take them outrigger canoeing, we go diving, we go fishing, we go snorkeling, we go ziplining, but the number one thing that I've seen in these camps and that connects for these people to stay in contact for the rest of their lives is when they're sharing in the bonfire the deepest, darkest, scariest moments of their life and everyone understands it."

Kelly Schwartz, a manager for Newport Aquatic Center and the race director for the Puakea Designs Wild Buffalo Relay, said a raffle has helped support causes in the past, and she wanted We Are Ocean to be the benefactor

See *Cancer*, page A2

Birria, done that: the ingredient filling tacos in Santa Ana

BY EDWIN GOEI

Walk into any Santa Ana taqueria worth its salsa and you'll inevitably find one meat touted over the rest: birria. For the past couple of years, birria has become one of the most sought-after proteins for tacos, perhaps more than al pastor, that ruddy spicy pork option which is carved shawarma-style from a vertical cone of meat called a trompo.

Birria comes from a decidedly less sexy preparation method. It's typically cooked in a pot wherein the meat is slow simmered for hours with an amalgamation of chiles and spices.

When it's ready, this stew seeds as many dishes as there are long-guarded birria family recipes. You could slurp it straight out of a bowl, with the meat falling apart

and ladled with the intense cooking liquid called "consomé." But if you've encountered birria already, you probably had it as quesabirria taco, where the chopped meat is stuffed with cheese into a tortilla that's been pan-fried and stained red with the crimson grease skimmed off the top of the stew. And if you've had your taco at a place that specifically distinguishes itself as a birrieria, it will be served with a side cup of consomé to use as you would *au jus* for a French dip sandwich.

Even Disney got into the action when it introduced its own quesabirria taco last year, which has become so popular at Cucina Cucamonga — the Mexican eatery at Disney's California Adventure — the park imposed a rule



See *Birria*, page A8

THE MULITA at Papi Tacos & Churros at 2603 S. Main St. in Santa Ana. Food writer Edwin Goei investigates the popularity of birria at taco shops.

Edwin Goei

An immigrant artist dares to dream

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

When Adriana Martinez moved from Colima, Mexico, to the United States at the age of 1, she and her family were undocumented.

"Everything that I have known is being in the United States. But it was very tough growing up being undocumented because it was something that you couldn't share," said Martinez. "It is actually difficult to share it now."

Martinez moved around as a child, living in Los Angeles, the Inland Empire and Orange County, where she attended middle school and high school. The multimedia artist, muralist, educator and community art advocate is currently protected under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals immigration policy also known as the Dream Act.

"I am protected under DACA and it has given me a lot of opportunities to go to school," said Martinez. "But they are trying to get rid of it all the time, as if our lives and our dreams and what we are doing out here in our communities is nothing. That is a constant battle."

Martinez said her immigration story is full of complexities. She lived with a fear of separation from her family and felt targeted as a person of color.

But in spite of its immigration status, Martinez said her family was able to build a life full of happy memories, like eating birthday cake, spending weekends at Griffith Park and visiting Southern California amusement parks.

"As an undocumented



Photos by Scott Smeltzer | Staff Photographer

ADRIANA MARTINEZ, a multimedia artist, muralist, educator and community art advocate, observes pieces from "Dreamer," an exhibit of her works opening April 1 at the Grand Central Art Center in Santa Ana.

person, we can get really stuck in survival mode," Martinez said. "It is about celebrating our lives and all the struggles that have gone into us being able to live out our dreams."

Family photos of such memories are the basis of Martinez's exhibition at Santa Ana's Grand Central Art Center, "Dreamer."

"This is my immigration story," said Martinez, "re-telling it through family photographs."

In the exhibition, which opens on April 1 during First Saturday Art Walk from 7 to 10 p.m., Martinez tells her story through a series of watercolor recre-

ations of the photos, designed to encourage viewers to reflect on their own familial backgrounds and stories.

The actual photos that inspired the show are fanned out on a white table in the gallery, grounding the show to Martinez. But the unfinished nature of the watercolor paintings, with recognizable landmarks only partly filled in and faces that are blank, challenges viewers to see themselves in the work.

"These are photos of my family, but they are painted in a manner that invites the viewer to finish the painting off with their imagination



FAMILY PHOTOS are the basis of Martinez's exhibition.

or also insert themselves in these common experiences," said Martinez, "like going to Universal Studios, going to Disneyland, having a birthday party, having a picnic at Griffith Park." The colors that bled so

seamlessly into each other in the paintings give them a dreamlike quality, and the scenes have just enough familiarity to conjure feelings of déjà vu.

"In telling my story, I am also telling everybody's

story and talking about dreaming and what does that look like ... fulfilling our purpose as people, as individuals. It is humanizing our experiences."

Dreams Martinez has achieved include earning her bachelor's degree in studio art from Cal State Fullerton and receiving her teaching credential from Cal State Long Beach this year.

As an artist and Dreamer, Martinez also feels a responsibility to give back.

In 2018, Martinez established Sketchbook Club, promoting creativity through sketchbooks, and she secured a 2020 Santa Ana Art and Culture grant to continue the work of providing accessibility to creative process and free art materials.

"I feel like being a dreamer is about paying it forward. How are you empowering others? Not everybody has the opportunity to follow their dreams," said Martinez. "I think about the people in cages, I think about the families being separated, I think about this tension between America and Mexico. It can weigh very heavy."

Today, Martinez is the last of her family to be undocumented, and through art she has found a means to share that complex struggle in a way she never could growing up.

"For me as an artist, making these paintings doesn't seem like much ... I am not a doctor or anything, but I am here to be a reflection, a mirror and to empower my community," said Martinez.

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Models used for illustrative purposes.

AIRCRAFT

Continued from page A1

pools, when replete with rainwater, produce endangered fairy shrimp, a valuable part of a food chain topped by raptors like the white-tailed kite, northern harrier and burrowing owl.

An updated master plan for the 200-acre park — which would direct preservation efforts in concert with multiple state and federal regulatory agencies and define activities as compatible or incompatible with those goals — has been on the drafting table for years.

HSS members have meanwhile pleaded their case before the Fairview Park Steering Committee, the Parks Commission and the City Council itself. Desiring to fly once more, the group has made concessions, proposing rules that would restrict flight times, require membership and regulate allowable crafts.

In September 2021, the City Council voted 5-2 to consider sanctioning the flying of non-mechanical gliders, while city staff looked for alternate locations in Fairview, or other city lands, that could accommodate the hobbyists.

But it's not looking good. Last week, claiming not to have found a feasible workaround, staff sought direction from the Costa Mesa City Council on whether to permanently close Fairview's model aircraft flying field as an activity incompatible with the park's environmental resources.

"Wildlife agencies communicated model flying activities should not be performed in or over sensitive resources, specifically including vernal pools, coastal sage scrub, riparian habitat and native habitats



A FLYING FIELD used by the Harbor Soaring Society to launch model aircraft has been closed since the pandemic. City officials are deciding whether to allow limited uses to return or permanently prohibit flying.

Scott Smeltzer
Staff Photographer

that are considered sensitive on the mesa," parks director Jason Minter told council members Tuesday.

Fairview Park Administrator Kelly Dalton described how the vernal pools, restored in the '90s with grant funding, contain a unique geochemistry highly sensitive to disruption and degradation. He cited archival reports of previous disturbances caused by model aircraft.

"There were actually multiple incidents of crashes into, in some cases, other operators and near other aircraft operating in the vicinity, occasional fires resulting from those crashes in the brush [and] a relatively frequent observation of unpermitted retrieval in closed off or fenced off areas," he said.

Some residents speaking during public comments at the meeting pointed out the current park master plan, written in 1998, identified silent gliders as a compatible and passive use of the park. Cassius Rutherford, a city parks commissioner, said there was no record of correspondence from state or federal wildlife agencies that called out gliders as a threat.

"I think there's an opportunity for the city to find a path forward for compliance with silent gliders," he said. "That would be a more prudent recommendation to explore, versus immediately shutting down the field."

Model enthusiast Richard Morely maintained most HSS members are retired engineers and veterans who cause little harm to the land.

"We didn't go up there to kill birds and step on shrimp, we went to talk, fly and spend our mornings," he said. "We hardly have any other enjoyment in life anymore — we've paid our taxes, we've served our country, and [yet] we keep getting kicked in the teeth."

Many commenters shared how the Harbor Soaring Society, particularly its volunteer efforts with local students and engineering classes, provided a valuable benefit to the community.

Others, however, took a different view, citing the more recent discovery of Fairview Park as an ecological resource as a mandate to protect the land.

"The land at Fairview Park has changed," said Steering Committee Chair

Andy Campbell, pointing out the vernal pool area in the 1970s was a construction dumping ground. "The park has transitioned. The vernal pools were restored, and the city's looking at restoration activities in the park."

"There's grant money at stake," he continued. "And if there's fly field activity that puts the natural resources at stake, I don't believe that grant money is going to be forthcoming."

City Manager Lori Ann Farrell Harrison confirmed the city has received millions for mitigation efforts and received word in 2019 from the Department of Fish and Wildlife flying was an incompatible use at Fairview and should be scaled back.

Ultimately, the council voted 7-0 to continue the item to its April 18 meeting so members could more deeply explore documentation and correspondence.

"It feels irresponsible to make an impactful decision on that without following up on some of that homework," said Councilwoman Arlis Reynolds, who made the motion.

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Don Leach | Staff Photographer

WE ARE OCEAN paddlers will compete in the Puakea Designs Wild Buffalo Relay on Sunday, April 2.

CANCER

Continued from page A1

this year. An outrigger canoe will be raffled off, she said.

"We would still pick them even if they didn't put together a team," Schwartz said. "The fact that they wanted to put together a cancer team and do that was just pretty rad."

Schwartz added that the race starting point is moving from Two Harbors to Avalon, making it about 8 miles shorter.

Claireliese Kennedy, 27, in remission for her battle with Stage 4 Hodgkins lymphoma, will be one of the We Are Ocean team members. Formerly a rower at Orange Coast College, Kennedy said she just earned a degree in political science and international affairs from UC Riverside.

Kennedy, who started a support group called Lymphoma Ladies when she finished chemotherapy in August, said she's embracing the opportunities in front of her, including the upcoming race.

"It almost was taken from me, this life, and I just want to live all of it," she said. "Every single thing I can, I

want to feel it, I want to do it, and that's a beautiful thing that I took away from this really difficult experience."

Danny Nichols, co-founder for Operation OpenWater, said the organization's relationship with We Are Ocean started last year. Training sessions for the race have formed an instant bond, and he has noticed synergy between the groups.

"You have no control when you're in the ocean," Nichols said. "You have to 100% surrender to the elements. You can't control the wind. You can't control the swell. You can't control the current. You have to surrender all of that. The only thing you can control is your attitude and your actions. When you have that type of surrender out there, there's a lot of power in that healing."

"It's a great metaphor for life because we have no control over people, places and things. Stuff happens, but we can focus on our attitude and our actions. I think the crew from We Are Ocean is a great example of that."

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COLUMN | **PATRICE APODACA**

Huntington Beach faces changes whether it embraces them or not

Oh, Huntington Beach. You were doing so well — actually taking steps toward becoming a healthy, evolved, 21st-century city.

Now, thanks to a series of ignoble moves by current city leaders, you're once again

looking like the poster child for what my late sister used to call “lockjaw of the mind” syndrome.

Granted, even before the recent episodes, the city still had a long way to go to overcome its notoriety as a magnet for neo-Nazis.

Indeed, it remains saddled with a tragically deserved reputation for being a community that fiercely, sometimes viciously, clings to its racist, homophobic, anti-Semitic, and otherwise intolerant roots — a reputation that is reinforced every time a white supremacist demonstration is held or Nazi symbols surface.

So I don't mean to suggest that this element disappeared. It never did. Yet many of us took heart from the rays of progress that had begun to peak through in recent years.

Two years ago, for example, when Ku Klux Klan propaganda was circulated in Huntington Beach, the City Council issued a full-throated condemnation of the incident — a council that, significantly, included the first black member — and passed three anti-racism measures. The council also voted to fly the LGBTQ Pride flag during Pride Month every year.

These moves toward greater inclusion reflected the reality that Huntington Beach is inching toward diversity in its populace. In



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

VISITORS CHAT at the end of the Huntington Beach Pier as a shipping container vessel anchors off the coast in 2019.

the 2010 U.S. Census, the city's population was found to be 76.7% white; by the 2020 census, that share had fallen to 63.7%. For once, it seemed, the city appeared to be a more welcoming place.

But a majority on the current City Council want to erase the progress, rewind the clock and hurl Huntington Beach back into its exclusionary, intolerant cocoon. Four members of the seven-member council — Mayor Tony Strickland, Mayor Pro Tem Gracey Van Der Mark, Pat Burns and Casey McKeon — have been championing this disturbing vision over the objections of the remaining three members and despite pleas from many residents to reconsider their stances.

That Pride flag? Now it's banned, thanks to a sly move by that majority to restrict the flags approved for display on city property to those representing the United States, California, Orange County and Huntington Beach, along with the POW/MIA flag and those representing the six branches of the U.S. military.

They denied the decision was aimed at the Pride flag, even though it was the only one on the previously approved list that was excluded. Burns, who proposed the measure, even had the temerity to suggest the Pride flag — widely recognized as symbol of love and acceptance — is “divisive” and that was justification for prohibiting it.

That vote was followed by another troubling decision by the same four-member majority. Earlier this month, they moved to restrict who would be eligible to deliver the invocations at council meetings. These prayers have been offered by religious leaders who are part of the Greater Huntington Beach Interfaith Council.

The dubious rationale for ditching that system, and instead instructing the city manager and city attorney to compile a list of approved religious leaders, was that the prayers had become “highly political.”

Was that really the reason? Or did the move have more to do with the Inter-

See *Apodaca*, page A8

THE DAILY COMMUTER PUZZLE

By Jacqueline E. Mathews

- ACROSS**
 1 Student's avg.
 4 1970s Ford subcompact
 9 Directive from Pat Sajak
 13 Dumbo's “wings”
 15 Workers' group
 16 Make sharper
 17 Carve in stone
 18 “Home on the ”
 19 Remains containers
 20 Good knife's quality
 22 Midterm or final
 23 Word with fire or North
 24 Debtor's note
 26 Block
 29 Colas
 34 Cancels
 35 Fire Department head
 36 Reason for NFL overtime
 37 Part of a highchair
 38 Youngster
 39 Meat-and-veggie dish
 40 Head topper
 41 Like bad camping weather
 42 Caroline, to RFK
 43 Grandeur
 45 Zoomed aloft
 46 “_ Lazy River”
 47 Lowlife
 48 Lois of the comic strips
 51 Crooked
 56 Takes advantage of
 57 Relative by marriage
 58 Quarrel
 60 Sour
 61 Island in a lagoon
 62 Every
 63 Wraps up

1	2	3		4	5	6	7	8		9	10	11	12
13			14		15						16		
17					18						19		
	20			21							22		
			23					24	25				
26	27	28				29	30				31	32	33
34					35						36		
37					38						39		
40				41						42			
43			44					45					
			46					47					
48	49	50			51	52	53				54	55	
56					57						58		59
60					61						62		
63					64						65		

SUDOKU

By the Mepham 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.

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

For answers to the crossword and Sudoku puzzles, see page A9.


- 64 Musical symbols
 65 Firmament

- DOWN**
 1 “Wow!”
 2 Taps lightly
 3 Foot part
 4 Eggplant color

- 5 Senseless
 6 Largest digit
 7 Clothing
 8 Not reciprocal; unfair
 9 “Put up or _”
 10 Skin opening
 11 Places to stay
 12 Home of twigs

- 14 Curvaceous
 21 Curtain holders
 25 Dolt
 26 _ pink; healthy
 27 Wall painting
 28 Piece of china
 29 Glisten
 30 Like sardines
 31 Playful water critter
 32 Portion
 33 Sutured
 35 Stylish
 38 Prime Minister Trudeau, e.g.
 39 Short-haired cat
 41 Ice Cube's music
 42 Person, place or thing
 44 Visitors
 45 Angry looks
 47 Layered rock
 48 Early guitar
 49 As comfortable _ old shoe
 50 Intellectual
 52 Put _ words; express
 53 Narrow opening
 54 Mineral springs
 55 Small nail
 59 Your

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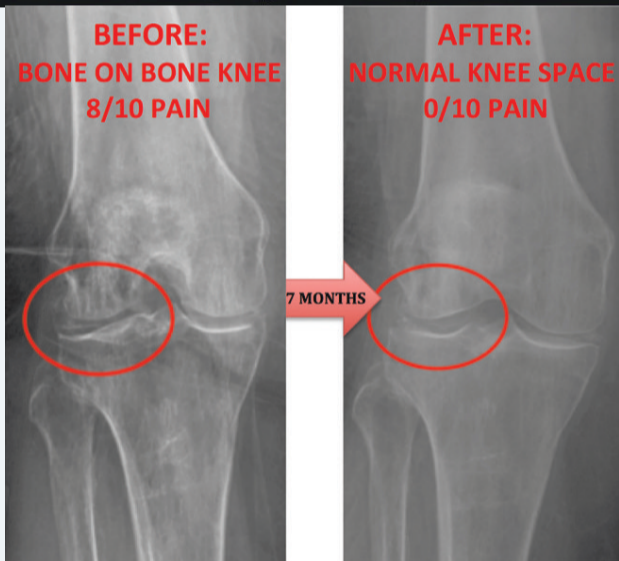
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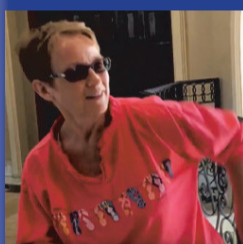
Do you suffer from any of the following symptoms?

- Can't go up or down the stairs due to weak legs
- Can no longer play golf or your favorite hobby
- Pain prevents exercise so you can't lose weight



ACTUAL KNEE X-RAYS TAKEN 7 MONTHS APART RESULTS MAY VARY

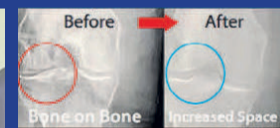
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-Linda L., R.N., Newport Beach, CA(Registered Nurse & Zumba Instructor)

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-lasted-Rosemary, Huntington Beach

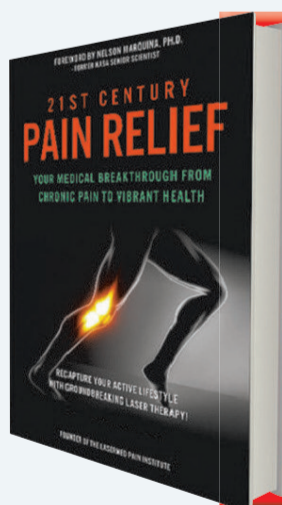


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-The late Dr. William Gutch, MD., Palm Desert, California



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Photos by James Carbone

SAM NORDIN, the owner of the Desert Moon Grill, holds a platter of traditional Middle Eastern mezze (appetizers) typically served after fasting for Ramadan.

The table is set for Ramadan at this Anaheim restaurant

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

When you enter Desert Moon Grill on 888 S. Brookhurst St. in Anaheim, a host will greet you. A table offers small paper cups and kettles of tea you can help yourself to while you wait — a small touch of hospitality that owner Sam Nordin credits to his culture.

“Lebanese people are hospitable people,” he said during a recent visit to the restaurant.

Nordin took over from the previous owner in 2019. The Mediterranean eatery in Little Arabia is casual but classy with plenty of comfy booths situated in a dimly lit dining area.

The menu is 100% Halal and utilizes a wood fire grill for kababs and baking fresh pita bread to order. A cook takes balls of dough from a speed rack and puts them on a paddle. He feeds it to a burning fire where the bread puffs to life and goes into a basket to be served hot and fresh with a crispy bottom and pillowy top.

Nordin said his Lebanese culture has not only influenced the service but the menu, which previously leaned more Jordanian.

“I had to build my own recipes, and I added my own Lebanese touch,” said Nordin.

He has begun a tradition of hosting a nightly buffet during the Muslim holiday of Ramadan, which takes place during the ninth month of the Islamic calendar and is observed as a time of spiritual growth.

“Ramadan is a month where we fast from sunrise to sunset,” Nordin explained. The observance this year began March 22 in the United States and runs through April 21.

The feast at Desert Moon Grill is served at Iftar time, or sundown, when Muslims are permitted to break their fast.

Nordin said the fasting takes place from about 5 a.m. until about 7:05 p.m., and the rule is not to put anything in your mouth. No eating, drinking or even smoking can happen during those roughly 16 hours.

The belief is that there are health benefits to this yearly fast, helping one’s body reset, Nordin said, but the act is also a sacrifice.

“The main thing is for you to feel with the poor, so



NORDIN GRILLS over hot coals, skewers of lamb, chicken and Kofta kebab at the Desert Moon Grill.

you feel what it is like to have nothing to eat,” said Nordin.

Other traditions include giving and praying. Nordin said it is customary for wealthy families to put together boxes of rice, powdered milk, jam and other pantry goods to give away to the poor. Muslims pray five times a day, but during Ramadan, Nordin said, the last prayer of the day gets extended.

“The last prayer, we call it the after-dinner prayer or evening prayer,” Nordin said. “What they do during Ramadan, they extended it and they pray for an extra 45 minutes and recite the Quran in full. So in 30 days they recite the whole Quran.”

Overall, Nordin said, it is a special month.

“You come out of it so much closer to God, so much closer to yourself.”

Desert Moon Grill’s Ramadan buffet is priced at \$40 per person and features a selection of mezze or appetizers like labanah, baba ghanouj, hummus and stuffed grape leaves, along with a whole stuffed lamb and mesquite grilled shish kabab, kufta kabab and chicken kabab tawook. There are also nightly specials. On a recent Tuesday night, kibeth in yogurt sauce was offered.

“It is a traditional Palestinian, Lebanese dish,” Nordin said. “The kibeth is minced beef, and it is made with ground beef, onion and pine nuts. We cook it with yogurt and serve it with white rice.”

Diners also get a plate of dates to start.

“Because that is how you break your fast, by eating a date and drinking water,” said Nordin.

Nordin said the resta-

rant does more work during the Ramadan holiday than the rest of the year, preparing all the dishes at the same time, rather than the staggered orders the kitchen prepares during a regular dinner service.

He even puts up a tent outside to accommodate the influx of guests ordering to-go food.

“On weekends, I have about 200 people come in. Our patio can seat about 36 people and we have 150 that can fit in here,” he said, motioning to the dining room.

The kitchen staff also works hard to assure that food will never run out.

“You will see me tell the guests, ‘Don’t worry, nothing is going to run out. If anything runs out, I am not going to charge you,’” Nordin said.

Nordin admits that having a feast isn’t necessarily traditional to the holiday, but he reconciles that by donating any leftover food to the mosque.

“It is going to go for a good cause, instead of going to the garbage.”

And the guests that come in to eat are not just practicing Muslims.

“You would be surprised at how many Christians I have coming in,” said Nordin. “They love all the food, they love the buffet, and they are sharing Ramadan with us.”

Such sharing is part of what makes the monthlong holiday of Ramadan so special to Nordin.

“That’s how it should be. After all, we are all brothers,” said Nordin. “We are all sons of God. We are all human.”

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A PLATE of grilled Lamb skewers, chicken skewers and Kofta kebab, served with traditional rice, at the Desert Moon Grill in Little Arabia in Anaheim.

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BIRRIA

Continued from page A1

limiting guests to two orders at a time. At this rate, it won't be long before birria displaces the barbacoa at Chipotle. But you don't have to wait until that happens. Here are three Santa Ana birria specialists where you can dive in headfirst into the spicy red birria sea.

THE ESTABLISHED HEAVYWEIGHT

La Super Birria
1041 W. First St., Santa Ana

At La Super Birria, you want to start with the big steaming bowl of birria de res itself for about \$12, a spicy stew with beef chunks so tender it verges on collapse. And where it doesn't fall apart, it wiggles from the bits of fat strategically left behind. Even if you avoid the fat, this soup is already a decadent meal. It's so rich that before you tuck into it, you must squeeze lime, throw in plenty of onions and sprin-

See *Birria*, page A10



A BOWL of birria and dorado taco at La Super Birria, located on First Street in Santa Ana.

Edwin Goei

NURSING

Continued from page A1

anything about it. "I'm kind of the glue [holding the family together]," she added. "So I thought, both boys were home, and if something happened to me... I really wanted to go to work, but I realized if I go down..."

It wasn't long before she began to miss the fast-paced setting of her job, and she became restless. So, like many during the pandemic, she turned to baking as an outlet.

She started out by making fondant topped cakes for neighbors and friends. But word of mouth began to spread, and by 2021 she found herself taking orders from well outside of Seal Beach.

"At first I thought people were buying my cookies because they felt bad for me or something," Brody-Chafe said. "But they were driving in from San Diego or Ventura. And I thought 'Well, they're passing a lot of other cookies on the way here.'"

Now she spends two to three days working at either Sea Surgery Center in Seal Beach or Memorial Outpatient Surgery Center in Long Beach. She spends the rest of the week running her baking business while serving as a driver for Steve and helping him care for his parents, who live a few streets over.

Brody-Chafe gets a lot of help from the friends she had started baking for in the first place. In addition to sending her referrals, neighbors some-



AN ASSORTMENT of cookies from Christina's Confections.

Scott Smeltzer | Staff Photographer

times gather in assembly line fashion to package larger orders or assist her husband with taste-testing duties.

The cakes, cookies, hot cocoa bombs and other sweets from Brody-Chafe's home bakery are more expensive than what you might order from a more traditional business. She said that's because she works closely with each client to create personalized treats that are pleasing to look at and eat.

But her most memorable creations were given out for free. She has given cakes to the daughter of a co-worker who had undergone a lung transplant and a young boy who was once treated by her husband for a seizure. She said she had anonymously left baked goods on the doorstep of a Long Beach Fire captain whose son been diagnosed with cancer.

She said she loves including intricate details in her work to bring her clients' vision to life, and her favorite projects are the ones that allow her to

exercise creativity. She seeks out courses to pick up new techniques, and feels like she's still learning how to run and promote a business.

"I was in my bedroom for 10 days because we thought I had COVID, and that's how I wound up with a website," Brody-Chafe said.

She said running her bakery has been more challenging than being a nurse in many ways. And working at a hospital full time would likely pay better.

But having her own business affords her the freedom to spend more time on other priorities in her life. And it's an exciting new venture that allows her to flex her creativity while making people happy.

"I never intended to have a business, ever," Brody-Chafe said. "I feel like it's a wave I'm trying to catch, you know? I'm chasing after this business. It's moving faster than me."

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APODACA

Continued from page A5

faith Council's stated goal of "understanding, respecting, promoting and celebrating spiritual and cultural diversity," or with the participation by a rabbi who had previously criticized Van Der Mark for posting what he described as bigoted material online?

These actions should also be viewed within the context of another development: Huntington

Beach's costly, controversial legal battle with the state over California's affordable housing mandate.

It's a complicated story, but suffice it to say that the City Council refuses to abide by state laws seeking to remedy the severe housing shortage that has priced far too many people out of the market for homes, contributing to homelessness and decisions by residents to move out of the state.

These are problems that were caused, or at least exacerbated, in large measure by NIMBYism; now Huntington Beach is pulling the ultimate Not In My Backyard move by blocking the solution. The stated reasons for opposing

the mandate center around accusations that it's a draconian power play that subverts local control and threatens to overly urbanize the city.

But it's impossible to ignore that the city leaders heading up the charge are some ones that champion other exclusionary policies. It's fair to ask if their motivations for opposing the housing laws are rooted in an ideologically driven goal of keeping out a certain "element" they consider undesirable.

The four council members who were swept into power in last November's elections were elected to four-year terms. It's reasonable to assume they're just getting started trying to impose their narrow vision of what Huntington Beach should look like.

But that vision won't last forever. Like it or not, change is coming, and those who operate out of fear of that change will become yesterday's news. At some point, voters will insist upon leaving Huntington Beach's disgraceful lockjaw-of-the-mind legacy fully in the past.

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.

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Toontown reopens with a more inclusive population in mind

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

Mickey's Toontown opened at Disneyland in 1993 as a place for park guests to immerse themselves in a cartoon land that was home to Mickey, Minnie, Donald and Goofy, inspired by the 1988 movie "Who Framed Roger Rabbit?" But after 30 years, the area was due for an update.

"We wanted to make sure the DNA of Toontown stayed intact," said Jeffrey Shaver-Moskowitz, imaginer and executive producer of Toontown's latest attraction, Mickey & Minnie's Runaway Railway, "but we wanted to make this land ready for the next generation of guests that are going to come here and make memories."

As a 7-year-old, this reporter got to experience Toontown's grand opening firsthand. My father was a concrete foreman with Whiting-Turner in 1993, the general contractor that built Toontown and also handled the recent remodel.

Our family got a first look at the cartoon city back then, and I brought my dad along for the re-opening preview on March 18, ahead of the public opening on March 19. We anticipated the changes we might see in the remodeled cartoon city, and there was one major detail that was apparent to both of us: less concrete.

"We've tried to take a whole new approach to what we call the area development, the landscape experience that is around the neighborhood," said creative producer with Walt Disney Imagineering, Elliott Rosenbaum.

The reimagined Mickey's Toontown has been thoughtfully designed to eliminate as many barriers to play as possible, which means more open green spaces and poured rubber playground surfaces.

When guests first enter Toontown they'll come upon CenTOONial Park, which features an interactive water fountain with "water tables" that are meant for children to play with.

"It is a really fun opportunity for kids to touch water and splash around a little bit," said Rosenbaum.

CenTOONial Park is also home to the dreaming tree, with sculpted tree roots designed for climbing and playing.

"We really wanted to reinfuse the neighborhood with a sense of fun and play that is relevant for our youngest guests," Rosenbaum said.

Cartoons don't equal chaos in the reimagined Toontown, which has a noticeably different feel thanks to the elimination of harsh, bright colors and the addition of calmer tones, like green and teal.

The sound design throughout the land is more calm too.

"Our music track is a really interesting part of our design," said Rosenbaum. "It was really important for us to make this a relaxing and decompressing experience."

The music evolves as guests move through the different parts of Toontown.

"It is the same music track everywhere, but the instrumentation is different, the tempo is different. So when you are over in the quietest part of the park, it is languid and soft," Rosenbaum said.

Shaver-Moskowitz concurs that all ends of the spectrum were considered in the redesign.

"We designed sensory elements for any of our guests on the spectrum, who need a sensory experience," said Shaver-Moskowitz. "Or for those who need a less-sensory experience, we have a quiet zone in the back of the land."

The quiet zone features



THE WATER FOUNTAIN at CenTOONial Park features water tables for kids to splash in at Mickey's Toontown.

more grassy spaces with plenty of seating and more muted sounds for children that need to take a break from the stimuli.

Some of the character houses have undergone changes as well.

Goofy's house is now Goofy's How-To-Play Yard, which invites children to decide how they play and interact with Goofy's candy-sorting contraption. Donald's Duck Pond is more of a playground with spinning water lilies, balance beams and rocking toys on soft poured-in-place rubber. Even the slides have "dignity landings," which provide space for children who need extra time or a mobility device to stand up again.

Toontown is also home to Mickey & Minnie's Run-

away Railway, which opened in January.

"We brought Mickey & Minnie's Runaway Railway to the land, which is a no height restricted, all-family attraction," said Shaver-Moskowitz.

The trackless train takes guests into the Emmy Award-winning "Mickey Mouse" cartoon shorts using audio-animatronic figures, animated media and projection-mapping techniques.

Mickey's house and Minnie's house remain mostly unchanged, though a green lawn sprawls in front of the properties now creating more space for kids to run off steam.

Chip 'n' Dale's Gadget Coaster returns as does Roger Rabbit's Car Toon



Photos by Sarah Mosqueda

MICKEY & MINNIE'S Runaway Railway at Mickey's Toontown. The reimagined area has been designed to provide a more inclusive environment for kids to explore and play.

Spin, but with a lush lawn out front.

Besides serving as a place to play, the lawns are also a place to picnic. Good Boy! Grocers inside

Toontown Farmers Market sells snacks, like apple-sauce, Goldfish crackers, granola bars and juice boxes as well as the Perfect Picnic Basket.

"You can pick up the novelty basket and pick out the items that you want," said Disney chef

See **Toontown**, page A10

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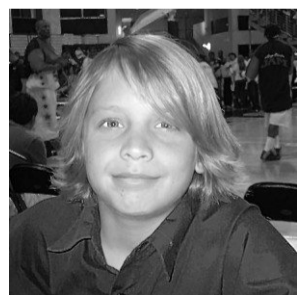
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Cade Sierra Feitler

February 6, 1992 - March 14, 2023

It is with the heaviest of hearts that we announce the passing of Cade Sierra Feitler, 31, on March 14, 2023 from complications of a traumatic brain injury he suffered in 2005. Cade attended Mariners Elementary School and Ensign Intermediate School in Newport Beach and was known for his high energy, quick wit and antics. He was an accomplished snowboarder, surfer and overall athlete. He was a friend to all and has a posse of friends he leaves behind.

Cade's dreams were shattered in 2005 when an inattentive driver ran a red light and broadsided the family car. In that pivotal moment, Cade's life and the lives of his family and friends changed forever. After numerous surgeries and lengthy hospitalizations at Children's Hospital Orange County, Casa Colina Rehabilitation Hospital and UCLA, Cade came home to continue his recovery.

Under the direction of his dedicated therapist, Cade exceeded the most optimistic doctor's predictions. Cade blessed his family and friends with 18 more years, and his daily struggles and perseverance inspired all who met him. He gave hope, joy and meaning to so many who cheered his accomplishments and witnessed this strong young man who soldiered on through the most difficult challenges.

Cade is survived by his loving parents Joel and Lisa Feitler of Newport Beach; sister McKenzie Chalmers, brother-in-law Christopher Chalmers, nieces Charlotte and Kennedy, and his extended family from Hawaii to New Jersey. Services will be held at Pacific View Memorial in Corona del Mar on April 16, 2023 at 1:00.

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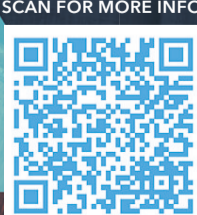
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BIRRIA

Continued from page A8

kle a handful of cilantro for balance.

When you start digging into the bowl with a spoon in one hand, you must have one of the thick corn tortillas in the other. The girthy things — hand-pressed and cooked to order — are some of the best in Santa Ana.

In the unlikely event that you're still hungry after you lap up the last drop, La Super Birria also griddles a stretchy quesabirria where the birria meat is tucked with cheese into the fold of its pillowy tortilla. Or you could have it as part of a \$12 "Birria Tour," for which you also get a red taco (beef stuffed into a thinner tortilla stained red with the birria grease), a griddle-crisped taco dorado and a cup of consomé.

Just know that everything here involves birria. In fact, since owners Rosie and Edgar Navarrete decided to carve out a tiny section of their decades-old candy business Dulceria El Caracol to sell it in 2015, the menu has exploded to include everything birria-related. These days, the menu boasts birria ramen, birria pizza (called "pizzirria"), even a birria cake.

Birria has so completely taken over the business that the old candy shop ceased to exist. Instead of flimsy plastic picnic tables and fold-out chairs, you now sit in booths and leather-covered thrones while a gigantic LCD and a booming sound system blasts Reggaeton.

The Navarretes have also expanded beyond Santa



Edwin Goei

THE LA CASCADA food truck lists birria as the first of its fillings to choose from. The truck, located at 1520 N. Main St. in Santa Ana, specializes in birria de chivo, or goat meat.

Ana, with new La Super Birria restaurants in Orange, Stanton, and Long Beach, each one presumably blaring the same music as loud as the flavors you'll encounter.

THE NEWEST KID ON THE BLOCK

Papi Tacos & Churros
2603 S. Main St., Santa Ana

The dining room at Papi Tacos & Churros looks generic. If you Photoshop out the menu stenciled on the wall, the place could conceivably be a burger joint or even a Chipotle. But perhaps it's on purpose: the clean, blank-slate quality of the interior design is decidedly un-intimidating for first timers.

In fact, even if you saw the bubbly Papi Tacos & Churros logo from the

street, you'd be completely unaware that it's a birria specialist. Since it is located at a Chevron gas station, some might even mistake it for the Food Mart next door where you'd put \$20 on pump No. 6.

Once inside, you see no options for carne asada, carnitas or barbacoa. You're forced to fall in love with birria.

This store is the third Papi Tacos location in Southern California. The first made a splash in Los Angeles and social media about two years ago. This third restaurant opened earlier this year in Santa Ana just a few blocks away from historic Main Street.

Papi Tacos is family-owned, but the face of the brand is a man named Omar Ghanim, who ap-

pears on its TikTok, Facebook and Instagram as "Papi." On countless videos, Ghanim and his rippling biceps can be seen lifting out hunks of halal beef from a 16-hour simmer and chopping it into oblivion with a cleaver.

And though chicken is offered as a fallback, you want the beef birria as the filling for the taco dorado, quesataco, mulita and quesadilla. The \$16 "O.G. Plate" gives you all four and a cup of the consomé for dipping or sipping. If you opt for the consomé con carne, a wad of meat is dropped into the cup of broth. The beef strands are so fine and tender, they're in danger of dissolving into the soup.

Except for the amount of cheese and whether the

tortilla cradles the filling or sandwiches it, there's very little difference between the taco, the quesataco, the mulita and the quesadilla. What's constant is the red grease from the stew that's used to fry the tortillas to crispiness and stain it crimson. It will coat your lips, lube your fingers and drip onto your lap.

If you think the grease is excessive, take comfort in knowing that afterwards you're inevitably compelled to order some decadent deep-fried churros caked in cinnamon sugar and drizzled with chocolate, which, let's face it, is way worse for your diet.

THE UNDERRATED LONCHERA

La Cascada
1520 N. Main St., Santa Ana

La Cascada's menu looks like that of a lot of other loncheras in Santa Ana. The list of meats includes birria, asada, cabeza, lengua, chorizo, pastor and tripa that you could choose to fill a taco, burrito or torta. And you would not be disappointed eating any of it, especially the birria de res. But what you want here is the birria de chivo, goat birria, the truck's pride and specialty.

If beef birria is Spotify, goat birria is vinyl. Everyone can appreciate the accessibility of beef birria, but only a true birria connoisseur should seek out and spend the extra money on the unique appeal of goat. And this truck, being one of a few that specializes in the Michoacan delicacy, is one of the best places to make your investment.

The birria de chivo costs at least a dollar more than

the birra de res, the beef birria. And if you're already committed to having goat as your taco filling over the beef, you might as well splurge an extra 50 cents on the option of a red taco instead of the regular. The red taco, as of this writing, costs around \$3.75, for which the tortilla is dipped in the red grease before griddling. Not only does the treatment make it twice as crispy than an undipped tortilla, it also amps up the taco's inherent scrumptiousness tenfold.

But make no mistake: You will know this is goat and no other meat. Melt-ingly soft but with a gamy aroma and a savory sweetness double that of lamb, your olfactory senses are never more present and in tune with the ones for taste when you bite into a birria de chivo taco.

Perhaps the only thing that completes the experience is a measured application of the salsa de aceite, a concoction akin to Chinese chili oil. If it's your first time, the cashier might advise you to only apply a few drops from its gigantic squeeze bottle. "It's super hot," he says, "please be careful." Yet you put on too much. And for about five minutes, you wince and try to catch your breath.

But a weird thing happens: your endorphins triggered, you become acclimated to the blinding spiciness of the salsa and the funky smell of the meat. Then you think to yourself: This is the best birria taco you've had in your life. The G.O.A.T., if you will.

Edwin Goei is a contributor to Times Community News.

TOONTOWN

Continued from page A9

Adolfo Salazar. "You bring your blanket over to the lawn area and you can sit down and have a picnic in Toontown."

Café Daisy is the other new eatery in Toontown, serving footlong hot dogs, like Daisy's Dressed-Up Dog with chili-

cheese sauce, macaroni and cheese and parmesan potato crispies for adults and Minnie's mini corn dogs for kids.

Salazar said the menus are sensitive to food allergies.

"We do have our gluten-free options," Salazar said. "Our pizza flop-over can be made gluten-free and we have our spring garden wrap, which is vegan-friendly."

While Toontown has leaned into the sense of play for young kids, some callbacks to Disney nostalgia have been added for adults.

"We put a lot of references to nostalgic Disney shows," said Rosenbaum. "We know that the adults of today were once young children and their connection to Disney is through shows like 'DuckTales,' 'Chip n' Dale's Res-

cue Rangers' and 'A Goofy Movie.'"

When my dad took me to Toontown as a kid, I was most excited to see Gadget Hackwrench, the problem-solving inventor from "Rescue Rangers." As an adult, I noticed a framed picture of Goofy and his son Max, displayed in Goofy's house and an instrumental version of Powerline's music from 1995's "A

Goofy Movie" on the speakers.

Toontown may have evolved since my dad first took me to experience its enchantment 30 years ago, but it is still a place for families to make memories together, no matter their ability. Or their age.

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SPRINGTIME ACTIVITIES

33RD ANNUAL SPRING GARDEN SHOW
April 20-23

The 33rd annual Southern California Spring Garden Show is a four-day garden event showcasing the latest innovations, display gardens and more.

EASTER
March 17-April 8

Celebrate Spring! Visit with the Easter Bunny for keepsake photos and ride the Bunny Carousel featuring larger-than-life bunnies and floral carriages. Springtime crafts, special activities and Easter balloons are sure to delight.

FLEURS DE VILLES VOYAGE EXHIBITION
April 19-23

Discover this unique exhibit and experience fresh floral installations inspired by stories from around the world.

Explore Spring fashion, home décor, and new stores

Alexander Wang	Hoka	Missoni
Anine Bing	Hublot	Miu Miu
David Yurman	JD Sports	Polestar
Dior	Marni	Reformation

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