

# Daily Pilot

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David Hansen

AS THE Sawdust Art Festival prepares for its opening, officials are looking at ways to attract younger artists who can't afford Laguna Beach.

## Sawdust Art Festival attempts to draw in the next generation

BY DAVID HANSEN

In 1965, the Sawdust Art Festival was the young, hippy upstart to the more stolid Festival of Arts. Now, those hippies are trying to embrace the youth movement.

But it's not easy. To exhibit at the Sawdust, artists must be Laguna Beach residents, but most artists can't afford Laguna anymore, which means the number of exhibitors is down.

Longtime artist, 38-year exhibitor and former Sawdust board member Patti Jo Kiraly has been watching the decline with alarm and decided to spearhead a youth outreach effort.

"Affordable apartments are just not existing anymore," Kiraly said. "Artists are forced out. They don't want to leave Laguna Beach."

Sawdust rules stipulate that artists must be a Laguna Beach resident before they are grandfathered.

"You have to establish your residency for a year and a half before you can be in your first show," she said. "And then you have to stay in Laguna Beach for 10 years before you are allowed to move out of town."

But artists are struggling and not just at the Sawdust. The loss is being felt throughout the community and has drawn the attention of the Laguna Beach City Council, which is re-

See **Festival**, page A4

## Ocean View student headed overseas

Seahawks sophomore Alex Linza, 16, will take part in a six-month soccer training program in Germany in the fall.

BY MATT SZABO

Alex Linza went to a soccer showcase at El Camino College in March with few expectations, other than the expectation to improve.

The Ocean View High sophomore defender has always wanted to do that, ever since he first started out on the pitch at 4 years old.

But the Bundesliga ID showcase led to an opportunity that Alex could never imagine.

He was offered a spot on the prestigious FC Cologne International Talent Squad this fall in Germany. Only 24 players from across the country were chosen.

"When they called me, I couldn't believe it," said Alex, 16, who lives in Los Alamitos. "I just go for fun, and play until I can't do it anymore. I was just amazed. I feel like when you think about it more, you do less. I just go for fun and whatever happens, happens. You might as well live in the present."

Alex's current present is an upcoming six-month training program overseas. He has never left the country, but that's about to change.

The cost for the program is

See **Overseas**, page A3



Eric Licas

SAUL TOXICOIA ties a new archway for a secret garden at Huntington Central Park to a forklift Friday.

## Archway welcomes visitors back to H.B. park's Secret Garden

BY ERIC LICAS

Volunteers with the Huntington Beach Tree Society celebrated the installation Friday of a new archway at the Secret Garden, a feature of Huntington Central Park they have been tending to for the past 10 years.

The improvement is the latest

in an overhaul of the garden spurred largely by extreme winter storms in Southern California over the winter, said Tree Society volunteer Steve Engel. Gravel pathways winding through the green space were furrowed and stripped by heavy rains, creating

See **Archway**, page A4



Matt Fukushima

CHARGERS LINEBACKER Kenneth Murray Jr. poses with Ngu, a StandUp for Kids client, at a shoe distribution event as UnitedHealthcare of Southern California CEO Tami Adams looks on.

## C.M. nonprofit partners with athlete, donor to give shoes to at-risk youth

BY SARA CARDINE

There's nothing quite like the feeling of stepping into a brand-new pair of shoes. But for those struggling with housing insecurity, who may not know where their next meal is coming from, moments like that may seem out of reach.

For that reason, Costa Mesa nonprofit StandUp for Kids — which provides housing, school support and job training for homeless and at-risk youth and young adults — teamed up with donor UnitedHealthcare to distribute more than 100 pairs of athletic shoes and clean socks to clients served by the organization.

During a small ceremony Thursday at Costa Mesa's TeWinkle Park, a contingent of volunteers and local officials gathered with special guest Chargers linebacker Kenneth Murray Jr. to de-



Sara Cardine

STANDUP FOR KIDS client Christopher, right, carefully inspects the brand-new shoes he received as his friend, Justin, looks on.

liver the goods to grateful recipients. Tami Adams, chief executive of UnitedHealthcare's Southern California division, was also present.

See **Shoes**, page A4

### ALSO FROM THE DAILY PILOT:



Scott Smeltzer | Staff Photographer

AREA HIGH SCHOOLS CELEBRATE THEIR GRADUATES PAGES A2-5





**REAGAN O'BRYAN** celebrates after receiving her diploma at the commencement at Newport Harbor High School.



Photos by Scott Smeltzer | Staff Photographer

# Sailors head off to make waves of their own

There's a great big world out there and the Newport Harbor High School Sailors of 2023 are ready to see what it has to offer, following the school's 92nd commencement ceremony on Thursday.

With graduation behind them, about 65% of Newport Harbor seniors are set for a four-year college or university and about 25% plan to head for a two-year college. Five percent will be making their way to a career

**NEWPORT HARBOR** High School seniors toss their caps in the air at the finale of the 2023 graduation ceremony on Thursday in Newport Beach. It was the 92nd commencement ceremony for the school.

technical education school and the remaining 5% will either travel the world or go straight into the workforce, according to school officials. Three students are enlisted in the armed forces and 18 look to compete at the National Collegiate Athletics

Assn. Division 1 level. "Class of 2023 ... your journey begins. On behalf of the entire school community, I leave you with these words: May all your journeys be safe, may your discoveries be bountiful, may your lives be blessed

by love of family and friends, and may the tides of destiny carry you to uncharted and unimagined success just like this school year," said Principal Sean Boulton. "Thank you, Class of '23. I love you all, diversity is our

strength," he continued. "And, as always, go Sailors!" Student speakers Thursday included Audrey Presby and Maggie McWhirter, and student Kira Wilkes performed Aerosmith's "Dream On" at the ceremony. — Lilly Nguyen



**ESTANCIA HIGH SCHOOL** valedictorians, from left, Natalie Valladolid, Elle Romine, Valerie Madrid, Sofia Kehoe and Elly Goan, pose before their graduation ceremony.



Photos by James Carbone

**JUBILANT ESTANCIA** graduates cheer for their fellow graduates Thursday during Estancia High School's Class of 2023 Graduation Ceremony at Jim Scott Stadium in Costa Mesa.

# Eagles eye new horizons as they leave the nest

More than 200 Eagles officially left the nest on Thursday, reflecting on their time at Estancia High School and the foundation it laid for the next stage of their journeys during a commencement ceremony at the school's Jim Scott Stadium. Graduating seniors

waved to loved ones in the audience with enthusiasm as they accepted their diplomas and took seats on the athletic field. This year's class is the 56th to be celebrated since the school opened in 1965. Estancia Principal Michael Halt encouraged the 212 students of the Class of 2023 to strive to

listen to understand, rather than to respond. "When you listen to respond, you concentrate on what you will say, how you will sound and how you will be reviewed by others. When we listen to understand, however, we let go of the need to prove ourselves right and instead open our hearts and

minds. "By becoming better listeners we can contribute to a society that is more compassionate, more inclusive and more united." Senior James De La O — who was named Orange Coast League Player of the Year in basketball and baseball and plans to play

baseball at Long Beach City College — shared with fellow graduates the only thing that makes goals impossible is the fear of failure. Graduate Makena Ray, who will attend Cal Poly San Luis Obispo next year, recalled how the COVID-19 pandemic upended the traditional high

school experience but also helped Estancia students to overcome hardships. "It's time to look forward with great anticipation and excitement and hope for an ever brighter future," she said. "Your time is here — life starts now." — Sara Cardine



Photos by James Carbone

**CLOUD CAMPUS** grad Jonathan Lohr speaks at the Cloud Campus High School Class of 2023 commencement ceremony at Saint Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Newport Beach.

# NMUSD's Cloud Campus closes its doors with final graduating Class of 2023



**CLOUD CAMPUS** graduates stand together after receiving a Parent-Teacher Organization Senior Scholarship certificate on Thursday.



**CLOUD CAMPUS** Class of 2023 valedictorian Lauren James sings the national anthem for the start of the Cloud Campus High School Class of 2023 commencement ceremony.

As teachers and faculty handed off the diplomas to this year's graduating class, they also waved goodbye to Cloud Campus, which will now officially close, following direction from Newport-Mesa Unified School District officials in April. "Graduates, may you look back on your time at Cloud Campus with fond memories," said Principal Raquel Stephens. "May the skills you acquired at Cloud Campus be the

launching point into the next chapter of your college and career goals. Cloud Campus was truly a special time in many lives and a great chapter in our district's history. "I wish you all good success! Congratulations, Class of 2023!" Twenty-one students graduated on Thursday at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Newport Beach, many of whom had participated in the Cloud Campus program for the last three years.

District officials confirmed that the virtual learning platform, created in 2020 as a direct response to the COVID-19 pandemic, served roughly 3,000 students. Ninety percent of students will be going to college, and roughly 10% plan to go to a trade school after graduation. Commencement speakers included Sentra Ho and Jonathan Lohr, and valedictorian Lauren James sang the national anthem. — Lilly Nguyen





Photos by Don Leach | Staff Photographer

**DECORATED GRADUATES** Thursday walk in a procession at Costa Mesa High School's graduation ceremony.

## Mustang grads reflect on legacy

**C**osta Mesa High School's Class of 2023 on Thursday matriculated from the campus that has become like a second home, but one thing is certain — they'll never forget their time there or memories they've shared, nor will they soon be forgotten.

A team of 273 Mustangs took seats on the stadium field to accept their diplomas and — with help from student speakers ASB President Clarice Encarnacion and Senior Class President Itzel Ramirez — reflected on the last four years.

Ramirez encouraged fellow classmates to remember that while they leave Costa Mesa High, their presence will remain in the legacy they've left behind, "a legacy of perseverance, unity, love, excellence



**A GRADUATE** waves to family and friends at Costa Mesa High School's commencement ceremony.

and family."

Incarnacion said the thriving life on campus helped her become a big fish in a small pond. She encouraged others to adopt that attitude in the next leg of their journey. "Go out into the world with this big fish mental-

ity and find out what you are passionate about," she said. "There's absolutely nothing stopping you from trying everything in order to discover your passion."

Retiring staff members athletic director Sharon Uhl and instrumental

music director Sandy Gilboe shared fond memories of their careers, concluding their comments with a resounding cry of, "Once a Mustang, always a Mustang!"

CHMS Principal Dupali Potnis, who came to the school this year from TeWinkle Middle School, spoke about her dream of becoming a high school principal and told seniors she couldn't have asked for a better first graduating class.

"This senior class just gets it," she said in a comment. "They embody with confidence who they are and are reflective. They strive to be better people, while thinking of the greater good. They believe in working for the collective community so that this world can be a better place."

— Sara Cardine



**ALEX LINZA**, 16, is finishing up his sophomore year at Ocean View High School.

Courtesy of the Linza family

## OVERSEAS

Continued from page A1

27,000 euros, about \$30,000, said Alex's parents, Corinne and Mark Linza.

They started a GoFundMe to raise money. Alex has sold a few of his baseball and Pokemon cards and is planning to get a summer job, and the family is even selling a car to help pay for the trip.

"I am just overwhelmed with mixed emotions," Corinne Linza said. "There's pride, amazement, sorrow and then a little bit of anxiety, wanting to make sure it happens for him. He's been playing since he was 4, and this is what he's wanted his whole youth, this is what he's been aspiring to. Having it be such a surprise, we just weren't set up or ready. I just want to make sure it happens for him. It would kill me if it didn't, this could be it, you know?"

Alex, who plays club soccer for Gus Gomez at Total Futbol Academy Orange County, is a valuable piece for his high school team as well and also puts his talents elsewhere. After a brief stint on the boys' tennis team as a freshman, he came out for track.

The result has been a budding star runner. Alex set the Seahawks sopho-

more record in the 800 meters this year by crossing in one minute, 59.02 seconds.

He said his ultimate goal is to break the national high school record, though he has a way to go to top Michael Granville of Bell Gardens, who ran a 1:46.45 in 1996.

"There is absolutely no question that Alex is a talented student-athlete, but what is more important to have?" Ocean View cross-country and track coach Daniel Hurtado said. "Is it talent, passion or purpose? I would argue that purpose is the foundation of continued success, and that's where Alex stands above the rest. Alex practices and races with a purpose — to reach places that the team has never reached before it. Because of it, his desire matches his efforts on race day. You cannot attend an Ocean View track meet and not feel excited when Alex takes the track."

On the track or the pitch, Alex continues to make his mark.

He'll be doing it this summer, too — even if he's thousands of miles from home. His soccer should fit in fine, once he gets past the language barrier.

"I do have to learn some German," Alex said.

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> Cameron D. works as an Associate at Smart & Final

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#### CITY OF NEWPORT BEACH NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

**NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN** that on **Thursday, June 22, 2023, at 6:00 p.m.** or soon thereafter as the matter shall be heard, a public hearing will be conducted in the Council Chambers at 100 Civic Center Drive, Newport Beach. The Planning Commission of the City of Newport Beach will consider the following application:

**Newport Place Planned Community Development Plan Amendment** - An amendment to Newport Place Planned Community Development Plan (PC-11) to change the minimum affordable housing percentage of the Residential Overlay from thirty percent (30%) to fifteen percent (15%).

The Amendment is not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") under Sections 15060(c)(2) (the activity will not result in a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment) and 15060(c)(3) (the activity is not a project as defined in Section 15378) of the CEQA.

All interested parties may appear and present testimony regarding this application. If you challenge this project in court, you may be limited to raising only those issues you raised at the public hearing or in written correspondence delivered to the City, at, or before, the public hearing. Administrative procedures for appeals are provided in the Newport Beach Municipal Code Chapter 20.64. The application may be continued to a specific future meeting date; if such an action occurs, additional public notice of the continuance will not be provided.

The agenda, staff report, and corresponding documents will be available by end of business day on the Friday preceding the public hearing and may be reviewed at the Community Development Department Permit Center (Bay C-1st Floor), at 100 Civic Center Drive, Newport Beach, CA 92660 or the City of Newport Beach website at [www.newportbeachca.gov/planningcommission](http://www.newportbeachca.gov/planningcommission).

Individuals not able to attend the meeting may contact the Planning Division or access the City's website after the meeting to review the action on this application. All mail or written communications (including email) from the public, residents, or applicants regarding an agenda item must be submitted by 5:00 p.m. on the business day immediately before the meeting. This allows time for the Planning Commission to adequately consider the submitted correspondence.

For questions regarding this public hearing item please contact Rosalind Ung, Principal Planner, at 949-644-3208 or [rung@newportbeachca.gov](mailto:rung@newportbeachca.gov), at 100 Civic Center Drive, Newport Beach, CA 92660.

**Project File No.:**  
 PA2023-0082

**Project Title:**  
 Affordable Housing Amendment to the Newport Place Planned Community Development Plan

**Location:**  
 Generally bounded by MacArthur Boulevard, Jamboree Road, Birch Street and Bristol Street North

**Applicant:**  
 City of Newport Beach

Sarah Klaustermeier, Secretary, Planning Commission, City of Newport Beach



#### CITY OF NEWPORT BEACH NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

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**Newport Village Planned Community Development Plan Amendment (PA2023-00711)** - Consistent with the City Council's initiation on April 25, 2023, the proposed amendment to the Newport Village Planned Community (PC-27) Development Plan would add "recreational facilities" as an allowed use within the area designated as Area 1. Area 1 encompasses the 2.43-acre property at the corner of Avocado Avenue and San Joaquin Hills Road that is developed with the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) transit facility and surface parking lot.

The amendment is not a project subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) in accordance with Section 21065 of the California Public Resources Code and Sections 15060(c)(2), 15060(c)(3), and 15378 of the California Code of Regulations Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3 (CEQA Guidelines). The proposed action is also exempt pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3), the general rule that CEQA applies only to projects, which have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. While this amendment would allow a new category of use in an existing planned community, it does not authorize new development that would directly result in physical change to the environment.

All interested parties may appear and present testimony regarding this application. If you challenge this project in court, you may be limited to raising only those issues you raised at the public hearing or in written correspondence delivered to the City, at, or prior to, the public hearing. Administrative procedures for appeals are provided in the Newport Beach Municipal Code Chapter 20.64 (Appeals). The application may be continued to a specific future meeting date, and if such an action occurs, additional public notice of the continuance will not be provided.

The agenda, staff report, and corresponding documents will be available by end of business day on the Friday preceding the public hearing, and may be reviewed at the Community Development Department Permit Center (Bay C-1st Floor), at 100 Civic Center Drive, Newport Beach, CA 92660 or at the City of Newport Beach website at [www.newportbeachca.gov/planningcommission](http://www.newportbeachca.gov/planningcommission).

Individuals not able to attend the meeting may contact the Planning Division or access the City's website after the meeting to review the action on this application. All mail or written communications (including email) from the public, residents, or applicants regarding an agenda item must be submitted by 5:00 p.m. on the business day immediately prior to the meeting. This allows time for the Planning Commission to adequately consider the submitted correspondence.

For questions regarding this public hearing item please contact Joselyn Perez, Associate Planner, at 949-644-3312, [jperez@newportbeachca.gov](mailto:jperez@newportbeachca.gov), 100 Civic Center Drive, Newport Beach, CA 92660.

**Project File No.:**  
 PA2023-0071

**Activity:**  
 Planned Community Development Plan Amendment

**Zone:**  
 Newport Village Planned Community (PC-27)

**General Plan:**  
 Public Facilities (PR)

**Location:**  
 1550 Avocado Avenue at the corner of Avocado Avenue and San Joaquin Hills Road

**Applicant:**  
 City of Newport Beach

Sarah Klaustermeier, Secretary, Planning Commission, City of Newport Beach



Eric Licas

**STEVE ENGELS**, left, watches Saul Toxicioia, Juan Cruz and Edgar Herrera install a new archway at the Secret Garden in Huntington Central Park Friday.

## ARCHWAY

*Continued from page A1*

numerous trip hazards. It had to be closed to the public in April.

The paths have since been resurfaced, thanks largely to fundraising by this year's class of the Robert Mayer Leadership Academy. With the installation of the archway, the

Tree Society hopes to have the garden reopened in about a week.

"People have been understanding, so I won't say they've been upset," Engel said. "But with the spring and part of the summer behind us, it would have been good to have for people. There will still be plenty of flowers here for a while longer though."

The archway was built

by Naddour's Custom Metalwork in Santa Ana and paid for by a single donor. Engel declined to specify how much was paid for the piece or name the person who covered its cost. But he said it was possible she might come forward at some point in the future.

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## SHOES

*Continued from page A1*

California region, told the young people assembled about growing up in Long Beach, one of seven children living in a two-bedroom house, putting herself through school and trying to find a life path.

She said she wanted them to know they have a community of people who care about them.

"When I think about what today brings, today hopefully brings some inspiration, hopefully a feeling of compassion and community and a village — we all need a village," Adams said, inviting Murray to speak next.

The linebacker shared how when he was younger, a lot of people depended on him as the oldest of five siblings. Now, at 24, he looks back and realizes he should have cherished his childhood. He encouraged listeners to pursue their dreams and not be dissuaded.

"Everything you put your mind to you can achieve," Murray said. "I like the saying 'Why not me?' In anything you want to do, why not you? Why don't you become a doctor, or that person who becomes CEO of that firm, or why don't you be the person who graduates college and gets a master's degree?"

"Anybody can do it," he continued. "Anything is possible in this life. It's all up to you and your mindset."

StandUp for Kids Executive Director Justine Palmore said that for the past 20 years, the organization has helped young people ages 12 through 25 who are living on the streets, couch surfing, staying with friends because they have nowhere else to stay, or struggling



Sara Cardine

**SANTA ANA COLLEGE** student Tre'veon Richard, right, with Los Angeles Chargers player Kenneth Murray Jr. at a shoe distribution event at Costa Mesa's TeWinkle Park.

with their school work because of similar conditions.

She said that while owning a new pair of shoes can help promote mental health and provide a sense of confidence, it may not be a top priority for at-risk youth.

"If you're living on your own, that's the last thing you're thinking about," she said. "You're thinking about where you're going to eat and where you're going to sleep — it's a constantly vigilant life."

The giveaway was made possible by a \$10,000 donation from UnitedHealthcare and another \$5,000 from an employee-led community engagement committee, which partners with organizations referred by individual employees with connections to the groups and the causes they serve.

Adams said the company began partnering with StandUp for Kids several years ago, after an employee brought the organization to leaders' attention.

"The reason we partner with [them] is because of what they're doing. And this today was a wonderful partnership," she added. "It's really about the kids today, letting them know we're here for them."

For 23-year-old Tre'veon

Richard, who received a pair of Nikes at Thursday's giveaway, StandUp for Kids has been a lifesaver. He moved from Louisiana in May 2022 and enrolled in Santa Ana College with help from a Division 1 athletics scholarship, not knowing where he would live or how he'd afford classes.

Someone at the school connected him with the nonprofit, whose members helped him secure housing in Irvine, sign up for food assistance and are now helping out with the monthly rent.

Now he's working toward a liberal arts degree and playing small forward on the college's basketball team, with hopes of continuing his education. His dream is to one day be interviewed by TV media, so he can look in the camera and thank StandUp for Kids in front of a national audience.

What would he say? "Thank you so much. You guys have had a major, astronomical impact on my life," he said. "I think God brought me here. Thank you for helping me through this time."

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## FESTIVAL

*Continued from page A1*

searching the issue.

"We're having a problem attracting and keeping," Kiraly said. "People more and more are not able to get to 10 years. It used to be that people would move into Laguna just to be in the Sawdust Festival, and we're losing some of that as well."

As a result, Kiraly gave an impassioned speech last fall to the board that made an impact. With Kiraly at the helm, they started a "next-generation committee" to brainstorm ideas.

"The rules that we are focusing on are minimizing the amount of time a person has to live in Laguna Beach before they can be in their first show," she said. "Right now, it's 18 months. We're trying to move it to a

year."

She also wants to make other changes, including a "youth booth" to feature Laguna College of Art and Design students, for example. Kiraly recently met with an LCAD official to discuss how that might happen.

Something needs to be done, she said, because the vacancy trend is clear.

"If you have an empty booth, you make it into a seating area or you make it an open space, but this has never happened before," she said. "So it started happening, and then it happened again, and then it happened again."

"And I just started to talk to my friends about it, saying you know, our older people are getting older, retiring, moving away, passing away. Where are the new people? Where are the young people?"

Which gets back to Laguna's lack of affordable housing.

"Certainly, we're getting some new people; we have 17 new exhibitors this year, which is nice but it's not enough. We've had some young people, but it's really,

really hard to move to Laguna to be an artist, to spend all that money to maybe not make anything."

Kiraly is seeing the attrition in all demographic levels, even among established artists.

"Two people on my committee might not make it to 10 years," she said. "They've been at the show all these years. These are people who want to stay in Laguna Beach, and they're heartbroken at the lack of affordability."

The committee is continuing its work and will present recommendations to the board at the next annual meeting in August. In the meantime, Kiraly welcomes ideas.

"We're losing our artists, and Laguna is just going to be just a bunch of rich people. Without an influx of young people coming in, I don't see how we have a really strong future in the long run. That's my feeling."

**DAVID HANSEN** is editor of Under Laguna in Laguna Beach. He can be reached at [david@underlaguna.com](mailto:david@underlaguna.com).

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# Laguna Beach High graduates celebrate by hitting the sand



Photos by Don Leach

**LAGUNA BEACH HIGH** seniors throw their caps in celebration as they complete the parade walk down Ocean Avenue to Main Beach as part of a week of graduation activities on Wednesday in Laguna Beach.

Laguna Beach has a style unto itself, and so the town kept with tradition and trotted out its graduating seniors ahead of the commencement ceremony.

The Breakers of the Class of 2023 marched down Ocean Avenue, across South Coast Highway and onto Main Beach on Wednesday, a rite of passage for Lagunans completing high school.

Laguna Beach High's 272 graduates then filled Guyer Field on Thursday evening to have their names called and receive their diplomas.

Mara Williams earned valedictorian honors, and Myha Pinto laid claim to being the salutatorian of the class.

"Today is your day," Williams said in the valedictory speech. "I hope you know your worth and know that no one can take it from you. You will never be a burden, and there will always be at least one person who wants you to succeed and prosper. And if you can't find that person,

know that I want you to succeed, know that your teachers want you to succeed and know your classmates want you to succeed."

Andrew Kelleher led attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance. Speeches were also delivered by science teacher Jennifer Merritt, as well as class speakers Aaron Poe and Dempsey Sadler.

Sadler compared her classmates to the beaches that they stared out at from campus during the course of their time at the school, shifting with the tide and changing for the better.

"In the face of change, we, too, changed," Sadler wrote in her prepared remarks. "Individually, we transformed, and collectively, we grew into something so much greater. Today, as we leave these sands for other shores, we know from experience that we won't merely be swept out with the tide, never to return. Instead, we venture into new currents, making space for the new sands of classes that will remain behind us."

— Andrew Turner



**GRADUATING BREAKERS** cross Coast Highway during the 2023 graduate parade on Wednesday in downtown Laguna Beach.

## Back Bay/Monte Vista High fetes its Class of '23

Among the Newport-Mesa Unified School District graduates who've walked the stage to receive their diplomas — a symbol of the successful completion of a K-12 education — perhaps none are as inspiring as those from Back Bay/Monte Vista High School.

Unlike most of their peers, these students have often overcome setbacks that have pulled them off the graduation track, preventing them from being able to matriculate onto the next stage of their lives.

But with the kindness and support of educators at the Costa Mesa continuation school, along with curriculum models that allow for independent study and

opportunities to recover lost credits quickly, many students not only bounce back but find themselves looking forward to what life has in store for them.

In a morning ceremony at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Newport Beach Thursday, 79 Class of 2023 graduates were celebrated by teachers and administrators as well as family members and loved ones for finishing their high school careers and overcoming obstacles that stood in the way between them and success.

Among this year's class, 38 have decided to continue their educational journey, applying to attend trade schools and community colleges in the fall. Another stu-

dent was recruited to join the military.

Although Back Bay is a continuation school, while Monte Vista is an independent study option for students who cannot maintain a daily school schedule, the two have shared a campus for years.

That will change next school year, however, when Monte Vista staff will relocate to another facility capable of housing more than 100 students who previously attended Newport-Mesa's 100% virtual Cloud Campus.

Established during the COVID-19 pandemic, the totally online campus graduated its last class in a separate ceremony Thursday.

— Sara Cardine



**GRADUATE AND** student speaker Breanna Fuentes, left, waves to family and friends as she picks up her diploma on Thursday.

**BACK BAY/MONTE VISTA** seniors Thursday cheer as their matriculation from the continuation and independent school is announced at St. Andrews Church in Newport Beach.



Photos by Don Leach Staff Photographer



**BACK BAY/MONTE VISTA** graduate Ruby Villicana gets a big hug from Erma Felix Thursday after the school's commencement ceremony.

On a bright and sunny day in a break from what has been June gloom, Corona del Mar High School graduates celebrated on Thursday in what their principal, Jacob Haley, said was the 60th commencement ceremony since the campus was founded in 1962.

Newport-Mesa Unified School District officials confirmed that 421 students graduated from the high school on Thursday with 98% of them planning to attend a four-year college or university. The remaining 2% are anticipated to attend a two-year college or enter the workplace. About 84% earned a GPA of or above a 3.0 and 37% earned a 4.0 or more.

"The high school journey has not been linear, but the perseverance of the class is evident in their determination, their grit and their togetherness," said Haley. "[Thursday] marks a special time as we are not only recognizing the graduating class of 2023, but also the culmination of 13 years of public education and the launching point into the next chapter of life."

Student speakers included TJ Rokos and Ella Rosen, and Sophia Rabin, who was selected as a U.S. Presidential Scholar in the Arts this year, performed.

Twenty-five students have also been recognized as National Merit Scholars, with one recognized as a National Merit Scholar scholarship recipient. About \$200 million has been received in scholarship money across this graduating class.

— Lilly Nguyen

## CdM Sea Kings' Class of 2023 are triumphant



**LEFT:** Corona del Mar High School graduates toss their caps into the air during the 2023 commencement on Thursday in Newport Beach.

**LOWER LEFT:** A Corona del Mar graduate raises his diploma.

**LOWER RIGHT:** Principal Jacob Haley, left, hugs ASB President TJ Rokos after receiving his diploma.

Photos by Scott Smeltzer | Staff Photographer







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