

Daily Pilot & Times OC

SUNDAY, MARCH 2, 2025 /// Serving the coastal cities of Orange County and beyond /// dailypilot.com

Film fetes success of twin sports

Industry insiders gather for a premier of a documentary on Orange County's part in the billion-dollar surf-skate culture.

BY MATT SZABO

It took producers Scott Hays and Terry Corwin about 18 months to make their new documentary "The Surf-Skate Business Evolution: The OC Effect."

The Laguna Beach residents ended up reaching a conclusion in considerably less time — namely, that Orange County is the epicenter of the surf-skate culture worldwide.

Many of the industry's bright minds showed up as the documentary held a private premiere Thursday night at the Lido Theater in Newport Beach.

"The people in this room tonight launched an industry that currently is worth \$13 billion," said Hays, the founder of nonprofit multimedia company OC World. "That's billion, with a 'B.'"

Steve Van Doren, the son of late Vans co-founder Paul Van Doren, continues to play a key role in the family company, which is celebrating its 60th anniversary next year. He flashed a "shaka" hand sign associated with the surf culture as he entered the theater.

Bob McKnight, co-founder and former chief executive of Quiksilver, entertained the guests during a post-documentary question-and-answer session moderated by Hayes. He described how Danny Kwock



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

VANS UNOFFICIAL brand ambassador Steve Van Doren arrives to the premiere of the documentary "The Surf-Skate Business Evolution: The OC Effect," at the Lido Theater in Newport Beach on Thursday.

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Elevating digestive health in Orange County

UCI Health

Chao Digestive Health Institute



Parents, teachers rally behind OCC Children's Center

Institution has become site of a battle between officials proposing to cut programs, staffing and those trying to save it.

BY SARA CARDINE

A beloved Orange Coast College children's center — where the care and instruction of infants, toddlers and preschoolers is rooted in play and tykes can tend to a garden or pet live animals — has recently become the scene of a battleground.

That's where parents and teachers are squaring off against proposed program cuts that would eliminate more than half of the Costa Mesa center's offerings and force the relocation or

layoff of staff members, many who've worked there for decades.

Officials who oversee the Harry and Grace Steele Children's Center announced the impending reductions, tentatively slated to take effect on July 1, in a Feb. 21 email to staff. They maintain years of budgetary shortfalls requiring the annual outlay of more than \$500,000 to the program led to need for the reorganization.

Madjid Nourimand, OCC's vice president of student services, said the center was initially created as a childcare option for community college students with small children. But as trends changed and the number of student-parents dwindled, enrollment widened to include children of faculty mem-

See **Center**, page A2



Photos by Sarah Mosqueda

NEWPORT HARBOR students put their culinary skills to the test at ProStart Cup 2025.

O.C. culinary students heat up the competition at ProStart Cup 2025

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

A Newport Harbor culinary student watched a pan of scallops intently as the seafood sizzled over the heat of a butane burner. Nearby, other students from the high school whisked saffron cream sauce and meticulously plated dollops of golden potato parsnip puree. Chef judges with white toques perched on their heads walked around the table of tense students as they cooked.

"Last five minutes!" shouted one judge.

"Heard!" the students barked back in unison.

Newport Harbor was one of four Orange County high schools to participate in the 2025 ProStart Cup, a two-day entrepreneurship competition put on



STUDENTS FROM Marina High School compete at the California Restaurant Foundation's ProStart Cup.

by the California Restaurant Foundation. The competition is just one facet of CRF's ProStart program, a two-year industry-backed culinary arts and restaurant management program for high school students that is designed to prepare the industry

leaders of the future.

Held this year at the Proud Bird Food Bazaar and Events Center in Los Angeles on Feb. 24 and 25, students competed for scholarships and the chance to

See **Students**, page A8

ALSO FROM THE DAILY PILOT:



Courtesy of Onco-Ballet Foundation

ONCO-BALLET IS ON POINTE WITH INAUGURAL TEACHER TRAINING IN LAGUNA HILLS PAGE A5

TWO SANTA ANA PROGRESSIVES MAKE BIDS FOR THE 68TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT PAGE A4

Buena Park opens doors to taekwondo company

BY GABRIEL SAN ROMÁN

Kukkiwon, a South Korean taekwondo company, is partnering with Buena Park for future events and economic growth as it expands its reach into the United States.

Branch leaders in seven U.S. states, including California, have recently been appointed by the company.

Jinseob Kim, secretary general of the Kukkiwon California branch, attended the Buena Park City Council meeting on Feb. 25 as council members considered a two-year agreement allowing the company to use its public facilities for five days at no cost.

"I hope that the city of Buena Park and Kukkiwon will grow together," Kim told council members on Tuesday.

Buena Park is home to a sizable Asian American population, Orange County's second Koreatown and an outdoor mall that serves as a hub for local Korean Americans.

By establishing a presence in Buena Park, Kukkiwon pledged to promote and recommend the city's hotels for international and out-of-town guests at its events. City officials hoped that a boost in tourism would also help surrounding retail and restaurants.

But not all were pleased by the proposed partnership.

Yong Choi, a former Buena Park planning commissioner, warned of a taekwondo takeover by Kukkiwon while raising ques-



Andrew Medicchini | Associated Press

OLYMPIC ATHLETES compete in a taekwondo quarterfinal match during the 2024 Summer Olympics.

tions of fairness regarding the facilities agreement.

Choi, who teaches taekwondo and owns a martial arts business himself, claimed that Kukkiwon earns profits from issuing Dan certificates recognizing a person's rank in the martial art.

Kukkiwon does have an interest in expanding its Dan certification reach.

According to statements made by the organization in the press, only a quarter of California's 1,400 taekwondo schools issue Dan certificates.

Choi feared that the company's growing presence in Buena Park would force other local taekwondo small businesses to close.

"They have [the] power to control," he said. "I don't think that's right or an equal opportunity for the local business people."

Choi stated that if there's a facilities-use agreement

between the Buena Park and Kukkiwon, the same terms should be extended to other smaller businesses.

After an initial discussion at the Jan. 28 council meeting, Kukkiwon sought all-day use of the city's Community Center Ballroom for an inaugural event as well as a four-day use of its Veterans Hall for a weekend event starting in late May.

Any other events at city facilities would be at the usual rental rate.

Councilman Carlos Franco briefly raised the issue of granting a "potentially unfair advantage" to a private company. He asked what the rental rates were for the city's Veterans Hall and Community Center Ballroom.

According to city documents, the Veterans Hall rents for \$89 an hour, including staff. The Community Center Ballroom rents

See **Company**, page A4



Michael Elkins

STUDENTS WRAPPED caution tape and chains around a Little Free Library in Corona del Mar in order to bring awareness to budget cuts and proposed book bans affecting libraries in Orange County and across the country.

Chapman students lock up Little Free Libraries to tell story of cuts, censorship

BY ERIC LICAS

A couple walking their dog in a tranquil Corona del Mar neighborhood did a double take as they passed by a group of four Chapman University students wrapping neon caution tape around a wooden box stuffed with books on Orchid Street. More heads turned as they bound the Little Free Library with chains and then secured it with a padlock.

"There was a man driving a truck and kind of

stuck his head out, and he took pictures of us, we think," student Kestyn Hudson said. "We don't know for sure, but we think he took pictures of us, maybe to submit us to one of the neighborhood watch websites. Because 'What are these kids doing with caution tape?'"

The display was temporary and similar to others the students created in Orange and Laguna Beach. It's one of several campaigns developed for the Public Relations Student

Society of America's Bateman Case Study Competition.

This year, contestants were tasked with promoting EveryLibrary. The national organization advocates in support of library funding and opposes what many progressive groups describe as book bans.

The future of local libraries has been on the minds of many students at Chapman's campus in Orange due to recent events,

See **Libraries**, page A4

The Chao Digestive Health Institute delivers advanced care for the region.

ucihealth.org/ChaoDHI



CENTER

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bers and the broader community.

But that model is no longer working as expenses outpace revenue, Niroumand said in an interview Thursday. While the projected expenses for the 2024-25 academic year are forecast at nearly \$2 million, officials anticipate revenues of just \$1.37 million.

The proposal to segue from five classes to just two — eliminating the center's infant, toddler and young preschool cohorts and leaving just two preschool classrooms for kids aged 3 to 5 — could possibly involve layoffs within the 14-member staff and force community parents to find other providers.

"The college has looked at various sources to see how we could continue the program. But looking at our financial structure overall, we want to take it in the direction that is true to our mission of supporting students," Niroumand said Thursday.

"Reducing some of these services would get us to that goal of being fiscally responsible and to ensuring our students can be supported."

But a contingent of parents and teachers who've been protesting the changes take a different view. Appearing at collegiate meetings and events as part of a "Steele the School Back" campaign, they blame years of mismanagement for the budgetary shortfall.

Newport Beach mom Courtney Prouty, who authored a [change.org petition](#) that had as of Friday garnered 2,266 signatures, has a 3-year-old son enrolled at the children's center and graduated two twins, now 6, from the pro-



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

PARENTS INCLUDING Dave Bower, Katrina Rey and Megan Johnson-Richards, from right, demonstrate against a decision to scale back programs at Orange Coast College's Harry and Grace Steele Children's Center, during a state-of-district meeting at the Coast Community College District center on Wednesday.

gram.

The school's stellar reputation as a place where high-quality instructors stay for 20 years or more inspired the Prouty family to add the twins' names to a long waitlist when they were just 4 months old. It took two years to get to the top.

"It's a really well-known program. They've got tons of outdoor space, and a lot of their instruction takes place outside," she said Thursday. "You walk into the place and you're like, 'I want to be a kid here.'"

Things were pretty much humming along until parents like Prouty got the Feb. 21 email describing the cuts. They started talking with teachers and digging into a history of what they describe as poor decisions made by school officials, including a former center director who was placed on administrative leave prior to leaving OCC in August 2021.

Prouty and others

learned the Harry and Grace Steele Children's Center had for years kept student-to-teacher ratios low enough to maintain Title V grant funding, a pool of federal money available for maternal and child-related programs.

Under former director Patricia Mendoza, the employee placed on leave, the center relinquished that federal designation, instead remaining compliant with California's less strict Title 22. The move allowed for more children per classroom without the need for more instructors but also caused an annual loss of up to \$500,000 in Title V funding, according to Prouty.

"Through that transition the ratio changed. By doing this, [Mendoza] was officially taking away the funds that had sustained the center," she said. "Nobody in their right mind who runs a child educational center would have given away that Title V status. This is how we've gotten here."

One children's center instructor, who asked to be identified only as "Susie" out of fear of retaliation, said while staff knew about budgetary slump going back to the COVID-19 pandemic, she was shocked by last week's announcement.

"We were blindsided," she said. "Are they trying to get rid of us? Are they trying to phase us out? Eight of us are going to lose their positions with the possibility of reassignment, but if there's no job they're a good fit for, then at the end of June we'll get a layoff notice."

She and others speculate whether officials are angling to privatize the facility, a strategy undertaken at OCC's Recycling Center and campus bookstore. The latter, along with the 323-unit campus housing complex the Harbor, also run by a private leasing company, fall within Niroumand's purview.

Niroumand on Thursday acknowledged the center's shift away from Title V to



A YOUNGSTER with his parents helps joins demonstrators.

Title 22 resulted in some lost grant funding but allowed for more flexibility and fewer restrictions regarding student-teacher ratios. He also recognized the reduction could possibly lead to layoffs but said human resources staff would work to relocate excess employees to other positions on campus.

Niroumand maintained there was currently no active plan to privatize the center, simply a desire to pare down its offerings to its original intended recipients — students and faculty.

"There are no plans at this time. But in the future, we may explore what's possible, what's viable," he said. "Again, the primary focus will be how any plans in the future will best serve the students."

Costa Mesa mom Carly Bower, who has two daughters enrolled at the center and a 1-year-old son on the waitlist, said Wednesday parents are mobilizing to come up with ways they might help keep the site and its offerings intact, through fundraisers, special events and classes.

"To be honest, we'd be willing to pay more," she said. "If the facility is at a deficit, I think most parents would agree to up the tuition. All the teachers there

treat the children like their own family. You look forward to taking your children there."

Parents and teachers attended a State of the District event Thursday hosted by Coast Community College District, the governing body that oversees Orange Coast College, to grow support for their campaign.

They will turn out for a CCCD Board meeting next Wednesday, although the matter is not officially on the agenda, and a March 10 special meeting announced Thursday, where the center and its future will be up for discussion.

"Susie" is hopeful someone higher up will hear their pleas and consider their ideas for how the Harry and Grace Steele Children's Center, a treasured resource, may yet be saved.

"We're not just babysitters," she said. "We are potty training and teaching them to read and write. We're teaching them self-help skills and how to take care of their belongings and to talk to one another and to listen. We're growing humans here, good humans, and we are really feeling that we are not valued at all."

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Colorectal surgeon Dr. Skandan Shanmugan and gastroenterologist Dr. John G. Lee lead the UCI Health Chao Digestive Health Institute.

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To learn more, visit ucihealth.org/ChaoDHI

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Progressives bid for 68th Assembly District

BY GABRIEL SAN ROMÁN

With the 68th Assembly district at the center of Latino politics in Orange County, the 2026 election is poised to be a referendum on its fate.

The district — which is 71% Latino and where 50% of registered voters are Democrats — encompasses Anaheim, Santa Ana and Orange.

It has already fielded three Democrat candidates — all under 40 — since incumbent Assemblyman Avelino Valencia announced a bid for 34th state Senate district in December.

The candidates vying for his open seat hail from Santa Ana City Council, a dais marked by policy battles between progressive and moderate Democrats.

Santa Ana City Councilman David Peñaloza's candidacy aligns more with Valencia, who has endorsed him alongside Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas and Santa Ana Mayor Valerie Amezcua.

Two new progressive challengers are both looking to push the district's representation in Sacramento to the left.

"This has historically been a moderate district, even when it has Latino representation," said Mike Madrid, author of "The Latino Century: How America's

Largest Minority is Transforming Democracy" and a senior fellow at UC Irvine's School of Social Ecology. "This is a family-centered working class district with working class concerns as a priority."

Santa Ana Councilman Johnathan Ryan Hernandez surprised political observers with his assembly campaign launch in January. He hopes that the district's working class concerns pivot towards progressive policies.

"We don't have a representative who is protecting us when it comes to the cost of living," he said. "We need to take on universal healthcare. Rent control is a start, but increasing the minimum wage is how we start really addressing the root causes of inequality."

On Feb. 19, Santa Ana Councilwoman Jessie Lopez entered the race and pledged to lower housing and utility costs while addressing corporate price gouging.

"I've lived the struggles that many in our community face, from working multiple jobs at a young age, to still working two jobs now as a sitting councilwoman, to worrying if I will ever be able to buy a home," she said. "I've seen how bad policy can hurt people. I also know how good policy can change the lives of community members.

That's what motivates me."

On council, Lopez and Hernandez agree more often than not on key progressive policies like rent control and police oversight. As young politicians, they both tout working class backgrounds as products of Santa Ana public schools.

Lopez, a Salvadoran American, grew up in Santa Ana's Willard neighborhood with a single mother who worked multiple jobs to provide for her children. She attended Santa Ana public schools and credited after-school programs like the Boys & Girls Club for instilling values of giving back to the community.

Her campaign is focused on the cost of living, housing and expanding economic opportunities.

"These are the issues that impact everyday people in our community, whether you're a parent trying to ensure that your child gets a quality education, or someone working two to three jobs to keep a roof over your head," she said.

Hernandez, a Chicano, grew up in Santa Ana's Artesia-Pilar neighborhood, which he now represents as a councilman.

Since first winning election in 2020, he has called himself the "progressive leader" of the council on issues like legalizing street cruising, declaring August



Lopez by Dania Maxwell / Los Angeles Times; Hernandez courtesy of Johnathan Ryan Hernandez

PROGRESSIVES Jessie Lopez and Johnathan Ryan Hernandez are competing in the 68th Assembly district race.

as Chicano Heritage Month and police oversight.

The issue of police violence hit close to home less than a year into Hernandez's first term when Anaheim SWAT officers shot and killed Brandon Lopez, his cousin, during a standoff in Santa Ana.

As the result of Assembly Bill 1506, the state Department of Justice investigated the fatal shooting, instead of the Orange County district attorney's office, since his cousin was unarmed.

The agency cleared the officers in a 2023 report. Grieving families have expressed frustration with how long investigations have taken, as well as decisions not to prosecute police. If elected, Hernandez

pledged to be a critical voice for police accountability, including on issues like qualified immunity for officers.

On economic issues, he wants to see the state's minimum wage rise from \$16.50 an hour to \$25 an hour. Using Santa Ana's local law as a model, Hernandez also favors lowering the rent cap statewide from 5% to 3%.

"My career has been a reflection of my community," he said. "My community has been rent burdened."

In addressing the housing crisis, Lopez backs Assemblyman Alex Lee's public housing initiative, which seeks to create a taxpayer-funded agency to build more mixed-income units.

Rent collected would fund more projects.

"I support the revolving door of dollars being managed by the government not only to operate these complexes, these housing units, but to invest further in creating more housing opportunities," she said. "Our families are now competing with hedge funds coming into our local market and taking that opportunity away from them. Working people will never be able to outbid a hedge fund. That's just reality."

Turning the district Latino and progressive hasn't yet become political reality.

In 2022, Valencia won election decisively as Bulmaro Vicente, the sole progressive challenger from Santa Ana, did not advance past the primary.

Madrid sees a challenge ahead with two progressives in the race, especially given the shift in Latino politics towards the right, in general, during the past two election cycles.

"A lot of it is going to come down to personality," Madrid said. "Who works harder? Who knocks on more doors? Who raises the money? Who's getting support from Sacramento. All of those things matter in electing a representative."

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School district preps meal kits for Ramadan

BY GABRIEL SAN ROMÁN

Muslim students at the Garden Grove Unified School District will be able to take meal kits home during the holy month of Ramadan when they are otherwise fasting in observance during the school day.

Bento boxes with a meal, fruits, vegetables and a drink are set to be distributed for free to students who attend school and request them as a religious accommodation during the Islamic holy month, which begins on Friday.

Observant Muslims abstain from food and drink from dawn until dusk during Ramadan until breaking their fast with meal called *iftar*.

Students can pick up the meal kits starting on March 3 through March 28.

The initiative came by way of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's approval of the California Department of Education's waiver request to allow local school districts to distribute free meals from the National School Lunch and School Breakfast programs for Muslim students to take home during Ramadan.

"We're always looking for opportunities to serve our students," said Agnes Lally, director of food services at Garden Grove Unified. "We have a very diverse population here at the district. When this waiver became available, we wanted to make sure that we had this opportunity for our fasting students."

Garden Grove Unified completed and submitted an opt-in survey towards that end.

Parents and students interested in the take-home meal kits must complete an online form and notify the district of how



Courtesy of the Garden Grove Unified School District

FREE MEAL KITS for breakfast and lunch will be distributed to fasting Muslim students at Garden Grove Unified School District during Ramadan in March.

many days during the week they will be requesting them.

"My staff will prepare the meal kits every day," Lally said. "We'll put together a bento box for breakfast and lunch with all the proper components. Before our staff goes home, they will deliver the meal kits to the school office."

The program has gained praise from the greater Los Angeles area office of the Council on American-Islamic Relations.

"This initiative exemplifies the values of understanding and respect that are crucial in educa-

tional settings, ensuring that all students, regardless of their background, feel supported," said Hussam Ayloush, CAIR-LA's executive director. "We hope that more school districts will take similar steps to ensure Muslim students feel seen and valued at school, not only during Ramadan but year-round."

The meal kits see to it that observing Ramadan at the district won't come at the expense of breakfast and lunch that students otherwise would have eaten during any other time of the school year.

"In our district, 81% of our students are socio-economically disadvantaged," said Abby Broyles, a district spokeswoman. "Having free breakfast and lunch available during Ramadan, it's a great service to ensure that those families still have access to free, nutritious meals."

On Thursday, the Anaheim Union High School District announced that it will also provide take-home meal kits to Muslim students during Ramadan.

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COMPANY

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for \$167 an hour, with staffing included.

"This is strictly a business agreement in terms of bringing more economic benefits to the city by accommodating all the international and possibly out-of-town visitors," said Mayor Joyce Ahn, in support of the arrangement with Kukkiwon.

Kukkiwon is expected to draw up to 4,000 people to the area by hosting the World Taekwondo Hanmadang at the Anaheim Convention Center in July.

Ahn commented that no small business can match that.

Choi objected that Anaheim's resort hotels would be in a better position to benefit.

Councilwoman Lamiya Hoque recommended that there be a one-year evaluation of the agreement and its economic impact on Buena Park with the second-year of the contract being contingent on demonstrated success.

"I think it would be for council's benefit to see what would come from that within the year," she said.

The proposed amendment to the agreement found favor with the rest of the council, which unanimously approved the partnership.

Ahn noted that Kukkiwon isn't a nonprofit and that bigger international events will be hosted outside of Buena Park.

"That said, the visitors will be encouraged to use the hotels in Buena Park," she said. "We're not expecting 3,000 or 4,000 hotel stays."

The agreement also calls on Kukkiwon to strengthen collaboration and outreach with local taekwondo schools in the city.

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LIBRARIES

Continued from page A2

project partners Hudson, Michael Elkins, Brandon Mahgerefteh and Isaac Persky said. Officials in that city reduced hours at three of its libraries in January. That move came after budget cuts across every department last summer and the failure of a half-cent sales tax increase proposed on the November ballot.

Elkins, Hudson, Mahgerefteh and Persky chose to focus on small community libraries because those are a beloved resource many people see as they go about their business in neighborhoods across Southern California and beyond. Seeing something that allowed people to freely exchange stories and ideas with their neighbors was jarring to many who engaged with their campaign, and became invitation to a broader conversation about access to literature, freedom of speech and



Eric Licas

CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY public relations students, from left, Brandon Mahgerefteh, Michael Elkins, Isaac Persky and Kestyn Hudson, inside Leatherby Libraries.

prompted its opponents to

circulate a petition asking the Huntington Beach council to ensure libraries remain a publicly held resource that garnered thousands of signatures. However, members of the council claimed many were obtained under false pretenses, and they have issued a survey asking those who signed if they were given false information or coerced.

Debates surrounding public libraries in Orange County and across the nation may rage well into the foreseeable future, well past the end of the Bateman competition on March 3. For their part, the four contestants from Chapman University realize the issue isn't going to simply resolve itself any time soon.

"We would love to go on beyond this competition because it's such an important thing," Elkins said. "So we absolutely want to continue to fight for this."

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Some of the most heated debate on those topics have come out of Huntington Beach, which approved the creation of a parent/guardian children's book review board in April. Supporters of that decision say it protects impressionable youth from exposure to obscene material and gives parents more agency in raising their kids.

They also note that flagged material won't be removed but instead relocated from the children's section into an adult section. Parents would still have access to it.

Book bans in other cities have often targeted titles that make reference to sexuality or LGBTQ+ identity. Examples of children's material that have been restricted elsewhere in America include Judy Blume's "Are you there God? It's me Margaret" and Todd Parr's "The Family Book." The latter captured the ire of conservatives for a passage that reads: "some families have two moms or two dads."

Critics say Huntington Beach's review board is an exercise in censorship that stifles diversity and tolerance of the LGBTQ+ community. On Wednesday librarian Erin Spivey and two local teens joined a coalition of organizations led by the ACLU Foundation of Southern California in a lawsuit challenging the city's book review board.

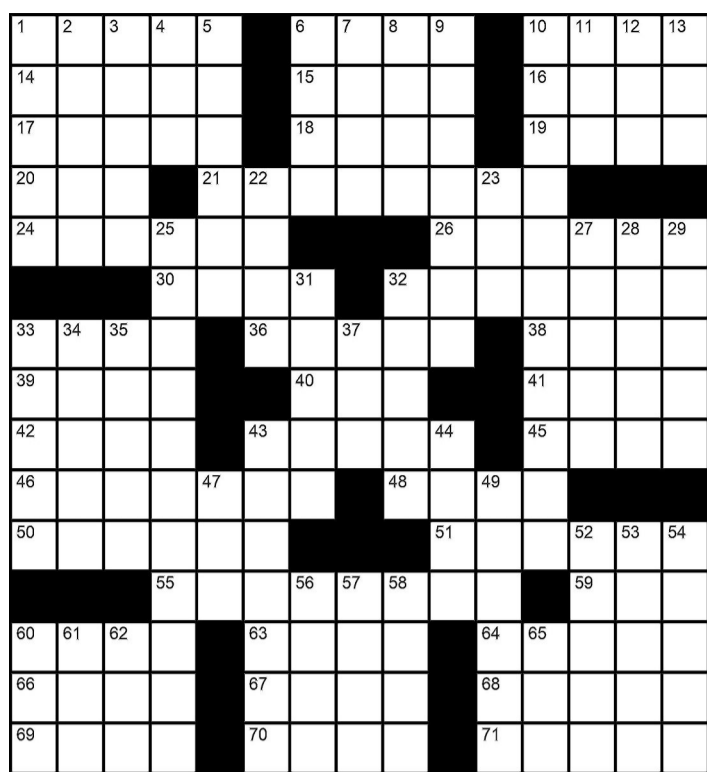
Huntington Beach City Council also raised eyebrows after approving the installation of a plaque commemorating the Central Library's 50th year of service. It prominently lists the words magical, alluring, galvanizing and adventurous, lined up so that their first letters spell out the abbreviation MAGA, shorthand for the phrase often printed onto red baseball caps and worn by supporters of President Trump.

Conservatives and progressives in the coastal Orange County community also clashed over a proposal to privatize the city's libraries. That plan eventually fell through and

THE DAILY COMMUTER PUZZLE

By Stella Zawistowski

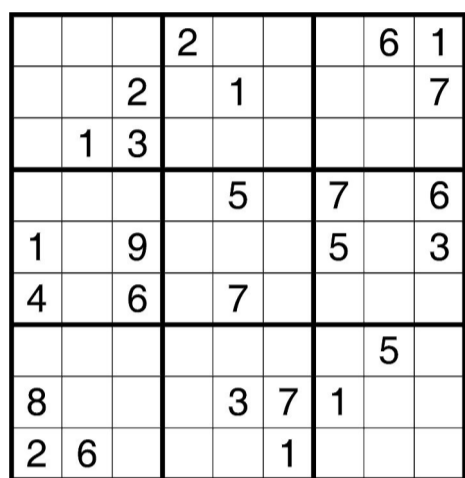
- ACROSS**
 1 Legally sound
 6 Former Mets stadium
 10 "Roughing it" spot
 14 Pleasant smell
 15 Use the phone
 16 Villainous
 17 _ and bounds
 18 Gives weapons to
 19 Gentlewoman
 20 Come to a close
 21 Good-looking
 24 Tried a bite of
 26 Long-eared prey animal
 30 _ and ends
 32 IRS information: 2 wds.
 33 Prefix meaning "half"
 36 Barcelona's country
 38 Trade group: Abbr.
 39 Skating jump
 40 Flow back
 41 Use a stopwatch
 42 Bar mitzvah, e.g.
 43 Marathons and sprints
 45 "Rhyme Pays" rapper
 46 Apply, as lotion
 48 Small city
 50 Gave assistance to
 51 Where a pup can go off-leash: 2 wds.
 55 U.S. airline
 59 Anger
 60 Bird's wing movement
 63 "Star Wars" sage
 64 Salad utensil
 66 Similar to
 67 Biblical garden
 68 Beginning
 69 2025, e.g.
 70 Sail the high _
 71 Requires



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.



For answers to the crossword and Sudoku puzzles, see page A8.

- DOWN**
 1 Parking pro
 2 Sports venue
 3 Fills with cargo
 4 Little demon
 5 Sprinted
 6 Look over
 7 Difficult
 8 Shade trees
 9 Election loser
 10 Having a party
 11 Actress Gardner
 12 _-Atlantic states
 13 25-Down layer
 22 Contributes
 23 Greatest possible, for short
 25 Bathroom

- product: 2 wds.
 27 Fundamental
 28 "Who's there?" answer: 2 wds.
 29 Ethical principle
 31 Primitive weapon
 32 Dalai Lama's land
 33 Very severe
 34 Banish
 35 Tin or gold
 37 "Abbott Elementary" network
 43 Night flights
 44 Bubbly beverage
 47 Skirt edge
 49 Chinese dumpling
 52 Washer cycle
 53 Strongly advised
 54 Birds' homes
 56 Took the bus
 57 Notion
 58 Food bank containers
 60 Aviate
 61 Tell a fib
 62 Alias acronym: Abbr.
 65 _ for the road

Tribune Media Services



Courtesy of Onco-Ballet Foundation

ONCO-BALLET FOUNDER and executive director Anna Wassman-Cox demonstrates ballet combinations at V&T Classical Ballet & Dance Academy in Laguna Hills.

Onco-Ballet is on pointe with inaugural teacher training in Laguna Hills

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

Orange County native Anna Wassman-Cox always knew ballet could spark joy. But it wasn't until the two-time breast cancer survivor came back to dance after battling her illness that she realized ballet could heal. Wassman-Cox is the founder and executive director of the Irvine-based Onco-Ballet Foundation, a nonprofit dedicated to providing free or low-cost ballet classes to the cancer community in order to "spark joy, facilitate healing and foster self-expression." "I created this ballet class that is super modifiable and approachable for anybody in the cancer community, to help them really tune out from what is going on around them while they are going through cancer and tune back into their bodies," said Wassman-Cox. Wassman-Cox was 25 years old when she was

first diagnosed with breast cancer. She experienced a recurrence at the age of 29. As a former professional ballet dancer, she found herself drawn back to her most familiar form of expression. "Sometimes, especially with something like cancer, you can't always put everything in words," said Wassman-Cox. "Dance is that way to express yourself without having to speak." Getting back to the barre inspired her to help other people to learn to use the discipline of ballet to feel strong again and regain confidence. By modifying true ballet techniques into chair ballet, for example, which can be done sitting down, or modifying movements for breast cancer survivors like herself who no longer have the same range of motion lifting their arms above their heads, she is creating a way for women to focus on what their bodies can do, rather than

what they can't. "Our classes are structured where we make parts of it consistent so it's the same every single time. That way they can build up that confidence and reach those goals," said Wassman-Cox. Ballet also brings in a level of whimsy for those who practiced it as young girls — or wanted to. "It brings in that nostalgia and beauty aspect because who doesn't want to feel like they are that ballerina they always dreamed of being?" Since Wassman-Cox founded the Onco-Ballet Foundation in 2024, the organization has hosted classes locally at Hoag Hospital and in Chicago at Rush University Medical Center. It has also partnered with Movement Pointe for events. Earlier this month, Onco-Ballet held its inaugural teacher training event, hosting aspiring

See *Training*, page A8

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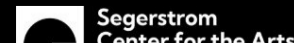
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COLUMN | **PATRICE APODACA**

Trump administration move could affect scientific research at UCI

Dr. Dan Cooper was a young pediatric resident when he was overcome by a sense of futility as he cared for a 14-year-old boy with cystic fibrosis. There was nothing more that could be done to save the boy from the terrible progressive, genetic disease that affects the lungs, pancreas and other organs. He would die that night.

"We had used every bit of our knowledge to help this kid, and we were



That's what makes it so frustrating to see scientists — and science itself — under attack.

One of the latest senseless and needlessly damaging assaults is the Trump administration's move to limit indirect funding for scientific research from the National Institutes of Health to no more than 15% of the value of the grants it awards.

The NIH is the largest funder of biomedical research in the world,

The indirect funding the NIH provides is frequently misunderstood, but it is essential to carrying out this critical research.

going to fail," he recalled.

Not long after, Cooper did a fellowship at Columbia University that was largely research-based. His career as a physician had taken a turn. Instead of spending most of his time attending patients, as he had long assumed he would do, he would go on to devote the bulk of his long and impressive career to finding ways to treat them.

Today, at 76, Cooper is still going strong at UC Irvine, where he is the associate vice chancellor for clinical and translational science. His is focused on taking scientific discoveries made in a laboratory and using them in the development of clinical interventions and treatments — the invaluable and practical approach of expediting the lab-to-therapy pipeline.

It's no exaggeration to state that many people are alive or have experienced a significant improvement in the quality of their lives because of scientists like Cooper.

helping in the development and advancements of treatments for cancer, Alzheimer's disease, cardiovascular disease, infectious diseases and so much more. It is a key reason why the U.S. is a global superpower in the production of cutting-edge biological science.

The indirect funding the NIH provides is frequently misunderstood, but it is essential to carrying out this critical research. Generally speaking, such funding is used to cover basic overhead. This includes the critical components of conducting successful research that are not necessarily focused on the science itself — facilities and administrative expenses such as office space and equipment, back office support, legal and compliance support, research security and biosafety, and utilities.

Until now, indirect funding has been negotiated with institutions on an individual basis and typically ranges from 25%

See *Apodaca*, page A8

COMMENTARY | **ERIK SKINDRUD**

Blackened dreams

The Pacific Beach Club in Huntington Beach was set to welcome members on Feb. 12, 1926, Abraham Lincoln's birthday. But it was burned down 3 weeks before its grand opening.

The mood was bright 100 years ago as the Pacific Beach Club neared completion by today's Newland Street and Pacific Coast Highway — just south of Huntington Beach's 1925 borders. Southern California's Black community had jumped over multiple roadblocks as it focused plans on this undistinguished stretch of sand.

Building in Orange County made sense, given the "informal but pervasive Jim Crow" that put Los Angeles County beaches off limits to Blacks, relates Daniel Cady, Ph.D., American history professor at Fresno State University.

The stakes were high, the need to act urgent, a 1925 ad in the Black-owned California Eagle newspaper told readers.

"The whites have for years enjoyed their clubs and organizations," it stated. "We must at this time awake ... NOW is the time ... There is ... no



New York Public Library

THE PACIFIC BEACH CLUB'S pavilion fronts the surf in this photo taken on Sept. 7, 1925. Labor Day brought thousands of Black residents to the Orange County location for the club's Bathing Girl and Children Contest and Beauty Parade. Note winning contestants at lower left. A bridge carrying the old coast highway over wetlands is at upper right.

place left on the Pacific Near Los Angeles where we may congregate for any purpose."

Titled "'Southern' California: White Southern Migrants in Greater Los Angeles 1920-1930," Cady's 2005 dissertation offers the most complete account of

the Pacific Beach Club story. It outlines a familiar narrative — Black aspirations frustrated by white fear, discomfort and racism.

That the story is not widely known is a shame. We never heard it at Peterson Elementary

School — about a mile from the Pacific Beach Club site. Nothing told me until an April 2, 1925, Los Angeles Times item, "Beach Club is Proposed by Negroes" popped up in my database browsing a

See *Dreams*, page A7

A WORD, PLEASE | **JUNE CASAGRANDE**

White House takes unprecedented step to stifle the people's proxies

If you've read this column before, you know about AP style. I've been writing about it for decades.

You know that the Associated Press Stylebook is a playbook for AP's own editors to ensure consistency in their stories, avoiding, for example, writing "5-year-old" on one page and "five-year-old" on the next, or writing "USA" on one page and "U.S.A." on the next. You know that the stylebook takes positions on matters of spelling, grammar, word usage, capitalization and punctuation. And you know that



sometimes AP's positions are controversial, like when its editors decided to allow "over" to mean "more than" in its style: "children over 5 years old."

AP makes these decisions for its own articles, updating its rules periodically as need arises, and many other publications choose to follow AP's popular style guide. Independent decision-making like this is normal in a free press, which itself is crucial to a functioning democracy.

Recent headlines involving AP are anything but normal. President Donald Trump's administration barred two AP reporters from covering White House events. The reason: AP did not change its style

guide to accommodate Trump's insistence that the Gulf of Mexico should be called the Gulf of America.

All Americans should be up in arms about a public servant trying to dictate the words news outlets use. They should be outraged that their representative refuses to answer to the people's proxies: mainstream journalists.

Yet too many people seem to think it's fine: "Who cares about AP? Mainstream media are the bad guys. Biased. Liars. 'Enemies of the people.'"

We've been told this for years. There's a multi-billion-dollar media establishment built on this narrative. The anti-mainstream-media media tell us: "Those other news

agencies are lying to you. We're the only ones you can trust." They stoke suspicion and play on the pride of people who want to believe they're too savvy to be conned.

The irony is that people who buy this argument are falling for one of the oldest cons in the book. "That guy over there just picked your pocket!" the pickpocket says as you turn the other way and he takes your wallet. Nothing suspends critical thinking like the belief that one is under attack.

In the world that the anti-mainstream-media have constructed, traditional news agencies can't be trusted, and they

See *Word*, page A8

MAILBAG

Policy questions arise as homeless disappear from park in Fountain Valley

In response to the Feb. 26 TimesOC newsletter, "How will Trump's policies hit O.C. where it hurts? Officials working to end homelessness look at uncertainties," my husband and I frequently walk the Mile Square Park in Fountain Valley.

We have noticed the homeless gathering in some areas of the park. A few days ago, we lost our

car keys and retraced our steps for two days straight. On the first day, we asked several homeless groups if anyone had found any car keys. They were all very friendly and wished us luck. On the second day, the homeless groups were nowhere to be found. They left behind some heartbreaking messages scrawled on cardboard and nearby walls.



Vicki Miko

A HOMELESS PERSON left behind this handwritten sign in Mile Square Park in Fountain Valley, a reader writes.

Meanwhile, we were very thankful that a park employee at the office found our keys. They were very helpful.

Our question is, where does the administration think the homeless are going to go? From place to place until — what? We do understand there are many concerns and safety issues. But how and where do the homeless get vital information about resources they may already have available to them without face-to-face communication? Most have no cellphones, no television, no internet, no way to travel to food shelters and know banks, except for hearing the news by word-of-mouth. Many need desperate help. In other words, it is up to law enforcement, first responders, advocates, informed

volunteers, printed signage and fliers, etc., to inform them.

How well are these approaches working?

As one example, CalAIM is a multiyear program that was approved in 2021. It is currently scheduled to expire in 2026. However, a person has to know this program exists and most importantly they must "qualify" to receive benefits.

Some people choose to live on the street no matter what. They do not want anything to do with "shelters." Where do they go? They still need resources to move from place to place. Where are the funds going to come from in Orange County, where federal dollars for its Continuum of Care are threatened? How

See *Mailbag*, page A8

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The Daily Pilot, established in 1907, is published Thursday through Sunday by Times Community News, a division of the Los Angeles Times. Subscriptions are available only by subscribing to The Times, Orange County.

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SPORTS

Continued from page A1

once stole board shorts from the brand's initial beach house at 56th Street on the Newport Peninsula.

Kwoc later ended up a team rider for Quiksilver. "Eventually, he ran marketing for the whole damn company," McKnight said with a laugh.

Quiksilver, like many others, had humble beginnings in Orange County. The brand was first sold at the Hobie store in Dana Point, McKnight said.

"We were selling as many as we could make," he said. "It was on fire. Not just us, but the industry was just rabid for anything new and cool. Especially from Australia, so we were really lucky in that regard, that it came from Australia."

"The Surf-Skate Business Evolution: The OC Effect" documentary is narrated by Sugar Ray lead singer Mark McGrath and tells the story of decades of influencers.

It features interviews with 30 innovative surfing



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

PRODUCERS TERRY CORWIN and Scott Hays, from left, stand next to the poster of their new documentary "The Surf-Skate Business Evolution: The OC Effect" at the Lido Theater in Newport Beach on Thursday.

and skating personalities, Hays said. Many either came from or did business in the area of Costa Mesa and Newport Beach.

Van Doren is a proud Estancia High School graduate, Class of 1973. He maintains those community roots, noting that he recently had a reunion with some of his Eagles football

teammates and coach Phil Brown.

"It's a little feather in the cap to be able to stay in business these days and make it through," Van Doren said. "It's all about the action sports, the surfers and skaters and BMX riders. They might not have lived in Costa Mesa, but they always had come to

businesses, coming down to see Quiksilver or Hurley or Vans. Everybody found their way down here to Costa Mesa and Newport and Huntington."

The industry has hit a time of transition. Authentic Brands Group, which had previously acquired Volcom, purchased Quiksilver, Billabong, Roxy, RVCA and several other popular brands from Boardriders in 2023. Authentic recently pulled licenses previously held by Liberated Brands and gave them to new operators.

Then, in January, Liberated closed its corporate office in Costa Mesa and laid off nearly 400 employees.

Boardriders had acquired Billabong in 2018, creating the world's largest action sports company.

McKnight said the recent headlines looked bad, but he still believed in the brands of Boardriders.

"Wherever they are, they're really good brands, and it's really hard to kill a global, good brand," he said.

Newport Beach resident Thom McElroy, who at-

tended Thursday's premiere, is a Volcom co-founder who designed the now iconic stone-shaped logo. Originally from Huntington Beach, he made the National Scholastic Surfing Assn. national team, traveling the world with coaches Peter "PT" Townsend and Ian Cairns.

"There weren't a lot of rules," McElroy said. "It was more of a playground growing up for us. The beaches were playgrounds, the parks for skating were playgrounds. Everything was. It was brand new, and it wasn't expensive to get into these sports back then."

"You could buy a cheap surfboard and a cheap wetsuit, and you're out surfing. The same thing with skateboarding. As things progressed, you could use better equipment, but it was an open environment to express yourself. You were able to wake up in the morning and then do what you wanted to do all day."

McElroy said he never would have dreamed then that the industry would evolve into what it has

become.

"When you get a box from a sponsor, you cherish it," he said. "You knew that it was coming out of a warehouse, and they needed to sell that stuff."

Surf industry pioneer Dick Metz, "Five Summer Stories" producer Greg MacGillivray and Volcom co-founder Richard "Wooly" Woolcott were also among the Q&A panel members Thursday.

Corwin, one of the documentary's producers, was the founder of nonprofit Lion's Heart, a platform that connects teenagers to volunteering opportunities. This was her first documentary.

"We're excited to see the reaction from the people that are in the industry," she said. "All of these companies started right here, and more. It's kind of crazy."

She added that the documentary will be submitted to film festivals, and the producers hope to sell it to a larger audience platform.

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DREAMS

Continued from page A6

few years ago.

The 1930 U.S. Census lists three Black residents in Huntington Beach. By 2010 the number grew to 1,813, or 1% of the population. I recall a single Black playmate from my growing-up years in the Pacific Sands housing tract near today's Beach Boulevard and Atlanta Avenue.

According to local lore, the following exchange took place when the family moved in across the street.

"Good morning, how you doing?" the boy's father greeted a neighbor.

"Fine until now," the neighbor snapped.

The Times item also documents a less-than-welcoming response by Huntington Beach and Orange County officials. "Objections raised by vari-

ous organizations," it relates, led to the Pacific Electric and Southern Pacific rail lines "refusing access across their tracks."

It was the first of many obstructions and technicalities that white residents would throw up over the next year and a half.

Still, beach club organizers advanced toward their goal as 1925 progressed. Buildings rose on 7 acres at today's Huntington State Beach. The completed club would have included a dance pavilion for 1,500 guests, a restaurant for 700, a grocery store, a drugstore and a 200-unit tent city, among other amenities.

E. Burton Ceruti, the beach club's president, was co-founder of Los Angeles' NAACP chapter. He had already notched victories — notably opening Los Angeles County's nurse training program to Black

students in 1918.

Ceruti had earlier led a drive to expel D.W. Griffith's 1915 Klan-friendly film "The Birth of a Nation" from theaters. In 1924 he appeared in another Times item filing legal action after Long Beach police allegedly tortured three arrestees.

African Americans were confident on Labor Day 1925 in Huntington Beach. The afternoon saw six-to-10,000 spectators line the sand for a beauty pageant featuring young women from across the region. The "negro bathing beauty parade" was "believed by its sponsors to be the first in the country," the Times reported.

The event was part party, part promotion for the beach club's opening — set for Lincoln's Birthday on Feb. 12, 1926.

A pair of photographs at the New York Public Li-

brary's Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture record the excitement, freedom and verve of that long-ago Monday.

For historian Alison Rose Jefferson, who has written about the beach club story, these photographs are culturally important, moving documents.

"The images of the New Negro, their style and beauty, race, class, identity, political assertion, and pride, as well as the Pacific Beach Club site ... (form) a visual record of African American ... resistance to being ascribed second-class citizenship," she writes.

The club wasn't built for all classes — annual fees would run \$50 to \$80 (\$700 and \$1,100 in today's dollars). Excitement spread, though. As editor Fred C. Williams of Northern California's Public Defender newspaper put it, "Here at

last, on the ocean front, we will have one of the most wonderful beach resorts in the world."

All would go up in smoke on the morning of Jan. 21, 1926. Around 6 a.m., security guard A.H. Sneed spotted flames — and two cars fleeing.

One car sped toward downtown Huntington Beach, another to Newport Beach. Sneed, a "colored watchman" in the Times' account, got a good look at one man, "who was white."

The pair were likely Klan members, Cady said in 2006.

"The reason I would say ... Klan is because the Klan's weapon is fire," Cady told the Orange County Register. "It's part of their ritual, part of their ceremony."

Organizers bounced back, however, launching "a national campaign" to raise more money, the

Times noted on Nov. 22. Huntington Beach whites mobilized too — with a new organization "to oppose any further efforts of negroes to establish a colony on the ocean front."

Faced with unrelenting obstruction, however, the Pacific Beach Club dream faded over the next year. It would not join the short list of resorts — like the famous Idlewild in west Michigan — that offered recreation to Black Americans in the first part of the 20th century.

Looking back a century later, the Pacific Beach Club's brief existence and fiery demise deserve more attention — and a permanent place in the stories of California and the nation.

ERIK SKINDRUD grew up in Huntington Beach. Today he is a writer and editor in Long Beach. He's @Erik_Bookman on Twitter/X.

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TRAINING

Continued from page A5

dance teachers at V&T Classical Ballet & Dance Academy in Laguna Hills for a two-day workshop.

"Anytime I shared with people what we were doing or had new people come to class that had a dance background, they always expressed interest in wanting to help to teach," said Wassman-Cox.

She organized a cohort of 15 instructors with dance backgrounds, ballet or otherwise, from New York, Chicago, Seattle and Cali-

fornia to learn the unique Onco-Ballet curriculum.

"Forty percent of the attendees were cancer survivors themselves and 26% had been either caregivers or had someone very close to them go through cancer," said Wassman-Cox.

While Wassman-Cox is an expert on curriculum, she tapped two other women as guest trainers to round out the workshop with additional knowledge. Director of the Creative Dance Center in Seattle Terry Goetz joined the training as did Marie Miao, an oncology clinical social worker and EMDR-certified

therapist at the Hoag Family Cancer Institute and Kokoro Wellness.

"Marie brought in a whole series on trauma-informed ballet teaching for dancers with cancer," said Wassman-Cox. "So that was wonderful to hear from a clinical stand point, how do you work with people who have faced trauma?"

Goetz is an expert on BrainDance and Brain-Compatible Dance Education, a teaching philosophy that takes a holistic approach to becoming a skilled dancer.

"That is key to what we do, having that brain-body

connection," said Wassman-Cox.

The plan is for the teachers to take Onco-Ballet back to their communities where it can help cancer survivors promote movement and find emotional healing.

"This training is just one step in building a national network of instructors who will empower even more individuals affected by cancer through the joy of ballet."

Another way Wassman-Cox is working to spread the word of the Onco-Ballet Foundation is through an upcoming performance

planned for Oct. 19 at the Irvine Barclay Theater. The special performance will celebrate the strength of cancer patients and survivors and explore ballet as movement therapy.

"We will have an all cancer patient and survivor cast and maybe even some caregivers on stage," said Wassman-Cox. "We really see this as an educational showcase to share the cancer experience through dance and help educate our audience about cancer advocacy and the therapeutic benefits of ballet."

Wassman-Cox knows other survivors can find

healing the way she did and the ways she has seen it in her classes.

"Even just the simplicity of cueing them to stand tall and breath has brought people to tears," said Wassman-Cox. "It is bringing them back into their bodies, and it's so meaningful to see how happy it makes people."

For information about volunteering opportunities, donating or details on upcoming events, visit [onco ballet.org](#).

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STUDENTS

Continued from page A1

represent California at the National ProStart Student Invitational in Baltimore.

"Programs like the California ProStart Cup and competitions like this are so important for students; it's transformative," said Alycia Harshfield, president of the California Restaurant Foundation. "It helps them not only think about what their future can be, they tap into their potential and they get to test their skill."

The competition is divided into two sections: a Culinary Cup and Management Cup. For the former, teams of up to four students create an original three-course menu of an appetizer, entree and dessert in under 60 minutes. The meals are judged on knife skills, safety and sanitation, taste and more. The Management Cup is a "Shark Tank"-style competition in which teams of students pitch an original restaurant concept before a panel of judges, preparing a business plan, marketing materials and more.

"They learn so much from these experiences and our industry needs people who are passionate, curious and interested in being our next business owners, entrepreneurs and fantastic chefs," said Harshfield.



Sarah Mosqueda

ORANGE COUNTY School of the Arts students get ready for the three-course meal competition at ProStart Cup 2025.

In the past participating Orange County schools have included the Orange County School of the Arts, Fountain Valley, Fullerton Union, Newport Harbor, Rancho Alamitos and Valley high schools. This year OCSA, Fullerton Union and Newport Harbor high school returned, and Huntington Beach's Marina High School competed for the first time.

Early the first day, OCSA's culinary team organized tools onto a speed rack as they prepared to take the floor for the culinary competition.

"We are putting all our equipment onto our equipment cart so it will be easy to grab and we can do that super-efficiently while

cooking," said Cynthia Zhou. "Soon we will get into what we call our 'mise en place,' prepping our ingredients before we enter the final cooking time."

The team trained extensively for the timed cooking contest.

"We have been practicing since September, twice a week. Now it's been, like, three to four times a week," said Stella Mulholland. "In the beginning months we were recipe testing, and by December we had our menu finalized. In January and February, we have just been drilling, doing the exact same thing over and over again to get it perfect."

Besides the main competitions, students also participated in quick-fire con-

tests hosted by events sponsors, like Wienerschnitzel's Dress Your Dog competition and Idaho Potatoes Loaded Potato competition. Others wandered around the college and career expo, meeting with hospitality-focused companies like Coca-Cola, Habit Burger, BJ's Restaurants and more.

Many of the volunteers and judges at 2025's ProStart Cup are former students who competed in past competitions themselves. Chef Dominique Valenzuela, who served as judge for the Culinary Cup this year, recalled competing with La Quinta High School when he was a student.

"Being introduced to ProStart at an early age in high school really set the foundation needed to excel in culinary school and my career," said Valenzuela.

Today Valenzuela is the executive pastry chef at JW Marriott Desert Springs Palm Desert, and he enjoys coming back to the event as a volunteer. It is a way he can pay it forward to the California Restaurant Foundation and the many mentors who guided him on his own culinary journey.

"It is definitely rewarding not only to be asked to participate in something that is so meaningful to many students here in California but also to see where I once

was in their shoes," said Valenzuela. "I realize how many people helped support me and get me to the place where I am today, and I want just want to do the same. It is rewarding to see the sprint, the drive and the dedication."

In another area of the event, Fullerton Union High School students filed into a conference room to get feedback from judges on the vegan and gluten-free food concept Cali Roots that they had presented for the management cup.

"We have been working since October, getting our written proposal together, then building our slides," said Ben Dennis.

The students shared how much they value the ProStart program and what it has given them.

"We think the ProStart program is great, it is a great stepping stone for learning more about the food and hospitality industry, and we are very grateful to have this opportunity to be competing here," said student Emma Kojonroj.

Fullerton Union High chef and culinary instructor Mario Schwarz-Cole said he sees the difference the program makes for his students.

"I see the growth in my students, their confidence," said Schwarz-Cole. "It gives them great experience for

the future. They grow together as a team too."

At the end of the competition, OCSA placed first in management for the second year in a row while Fullerton Union High School took third place, below Bontia High School in second place. For the Culinary Cup, OCSA placed second behind San Dimas High School, with Bonita High School in third place. Orange County students also took home awards in the quick-fire contests with Fullerton Union High School student Emily Alvarado taking first place in the Wienerschnitzel Dress Your Dog contest and OCSA student Angela Luo taking third place in the Loaded Idaho Baked Potato competition.

Whether or not the winners decided to pursue a career in the culinary arts or hospitality, Valenzuela said he knows the experience the students have at ProStart Cup will be a formative one.

"The competition gives the students the opportunity to meet one another, to connect, to see that there are others that are mutually as invested and interested in getting to the next stage and that is so rewarding on all fronts," said Valenzuela.

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MAILBAG

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will the funds be managed?

The situation remains overwhelming. It seems all we, the American people, can do is to protest, boycott, send money, and volunteer. But most of all we must be an informed

voter — before we can't. **Vicki Miko**
Costa Mesa

Symphony of Flowers a mistake

Despite a huge outpouring of vocal opposition from community residents, the Huntington Beach City

Council is moving forward with an ill-advised and destructive plan to place a damaging installation in our public Central Park. The so-called Symphony of Flowers is proposed to occupy a large section in the middle of Central Park for six months every year, from September to March, with a disruptive light show

and music lasting from 5 to 11 p.m. daily. The contract is for three years with options to renew. In addition to charging for admission to several shows per night, the city proposes to sell access to the parking spaces associated with the Central Library, which is usually open until 9 p.m. most days.

This installation will damage the grass and plants in the proposed area, as well as disrupt the environment for the birds and animals who inhabit the park and the people who enjoy the park on a daily basis. And it will disturb the residents for miles around the park with excessive traffic, noise and sound

pollution! And it is not even likely to bring in the pitiful amount of revenue that is projected in the proposal.

This is another bondoggle with smelly political overtones, and Huntington Beach residents do not want it to pollute our park!

Diane Bentley
Huntington Beach

APODACA

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to 70% of a grant's value. Without the indirect funds, many scientific research endeavors would come to a screeching halt because they would, quite literally, be unable to keep the lights on.

Consider how it might impact Cooper's area of research. As a pediatric lung specialist, he and his team are zeroing in on the role of exercise and physical activity on the growth and development of children with lung disease.

"We do know that exercise has a profound impact on disease," he explained. But what kind of exercise? What amount? How often? His work has led to important discoveries about the precise ways the immune system is affected by exercise, information that is influencing exercise prescriptions for pediatric lung disease patients.

Cooper must periodically reapply for NIH grants to keep this work going. The indirect funding, in part, has helped cover the costs associated with the training of 250 translational scientists since

2010, and for reaching out to high school students to keep the pipeline of fresh blood coming into the field. The funds also help underwrite the costs of clinical trials.

Last summer, his research team's funding was renewed for about \$28 million over seven years. But if the new policy stands, the funding for the indirect costs that would normally go along with that grant would be slashed.

(As of this writing, a court order has stayed the new policy, but the NIH has stopped considering

new grant applications, and some universities, uncertain of future funding, are cutting acceptances for biomedical graduates students and postdoctoral scholars.)

To be clear, Cooper doesn't object to greater scrutiny of indirect costs or of reducing such funding in certain instances. But an across-the-board decrease to 15% would be devastating, he said.

"To arbitrarily say we're cutting to this amount is going to stop a lot of research."

It will also discourage recruitment, he fears. "It's

creating this atmosphere, if I'm a young person, why would I go into this field if it's so at the whim of these budget cuts. It's hard enough now to bring people into the field."

For now, he is trying to stay as optimistic as possible. Perhaps a negotiation can lead to less drastic cuts, he said.

"The 15% would destroy research. And I think that's tragic."

Tragic indeed, but not only that. In the many years since he helplessly watched a boy die from a horrible disease, Cooper has devoted himself to

pioneering science that can be used to prevent such heartbreaking outcomes.

To put that in danger would be a shockingly callous abandonment of our longstanding national quest to be the world leader in scientific advancements, and of our responsibility to further the betterment of humankind. This policy must not stand.

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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WORD

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can't make honest mistakes. If a newspaper re-

ports something in a way you don't like, it's deliberate, sinister manipulation. Years ago, when I was a community news reporter working under a heavy workload on tight deadlines, I was assigned to write a light feature article about a struggling sailing club. In my haste, I glossed over the underlying news story — a story with two valid sides that both deserved an airing. I blew it. The next day, I got an angry email from a reader

who called my story a "socialist diatribe." Deliberate manipulation. No chance I was just a human being who did a bad job, even though I lived 50 miles away and had no personal interest whatsoever in what happened in his city. As a member of the media, I was a supervillain.

Yes, journalists sometimes let their own bias skew a story. But in my experience, journalists are more inclined to overcom-

pensate for their own bias, skewing stories in the opposite direction. So if you see only bias against your side and never bias that favors your side, you're not a good judge of media impartiality.

Things weren't always this way. For the first half of my life, people knew that, flawed as they are, mainstream media like AP act as the people's scribes. As citizens in a functioning democracy, they expected their representatives to

answer to the mainstream press, who ask questions on the people's behalf. A leader shutting out a major journalism outlet would have been tantamount to telling the American people you no longer answer to them. Unacceptable.

I get why people like the name "Gulf of America." The word "America" is, frankly, beautiful. To me, it's a reminder of how people living under dictators like Stalin, Mao and Pinochet could look to us and see it's possible for citizens to pick leaders who wield power on the people's behalf, not their own. It was in those places, not here, that leaders could dictate what the media said.

No American, regardless of party or ideology, should tolerate a public servant telling journalists what to write. It's un-American.

JUNE CASAGRANDE is the author of "The Joy of Syntax: A Simple Guide to All the Grammar You Know You Should Know." She can be reached at JuneTCN@aol.com.

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