

# Daily Pilot

SUNDAY, AUGUST 8, 2021 /// Now including Coastline Pilot and Huntington Beach Independent /// dailypilot.com



Photos by Don Leach | Staff Photographer

**LEGO MASTERS** contestants Lauren and Bryan Firks hold a few of their creations, including "Neuschwanstein Castle" on the right.

## Laguna siblings building bond on LEGO Masters

Bryan and Lauren Firks are among the final seven teams remaining on the show that is in its second season.

BY ANDREW TURNER

Most adults have probably wished at one point or another that they could turn back the clock. Growing up is not easy, but Laguna Beach siblings Bryan and Lauren Firks have found a lifelong hobby that has kept them young in building with LEGO.

That passion has now taken the brother-sister duo on an adventure, as they were selected to compete on the second season of the show LEGO Masters.

For Bryan, 26, the obsession with the miniature bricks be-



**THE FIRKS** hold two of their favorite LEGO pieces, created in images of themselves, at the LEGO store at the Shops in Mission Viejo.

gan when their father brought a set home for him when he was 3 years old.

Before long, he was disassembling the sets and building

from scratch, and not long after that, he invited his sister to get in on the act, too.

It was evident that their hobby had caught up to them

when a targeted advertisement provided the path toward getting on the show.

When Bryan saw it on Facebook, he sent a message to his sister to see if she was interested, and she was all in.

Getting on the show has allowed the siblings to share a part of themselves that might not otherwise be the first thing that people learn about them.

For those that know them well, like their significant others, it is a different story.

"I've been building LEGO for [my girlfriend] as gifts that resonate with her," Bryan said of how his hobby spills over into his relationship. "Her favorite animal is a bunny, so I built her a bunny."

Lauren, 22, said that her boyfriend also likes LEGO. They each own a key chain

See **LEGO**, page A6

## Doctors say more kids are getting sick

With Delta variant cases rising in Orange County, pediatricians are reporting an increase in coronavirus infections among children.

BY SARA CARDINE

As a more contagious Delta variant takes root in Orange County and residents 12 and older get vaccinated, pediatricians are reporting a noticeable increase in coronavirus infections and COVID-19 hospitalizations among young children, just weeks before the start of school.

"Right now, we're seeing a huge uptick in the number of cases in children," said Dr. Chulie Ulloa, a pediatric infectious disease physician scientist and assistant professor of Pediatrics at UC Irvine's School of Medicine. "And unlike before, the children tend to be more symptomatic."

A recent report issued by the American Academy of Pediatrics indicated the number of infections among children nationwide increased in the previous week to 72,000 from around 39,000 the week prior to that — a nearly 85% jump in new cases.

And while kids were previously thought to be less predisposed to suffering the worst symptoms of the virus, as the Delta variant begins to proliferate, more children are being admitted into local hospitals.

Dr. Kate Williamson, a CHOC pediatrician and immediate past president of the AAP's Orange County chapter said after a springtime lull, infections began picking up in early July and have been on the rise ever since.

"We're seeing the cases go up at CHOC, both on the inpatient floor as well as the ICU," Williamson said. "And we have kids who are really, really sick."

A spokeswoman for Children's Hospital Orange County on Friday confirmed 219 positive coronavirus tests were recorded in July, compared to 48 in June.

Among those, 27 children were hospitalized with COVID-19 last month, whereas only 17 were admitted in June.

Between Thursday and Friday alone, the daily number of new infections reported by the Orange County Health

See **Sick**, page A3

## Laguna Beach Live! sets dates for 2 jazz concerts

BY LILLY NGUYEN

Laguna Beach Live! is returning to the Promenade on Forest this Wednesday with Orange County pianist Carol Roman.

Roman, a graduate of Cal State Fullerton, is also a teacher, songwriter and composer, and will begin her performance on Forest Avenue at 5:30 p.m.

Roman has released four CDs and recently had her single, "Hidden from View," played on KJAZZ.

The nonprofit organization

also announced it would bring renowned trumpeter Bijon Watson and the Latin Jazz Syndicate, featuring Cuban vocalist Adonis Puentes, to the Women's Club on St. Ann's Drive this September.

They will perform at 5:30 p.m. on Sept. 23, and a cocktail hour is expected to precede the concert.

Seating, however, is limited in light of social distancing due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

See **Jazz**, page A6

## ALSO FROM THE DAILY PILOT:



Gary Ambrose | For the Times

**TEAM USA WOMEN'S WATER POLO WINS GOLD MEDAL, CORONA DEL MAR HIGH'S MADDIE MUSSELMAN IS OLYMPIC MVP** PAGE A7

## Afterburner Music Festival coming to Huntington Beach

BY MATT SZABO

How about a few tunes to go with your supersonic jets?

The Pacific Airshow will be providing that this year with the two-night Afterburner Music Festival, which is coming to Huntington City Beach on Oct. 1 and 2.

The festival will feature a variety of musical acts including Sammy Hagar & the Circle, Sam Hunt and X Ambassadors.

Afterburner Music Festival will take place north of Beach

Boulevard at Pacific Coast Highway. It is the first live music event to take place on Huntington City Beach since 2013, when the U.S. Open of Surfing ended in rioting, more than 100 arrests and property damage.

Other music festivals have taken place since then at Huntington State Beach, including the Surf City Blitz with Social Distortion and the Offspring in 2018 and the Back to the Beach festival in 2018 and 2019.

See **Festival**, page A6

## Future of whale mural in Laguna Canyon yet to be decided

BY ANDREW TURNER

Competing interests have left an uncertain future for a long-standing marine life mural in the Laguna Canyon.

For more than 30 years, a mural of a gray whale emerging from the water has greeted those that pass the property at 2171 Laguna Canyon Road.

Laguna Beach artist Robert Wyland, who was once a tenant in that space for his studio, originally painted the piece, and then a 450-square-foot ceramic tile version went through the city's permitting process in 1995 and was introduced to the building the next year.

On July 30, members of the Wyland Foundation and supporters of Wyland's work returned to

the premises to hold an event to call attention to an effort to save the mural, which was first seen at the property in February 1987.

Steve Creech, president of the Wyland Foundation, said that the group of demonstrators consisting of about 20 people that showed up in person, were acting on an anonymous tip that the mural was going to be demolished.

The visual of the gray whale breaching the surface is considered one in a series of 100 "whaling walls" around the world that were created by Wyland between 1981 and 2008.

"When he started this project, there was nothing like it in the world," Creech said.

"Nobody had done anything of that scale, especially devoted to

the conservation and protection of marine mammals, so this is an incredibly significant public arts project."

The ceramic tile mural stands along the south wall of Laguna Classic Cars.

The Dornin Investment Group, which owns the multi-tenant light industrial property, sought to make improvements to the space and received design review board approval on Feb. 13, 2020.

Included in those improvements was a plan to replace the existing mural with a directory sign that could display the names of current tenants of the building.

"We'd like to use that billboard sign for something other than a tenant that does not occupy

See **Mural**, page A3



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

**THE 450-SQUARE-FOOT** gray whale mural by artist Robert Wyland. Some protesters showed up and saved it for now. The mural, visible from Laguna Canyon Road, used to be at the Wyland Gallery, but it is now a car showroom.

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**SICK**

*Continued from page A1*

Care Agency in children under 18 rose from 134 to 173, the latter of which represents nearly 16% of the 1,108 new cases reported by the agency Friday.

Orange County District 2 Supervisor Katrina Foley on Friday launched a news conference she said would be the first of several daily briefings on virus trends.

There, OCHA Deputy Health Director Regina Chinsio-Kwong acknowledged an elevated risk among minors who are not eligible for the vaccine.

"They're at the highest risk, especially with this Delta variant that's highly transmissible," she said. "The rate of hospitalization is still low, but it is happening."

In July, all admitted COVID-19 patients at Children's Hospital of Orange County were unvaccinated, Chinsio-Kwong added, urging all parents,

even those who've received a vaccine, to take every precaution around unprotected minors.

Concerns about children's exposure to the Delta variant are especially troubling as area school districts prepare for the start of the 2021-22 school year in the weeks ahead.

While the California Department of Public Health has issued a mandate for all students and school staff to wear masks indoors, officials have left enforcement of noncompliance up to individual school districts.

Medical experts warn adherence to coronavirus protocol — especially mask-wearing — will be crucial to keeping kids safe as they return to campuses.

Ulloa, the principal investigator on a study published earlier this year on coronavirus trends among children at four different schools, said institutions that practiced multiple mitigation protocols, such as distancing, mask-wearing and handwashing, were relatively safe.

She emphasized the importance of taking all precautions to stop the virus from continuing to spread and mutate into versions against which current treatments will be less effective.

Williamson agreed. "If all [the precautions] are in place, our kids can be safe in school," she said.

"But if you don't have all of those things, if teachers aren't vaccinated or kids aren't wearing masks, you're going to have outbreaks and kids are going to get really sick."

Williamson further said it was crucial for adults to get vaccinated, as children are only as safe as the people they're around.

"For children younger than the age of 12, since they can't have antibodies, you need to make sure the people around them have antibodies," she added. "If you have multiple layers of people who are vaccinated around them, the virus cannot get to them."

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**THE DAILY COMMUTER PUZZLE**

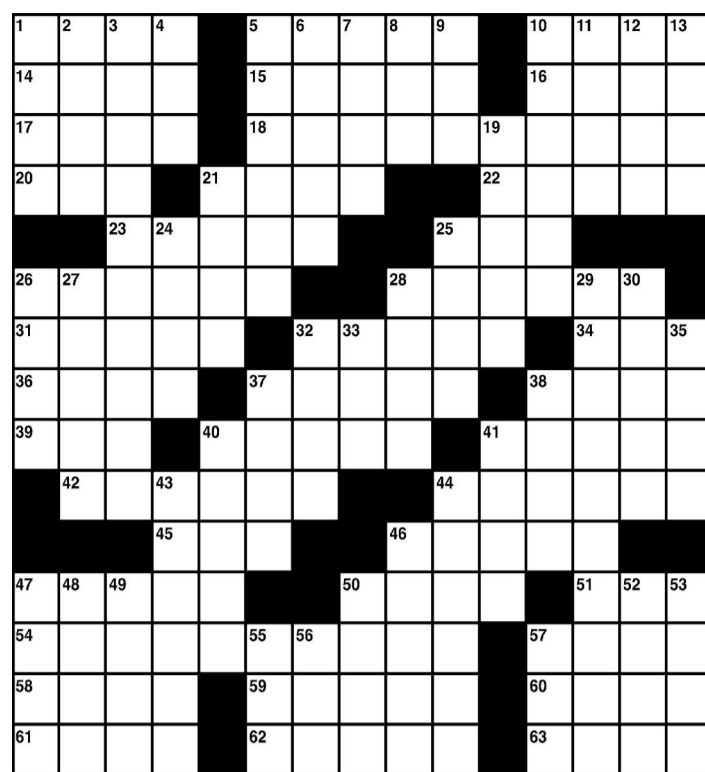
*By Jacqueline E. Mathews*

**ACROSS**

- 1 Spanish bull
- 5 Hits the ceiling
- 10 Prefix for angel or bishop
- 14 Had regrets about
- 15 " \_ home is his castle"
- 16 Reign
- 17 Applied frosting to
- 18 Cold symptom
- 20 Prof.'s degree
- 21 Hoodlum
- 22 Los Angeles NHL team
- 23 Theater worker
- 25 Prefix for place or print
- 26 Gregarious
- 28 Bricklayer's goo
- 31 \_ from; besides
- 32 Stretch of land
- 34 Lawman
- 36 Acquires
- 37 Teacup flaw
- 38 Surgical souvenir
- 39 "That's What Friends \_ For"
- 40 \_ up; matures
- 41 Coat material
- 42 Worshipped
- 44 Minute
- 45 Boxer's foot
- 46 Bare minimum
- 47 Colorado resort
- 50 Composer/singer/pianist Billy
- 51 " \_ Lazy River"
- 54 Indirect
- 57 Actor James \_ Jones
- 58 Give a hoot
- 59 Renter's paper
- 60 Go no further
- 61 Went lickety-split
- 62 Not as kooky
- 63 Makes clothing

**DOWN**

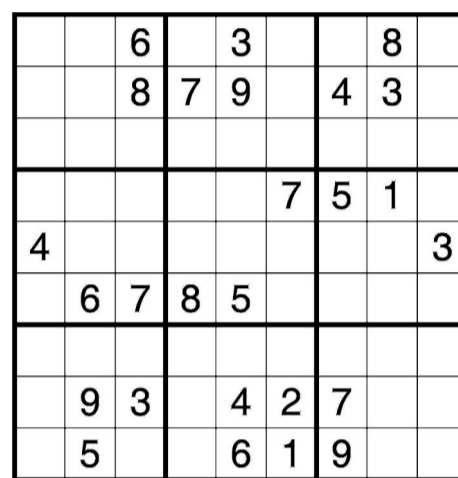
- 1 Journey
- 2 Cry from a flu shot clinic



**SUDOKU**

*By The Mepham Group*

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



**For answers to the crossword and Sudoku puzzles, see page A7.**

- 3 Taught in order to change thinking
- 4 Strange
- 5 Role on TV's "Friends"
- 6 Love in Paris
- 7 \_ up on; attack as a pack

- 8 High school subj.
- 9 90 degrees from ENE
- 10 Painter
- 11 Wreck
- 12 Wooden shoe
- 13 Barnyard birds
- 19 School uniform

- piece
- 21 "All \_ Jazz"
- 24 Knightly titles
- 25 Make fun of
- 26 Long narrative
- 27 Musical drama
- 28 Big \_; fast-food burgers
- 29 Stress
- 30 "All \_ lead to Rome"
- 32 \_ on; walked all over
- 33 Uncooked
- 35 \_ on; victimize
- 37 Ship personnel
- 38 Hauls into court
- 40 Large piano
- 41 Make airtight
- 43 Unlocked
- 44 Wobble
- 46 Rotten person
- 47 Curved paths
- 48 Daytime serial
- 49 Untainted
- 50 Rivers or Baez
- 52 Ship's bow
- 53 European peaks
- 55 Pacino & Hirt
- 56 "Don't \_ stranger"; parting words
- 57 Curvy letter

Tribune Media Services

**MURAL**

*Continued from page A1*

space there anymore," Chris Dornin, the CEO of the Dornin Investment Group, said.

Dornin disputed the notion that there was a plan in place to demolish the mural, but he added that Wyland has had ample opportunity to come and reclaim the mural.

He said communications were exchanged between the parties concerned as early as two years ago.

Wyland has concerns that the mural would not survive if it were to be relocated.

"Thousands, if not millions, of people have enjoyed that mural for over 30 years," Wyland said in a prepared statement.

"Someone that buys a building shouldn't be allowed to simply destroy art

that has become part of the community. We think that's something worth fighting for. It's why there are now laws to protect public art.

"The mural has become too fragile to remove without suffering irreparable damage. We think it needs to stay right where it is, where it can inspire people and share the city's commitment to art and our environment."

Dornin said that in addition to offering for Wyland to come and take back the mural, offers have also been made to donate it to art colleges, and there have also been active discussions about donating the work to a couple of municipalities.

"There are municipalities that would be happy to take it and put it up in public spaces," Dornin said.

"Wyland's got his own properties. He should go

put it up on his own property, pull a billboard sign permit for his own property [and] put it up there."

The Wyland Foundation focuses on the issues of clean water and a healthy ocean. Creech said he believes that the gray whale mural is symbolic of that cause and the community's commitment to it.

The Visual Artists Rights Act of 1990 is one avenue being explored in the effort to preserve the mural, Creech said.

"It's hard to see history while it's being made," Creech said.

"You see it in retrospect, but now we're starting to get a glimpse, looking back at Wyland's artwork and the murals that he created. That's a huge achievement."

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## forum

COLUMN | **PATRICE APODACA**

# Misinformation, paired with disinformation, fuels today's divisive times

**B**lue whales had been sighted in the waters off coastal Orange County.

The largest animals to have ever existed, blue whales can span 100 feet in length and weigh up to 200 tons. The tongue alone can balance an elephant on a scale; the heart weighs as much as a car.

These are seriously cool creatures, and I badly wanted to see one, so I signed up for a whale-watching excursion out of Newport Harbor. As our small boat carrying about a dozen passengers zipped across the water, I asked one of the crew members about the posted numbers of sightings.

Be mindful when considering those numbers, he cautioned, that "sightings" don't equal the number of whales. One whale might be spotted several times in any given day, and those sightings are then reported separately.

He was obviously trying to dampen expectations in the event that our expedition proved fruitless. Nonetheless, I appreciated the clarification. Someone might see the figures showing a multitude of whale sightings and picture waters teeming with easily spotted behemoths, whereas the reality might be quite different.

Which brings me to my point, which is not about whales, per se, but about how easily information can be misinterpreted and misused.

That lesson applies to far more than marine mammals. Indeed, it is the story of our times. We live in an age of information overload, when trying to make sense out of our complicated world is no easy task, even when facts are clearly articulated and supported by an abundance of credible evidence.

But thanks largely to the internet and social media, what we see, hear and read is routinely tailored to specific agendas and preconceived beliefs. Misinformation — that is, incorrect information — abounds. Disinformation — misinformation on purpose — is readily accepted as



Don Bartletti | Los Angeles Times

**WATER ROLLS** off the tail of a blue whale as it makes a dive off the coast of Long Beach in July 2021. Patrice Apodaca writes that the potential to misinterpret available information about whale sightings off the coast of Orange County is analogous to the varying public views of COVID-19 vaccines and ethnic studies.

fact. Both play into confirmation bias — the inclination to accept whatever fits with what we already think.

So it is with some highly charged issues that have been dominating much of our discourse.

COVID-19 vaccinations, for example.

Coronavirus infection rates are ticking up again to alarming levels, driven by the highly contagious Delta variant. Scientists warn that variants potentially even more dangerous than Delta are likely incubating in infected people around the world.

Yet about half the population in the U.S. remains unvaccinated, despite the fact that shots are widely available. We had a chance to contain the spread of the virus; now we're looking at reinstating mask mandates and social distancing.

Why? Largely because vaccine hesitancy runs stubbornly deep. And that hesitancy is fed by a deluge of misleading to downright false information about the vaccines, which plays into widespread distrust of government and institutions.

The controversy that's blowing up

over the teaching of ethnic studies in public schools is another case in point, as it is also being fueled by wildly distorted and inaccurate information.

As districts throughout Orange County prepare to make decisions about whether and how to implement the state's new model curriculum for ethnic studies, school board meetings have been inundated by protests against the voluntary coursework.

Sadly, the objections being voiced bear little to no resemblance to the reality of ethnic studies. That was evident at a recent Orange County Board of Education forum, where many of the comments revealed a lack of understanding about ethnic studies and reflected the kind of talking points found in propagandist playbooks.

For the record, the model ethnic studies curriculum is designed to teach students about the histories, contributions, cultures and struggles of ethnic groups that have historically been overlooked. It is intended to promote empathy, understanding

See *Apodaca*, page A5

MAILBAG

## Huntington Beach House project raises eyebrows

Congratulations to Prjkt CEO Alicia Whitney for succeeding with the badly needed concession upgrades at Huntington Beach State Beach. Your readers might want to know about an inequity that her improvements highlight.

When the major infrastructure was built for Huntington Beach State Park, planners calculated the number of toilets needed for the anticipated attendance numbers. It was figured that 110 toilets would be able to service the attendance capacity of this massive beach park. They did not overestimate: On peak weekends and holidays every one of those toilets saw frequent usage.

Some time ago a fire destroyed one of the toilet structures, and a few years later another fire was responsible for removing even more toilets from public access. At each of the remaining restroom structures the park has permanently closed half of the toilets for reasons unexplained.

Today, I counted 52 toilets open to the public, and 12 of them are portables. So, fewer than half of the toilets built to serve the park visitors are available to them. This has led, of course, to long waits for those who need to relieve themselves.

The restroom structure adjacent to the Huntington Beach House concession featured in your story is the only structure where all of the toilets are open. But half of them, upgraded on Prjkt's dime, are open only to Beach House patrons, and entrance to the venue is restricted to people older

than 21. We might expect that similar arrangements are in store for the Sahara's Sandbar and California Fork and Spoon concessions when Prjkt opens them: more toilets available for those with cash.

Ten percent of Prjkt's concessions sales go back to the state park system. Let's hope those funds will be used to open up the 45 toilets visitors pay to use but can't. If not, maybe Ms. Whitney will let them use the ones the state park turned over to her venues, but I doubt that her business insurance would cover that potential liability.

Bear in mind that all of these toilet structures were already paid for by California taxpayers and are maintained by the fees that park visitors pay. These are the same park visitors who come to the beach because it is one of the only places left where summer recreation is within reach for working class family budgets. To reduce the number of toilets available to them, and then to open up others to those who can afford patronage at these private concessions doesn't seem right.

We need the upgrades. There must be a way to do this equitably.

**William Yarchin**  
Huntington Beach

It must have taken a lot of creative efforts for the Huntington Beach House to be permitted to operate on Huntington State Beach.

"Enjoying a cocktail at the beach is now no problem," wrote Daily Pilot reporter Matt Szabo. I Googled the business,

See *Mailbag*, page A5

COMMENTARY | **BOB TAYLOR**

## National legislation on climate springs from local actions

**T**he devastating impacts of climate change are on full display in Orange County as well as across the nation, and around the world. As sea levels rise, coastal communities are under threat. Sunset Beach and Newport Beach are experiencing more high tide flooding. Dana Point and San Clemente are watching cliff sides erode and beaches disappear. Inland, Irvine and Tustin are battling wildfires.

All of us in Orange County are suffering from more frequent and intense heat waves. The need for action on climate has never seemed more urgent.

Many have known for years that the transition from a fossil-fueled economy to one powered by clean energy is the biggest challenge facing humankind. Yet action has nevertheless been impeded and delayed for decades by the influence of fossil fuel interests upon politicians and the media. Well-funded sophisticated

campaigns have falsely denied the problem of climate change or fostered a sense of hopelessness about it. Finally, it appears that this longstanding period of national paralysis may change. The year 2021 may be the one when Congress finally acts.

President Biden has made the climate crisis a central priority and is determined to include mitigation policies in his new infrastructure plans. As our leaders in Washington go about determining the final package of climate policies to enact, we should be aware that we've reached this pivotal moment because of pressures emanating from local communities just like ours, all around the country.

Here in Orange County, there has been a groundswell of support for the market-based carbon-pricing solution detailed in the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act (HR-2307).

Huntington Beach has now



Charlie Riedel | Associated Press

**IN THIS** 2012 photo, smoke billows into the air in Kansas. Efforts to reduce emissions by charging fossil fuel companies for carbon are gaining support.

joined Santa Ana, Costa Mesa, Brea and Laguna Beach to urge congressional support for this

promising legislation. In her July 13, 2021, letter reporting the city's action, Mayor Kim Carr

said, "This bill would help achieve net zero emissions by 2050 by imposing a fee on the producers and importers of greenhouse gas emitting fuels, rather than putting the burden on American families." And further, "Cities like ours understand the importance of innovative strategies to create a sustainable future, while ensuring that American families do not take on the economic burden of this transition." This legislation, she says, "will help families to thrive in a carbon neutral economy."

This legislation has also gained broad support from Orange County's congressional delegation. Five of the seven members of Congress who represent areas of Orange County, Democrats Linda Sanchez, Katie Porter, Lou Correa, Alan Lowenthal and Mike Levin, are co-sponsors of this promising legislation. Since

See *Climate*, page A5

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## MAILBAG

Continued from page A4

found its Facebook, one photo shows people lounging on the beach with drinks in single-use plastics. Recently, Laguna Beach banned single-use plastic foodware from restaurants, beaches, parks and trails. Don't you agree this is necessary?

The article quoted California State Parks Orange County Supt. Kevin Pearsall at the opening ceremony, "Hopefully this is a thriving new path that state parks in all of California will take, so that we can really be proud of our beaches and what we have on them."

Hopefully, the mastermind at the Huntington Beach House can change to an ocean-friendly practice and set a environmentally good example for the rest of the state.

**Jonathan Lukoff**  
Laguna Beach

## Anti-bias education is not political

Since when did opposing hate become a divisive topic?

Whether we want to believe it or not, hate is an issue that is deeply affecting our children inside and outside of school. Orange County students deserve an education on how to detect, prevent and respond to hate, bullying and harassment.

Which is why we at the Anti-Defamation League Orange County were saddened and disappointed to learn that through the influence of Newport Harbor Republican Women and the group's disinformation campaign, we are unable to continue our bullying prevention

## HOW TO GET PUBLISHED

Send an email to [erik.haugli@latimes.com](mailto:erik.haugli@latimes.com) and include your full name, hometown and phone number (for verification purposes) with your submission. All letters should be kept to 350 words or less. The Daily Pilot reserves the right to edit all submissions for clarity, accuracy and length.

and anti-bias programming with Newport-Mesa Unified School District this school year. After two years of successful and well-received programming with 98% of students indicating a strong understanding of what it means to be an ally and a willingness to offer support to targets of prejudice, we see this as a tremendous loss for the district's more than 20,000 students.

We reject Newport Harbor Republican Women's assertion that ADL is providing "a divisive, critical racist training program hiding under the 'sensitivity' education umbrella and indoctrinating our children." This is entirely false. In fact, our programming is designed to prevent racism and other forms of discrimination while empowering students to respond to bigotry and bullying effectively.

ADL works in partnership with K-12 schools to provide these programs based on individual schools' needs and school climate assessments. With our various programs such as A World of Difference Institute, No Place for Hate and Echoes & Reflections, we help schools provide skills, knowledge and awareness to promote and sus-

tain respectful, inclusive and equitable learning environments and help young people understand and challenge bias in themselves, others and society. There is nothing divisive, racist, or coercive about this training.

At ADL, we have long believed that education is the best antidote to hate and bias. This is precisely why we are speaking out against Newport Harbor Republican Women's gross mischaracterization and incorrect depiction of our anti-bias education initiatives. Newport Harbor Republican Women equates our anti-bias programs with Critical Race Theory.

This is simply not accurate. Bias is universal and it can be challenged through educational programs like those offered by ADL. In these incredibly divisive times, we have a responsibility to teach students how to handle hate without politicizing the process. Anti-bias education is an essential element of this work — and our valued teachers agree. In the first year of our anti-bias training in Newport Mesa Unified School District, 91% of teachers agreed that the training tackled issues they face — and they reported greater comfort in addressing students' bullying and biased comments and in incorporating anti-bullying and anti-bias themes into classroom instruction.

So, we ask once more — what is divisive about preventing hate?

**Peter Levi**

ADL Orange County/Long Beach  
Regional Director

## Missing N.B. Circle K

When I used to live on Seashore Drive in Newport Beach once upon a time way back when, I had kind of a daily ritual

consisting of making a very short walk (I lived near 48th Street) to the once active Circle K store. Circle K was located in the little neighborhood center on the corner of Pacific Coast Highway and Balboa Boulevard where it also housed Jack in the Box and the Alley restaurant. I would purchase a cup of coffee, a few lottery scratchers and occasionally a newspaper.

After owning a duplex for 27 years and living there for 14 years, one of the partners said, "OK, it's been 27 years, let's sell."

Not having ample money to buy the partner out, we sold and I moved to a little condo half a mile north of that location. I frequently walk down Superior Avenue to the beach and casually walk by my old place and think of the old times I had. The Circle K store where I had spent much time drinking coffee and spending my retirement money on scratchers was gutted down to its bare concrete floors in November of last year and is still vacant and unoccupied. When it was open it was usually busy.

I'm troubled by the fact that its location a few blocks from the beach is prime for another similar type business as the old Circle K, but yet, 10 months after its closure, it is still dead inside with nary a coffee or Coke machine. I hope that someone, or some business entity, sees the potential there for a thriving business and leases the place soon.

Two of my old neighbors on Seashore Drive, Dennis Rodman and Tim Salmon (former Angel baseball player), frequented that store as did many others through the years. Ah ... the good old days.

**Bill Spitalnick**  
Newport Beach

## CLIMATE

Continued from page A4

previous versions of this bill have had bipartisan cosponsors, we urge Republican Reps. Michelle Steel and Young Kim to consider adding their support.

While solving the climate crisis will require a variety of government policies, scientists and economists have long favored policies that make fossil fuel companies pay an increasing fee on their carbon pollution, distribute the revenue to American

households, and establish a border carbon tariff to incentivize all nations, including China, to adopt similar policies. This approach, embodied in HR-2307, is widely understood to be the single most effective and fair way for our nation and the nations of the world to reach net zero emissions by 2050, a goal scientists say is crucial.

Polling shows that Americans of every political stripe now favor this approach to reducing emissions, with majority support in both very red and very blue districts. Major business groups,

like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the Business Roundtable, have expressed support for a market-based approach to emissions reductions. The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine are calling on Congress to implement a rising carbon price. By shifting the economic incentives away from fossil fuels and toward cleaner energy, a carbon price will strengthen our economy, make businesses more energy efficient, spur new sources of renewable energy, add millions of new jobs and save lives by

reducing pollution.

If, as expected, Congress enacts climate legislation this year that includes carbon pricing at the center of its mitigation plans, we will know who to thank. It will have happened because of the persistence and determination of local climate activists and the courage and good judgment of local city councils and congressional representatives.

**BOB TAYLOR** is an environmental journalist and a volunteer with the Orange County Coast Chapter of Citizens' Climate Lobby.

## APODACA

Continued from page A4

and inclusivity.

Ethnic studies is not, as critics contend, analogous with critical race theory, an even more controversial means of examining the ways that racism is embedded in legal and institutional structures, which is taught primarily in law schools and some college courses.

Contrary to a highly influential disinformation effort, ethnic studies is also not inherently divisive, it doesn't teach white kids that they are oppressors, and it is not rooted in Marxist ideology.

Faulty information and skewed logic were also on display at a recent Newport-Mesa Unified school board meeting, where many commenters objected to a well-run anti-bias, anti-bullying training program.

The majority of board members voted to pause the program, indicating that more research was needed before deciding whether to renew the contract, which is overseen by the Anti-Defamation League.

Fair enough. Take some time and do a thorough, unbiased investigation. But I urge the board to base their final decision on facts, not on an alternate-universe theory in which the teaching of compassion and acceptance is viewed as an evil mind-control plot.

I never did see a blue whale. But I was OK with that. I had a splendid time, with plenty of frolicking dolphins, comical sea lions and even a few seals on hand for amusement.

I reveled in the real world that was before me, not the cartoonish one I might have imagined had I clung to some misguided notions about the frequency of whale sightings.

My day on the water was a tonic, distracting me briefly from the harshness of our age and the deep-seated hostilities that threaten to engulf good judgment and cooperation. Far too many of us are chasing whales that aren't there, and that pursuit promises only tragic results.

**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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# LEGO

Continued from page A1

with part of a LEGO plate, and when they are put together, they form a heart.

She said her boyfriend gave it to her as a gift just before she went on the show.

"Kids growing up, they probably played with LEGO together and were inspired

to keep doing it into an older age where they can be kind of experts at it and bring their own artistry to it," LEGO Masters executive producer Michael Heyerman said. "For Lauren and Bryan, when we saw their casting tape, they came across and proved to be just very genuine, talented and well-intentioned people.

"We thought these are

two really nice people who are obsessed with LEGO and seem to really get along as brother and sister, and that was an energy that we wanted to put on the show."

At the midway point of the show, Bryan and Lauren are still alive with the seven remaining pairs of builders vying to impress the Brickmasters, or judges. The last team left standing wins a grand prize of \$100,000. The show airs on FOX on Tuesdays at 8 p.m.

The contestants have been challenged in unforeseeable ways. On one occasion, they were asked to build a creation that would result in a spectacular explosion.

Bryan and Lauren's build included a ladybug, which survived the scene after a predatory frog is blown up.

They also partook in a fashion show. They put together a mythical hat, with a phoenix rising from the ashes out of the top of it. The heavy headwear remained intact as Lauren wore it down the runway.

In addition, one challenge tasked the competitors with building a tower to take on an earthquake simulator called the Brickter Scale.

Bryan and Lauren were not satisfied with simply building something that could withstand the seismic shakes.

"We built a giant cake," Bryan said. "It was supposed to be a cake made for a giant, Georgina the Giant, and on it, we put all these mini-figure sprinkles. They were like human sprinkles screaming for their lives on the cake." Lauren added that incor-



Photos by Don Leach | Staff Photographer

LEGO MASTERS competitor Bryan Firks with his "Neuschwanstein Castle."



LAUREN AND Bryan Firks hold a few of their creations.

porating LEGO people with scared faces was an integral part of the style of the build.

Those who grow up in Laguna Beach are accustomed to being around artistic people and finding

their own creative outlets.

The Firks family regularly attends the living picture show at the Pageant of the Masters, but there were other venues that triggered their imaginations not far from the seaside community.

"I think another thing is being from an area where we're also very close to theme parks," Lauren said. "It's something that we talk about. We're kind of in the middle of LEGOLAND and Disneyland, so we grew up in these creative worlds, being able to visit these imaginative worlds that we then wanted to be able to re-create at home."

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# Daily Pilot

A Times Community News publication incorporating the Huntington Beach Independent, Coastline Pilot, Orange Coast Daily Pilot and the Newport Harbor News Press combined with Daily Pilot

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Suite 300 West,  
Fountain Valley, CA 92708

The Daily Pilot, established in 1907, is published Wednesday 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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Published in the Daily Pilot on Sunday, August 1 and Sunday, August 8, 2021.

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Published in the Daily Pilot on: 8-01-2021 & 8-08-2021

# FESTIVAL

Continued from page A1

Huntington Beach resident Kevin Elliott has been working to bring music to the Pacific Airshow, which returns after a one-year hiatus, since his Code Four marketing agency took over production of the airshow four years ago. The Afterburner Music Festival is dif-

ferent than the U.S. Open concerts in that it is a ticketed event and is planned to be zoned off on the sand.

It is expected to accommodate up to 12,000 people per day.

"Combining daytime mind-bending aviation feats with evening celebrations of live music has been our vision for Pacific Airshow, and we are grateful to the city of Huntington

Beach for sharing that vision," Elliott said.

"Pacific Airshow is back and bringing extraordinary sights and sounds to our community for the biggest event of the year, and we can't wait for Afterburner Music Festival to hit the beach this fall."

Hagar, a Rock and Roll Hall of Fame vocalist, guitarist and songwriter, will headline the first night of the festival on Oct. 1.

Hunt, a chart-topping country artist, will headline the following night with support from X Ambassadors.

Additional performers are expected to be announced soon. Doors for the festival will open at 4 p.m. each day.

Huntington Beach is a familiar place for Hagar, who performed at the High Tide Beach Party & Car Show at Huntington State Beach in 2018.

"I'm a beach guy, and it just doesn't get any better than playing music on the beach," Hagar said in a news release. "My band and I can't wait to play for the fans and bring live music

back to the sand in Huntington Beach. Afterburner Music Festival is going to be one hell of a show — following the Blue Angels' performance at Pacific Airshow will be epic — and to play "Dreams" as a tribute to Van Halen during the Blue Angels 75th anniversary year will be surreal."

Tickets for the Afterburner Music Festival went on sale Thursday. Early bird tickets start at \$59 for Friday and \$79 for Saturday, and can be purchased online at [afterburnermusicfestival.com](http://afterburnermusicfestival.com) or on the Pacific Airshow mobile app.

The Huntington Beach City Council approved the permitting of the music festival by a unanimous 6-0 vote during its June 15 meeting.

Included in the permitting agreement, Code Four has to provide a full event security plan vetted and approved by the Huntington Beach Police Department, as well as carry general and Alcoholic Beverage Control liability insurance coverage.

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Dorothy P. Gray

March 12, 1926 - July 24, 2021

Dorothy P. Gray, age 95, passed away peacefully in her home in Corona del Mar, CA, on Saturday morning, July 24, 2021. As she often said, her life was a lucky one, full of the things she loved most: world-wide travel, music and theatre events, golf, bridge, swing dancing, financial investing, loving companions, good friends, and a home with a spectacular view of the Pacific Coast. She was known for her outgoing personality, sharp mind, strong opinions, and smart fashion sense.

Born on March 12, 1926, Dorothy lived in El Segundo, CA with her parents and younger sister Nancy until she was 13. When her father, who worked for Standard Oil, was transferred, the family moved to Berkeley, CA, where Dorothy attended Berkeley High School. She excelled in sports (especially baseball and volleyball) and academics, her competitive spirit fueling her desire to do exceptionally well in both.

During her first year of college at the College of the Pacific (now known as University of the Pacific), she majored in drama and psychology before transferring to UC Berkeley, where she continued her studies in psychology as well as sociology (though her favorite class was one on the works of Shakespeare). It was at UC Berkeley that she met James L. Gray, whom she married in May of 1949. They made their first home in Corona del Mar before building a house on Lido Island in Newport Beach where they lived, raised their 3 children, and enjoyed an active life of golf, tennis, and bridge as members of the Santa Ana Country Club and Irvine Coast Country Club. Dorothy brought her innate competitive spirit to these sports as well, and developed close friendships with her golf, tennis, and bridge buddies.

As a wife and mother, she had a knack for creating elaborate celebrations, dinner parties, magical Christmases, enchanted Easters and unforgettable birthday celebrations. She volunteered for the Assistance League of Newport Beach, contributed to American Cancer Society and the Arthritis Foundation.

After she and James divorced in 1968 she indulged in new activities and adventures, like travel, swing dancing, spa vacations with her girlfriends, financial investing, and nights on the town with men who were smitten by her sharp wit, intelligence and gregarious, fun-loving personality. When she was 63 years old, she fell in love with her last and greatest love, Donald Turner. While they were never officially married, they lived and traveled together for 25 years until Don died in 2011.

After Don's death and her diagnosis of congestive heart failure, Dorothy's life slowed down considerably, though she still played bridge with "the girls" at Big Canyon Country Club. Almost every evening, she indulged in one of her greatest pleasures: sitting in her living room with her cat Ben in her lap, taking in the breathtaking view as the sun sank slowly into the Pacific.

Dorothy is survived by her three children, Dhyana Winant, Nancy Tierney and Robert W. Gray, and her grandson, Daniel Winant. She is also survived by her niece, Linda Weill; daughter-in-law Jutta Gray; son-in-law Paul Winant, and son-in-law John Tierney; step-grandsons Frank, Thomas and James Farias, and four step-grandchildren: Loren, Gavin, Ella, and Robbie.

Donations in Dorothy's memory may be made to S.O.S (Share Our Selves) at <https://www.shareourselves.org/donate/>.

# JAZZ

Continued from page A1

demic.

Tickets cost \$30 and are expected to go on sale for the general public on Aug. 10, after being available for members of the nonprofit since Aug. 3.

Both concerts are part of Laguna Beach Live's jazz program.

Laguna Beach Live! was founded 20 years ago this month with the aim of boosting Laguna Beach's reputation as a music town through education and live performances. The group presents more than 30 concerts a year.

Interested readers can visit [lagunabeachlive.org](http://lagunabeachlive.org) for details.

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**OLYMPIC GAMES 2021**

# Dynasty! U.S. women's water polo team wins third straight gold medal

BY MATT SZABO

They came, they saw and they conquered. Again.

The U.S. Olympic women's water polo team extended its dominance in the sport on Saturday in Tokyo, routing Spain 14-5 to claim the Americans' third straight gold medal.

Maddie Musselman, a Corona del Mar High School product who will be a redshirt senior at UCLA, earned Olympic MVP honors. She scored three goals in the final, but she definitely had help.

Aria Fischer, Alys Williams and Kaleigh Gilchrist — all players who also have local ties — each scored two goals. Fischer is a Laguna Beach graduate now at Stanford, while Williams and Gilchrist played prep water polo at Edison High and Newport Harbor High, respectively.

CdM girls' water polo coach Melissa Seidemann, Laguna Beach High alumna Makenzie Fischer and CdM graduate Stephanía Haralabidis each scored a goal for Team USA in the final. So did Rachel Fattal, who played in high school at Los Alamitos High, and team captain Maggie Steffens.

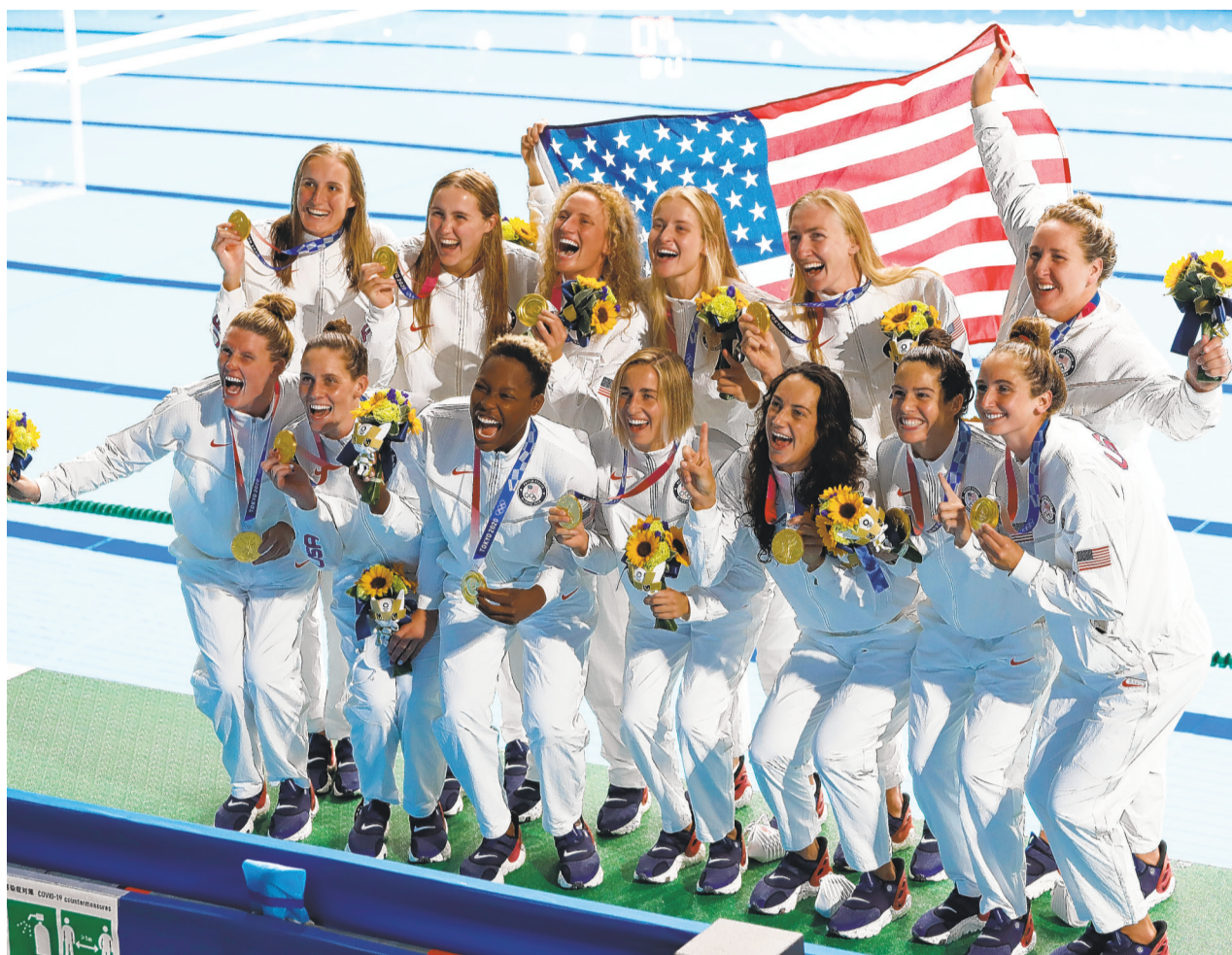
Goalkeeper Ashleigh Johnson made 11 saves and was named the tournament's top goalie.

The depth of the U.S. was apparent, as different players scored each of the team's first six goals to open up a 6-1 first-half lead.

"It was pretty cool to see us finally play a four-quarter game," Musselman, 23, said in a phone interview from Tokyo.

"I feel like all of the games leading up to that ... the way we came out in each game was a little slow. It was nice to have a full game where everyone brought their best every minute they were in there. We kind of punched them in the face first, rather than getting punched in the face first by them. I think they were a little rattled by it. No team had really pressed them throughout the whole Olympics, so that was one of our points of emphasis."

Team USA set several Olympic records, including the largest margin of victory in a women's water polo final (nine goals) and the most goals scored in



Photos by Gary Ambrose | For the Times

**MEMBERS OF** the U.S. women's water polo team celebrate after receiving their gold medals Saturday in Japan.

one Olympic Games (109). The Americans' 366 goals and 27 wins are also all-time records.

Seidemann and Steffens each won their third gold medal, as did coach Adam Krikorian.

Put simply, Team USA is a dynasty, though the squad did have to overcome adversity in Tokyo.

A 10-9 loss to Hungary in group play was the team's first Olympic loss since 2008, and the U.S. had to rally for a 15-11 victory over the Russian Olympic Committee in the semifinals.

They accomplished the

latter feat partially through the offense of Musselman the MVP, who scored four of her five semifinal goals in the second half.

"Obviously, [the MVP] is super-special," she said. "All of us work hard to be where we are. You put in the effort and the time ... We're the best team, and at the end of the day that's what matters most to me, but obviously there's a little motivation in that award."

The championship match was all the United States. María García led Spain with two goals, but

the U.S. defense was on fire in holding Spain to two goals in 16 power-play chances.

The local connections on the current team are noteworthy. Assistant coach Dan Klatt is the UC Irvine women's water polo

head coach. The other assistant coach, Chris Oeding, played water polo at CdM.

Musselman, Gilchrist and the Fischer sisters, returners from the 2016 gold medal team in Rio de Janeiro, earned their second

gold medal.

It's the first gold medal for Williams — the last cut from the Rio team — and Haralabidis, a left-hander who helped CdM win its lone CIF Southern Section Division 1 title in 2013.

Among her two goals, Williams scored the first one of the match less than a minute in.

"To be able to witness her growth as a teammate was really special," Musselman said. "At the beginning of the tournament, you could see the nerves that she had. The way that she processed that and was able to just play was really cool to see. For her to get the first goal of our Olympic final game just fired us all up."

The United States is now 134-4 since winning gold in Rio. Musselman said a plane carrying much of the team is scheduled to land at Los Angeles International Airport at about 11 a.m. Monday, Pacific time.

"It's about the unit that you build, the unit you create and that's really where the magic lies," Steffens, the team captain, told reporters after the gold-medal match.

"I'm really grateful to be a part of it and to have been able to show the world that magic we've created as a circle and as a unit."

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**LAGUNA BEACH** native Aria Fischer loses her cap while playing against Spain in the gold medal game Saturday.



**THE U.S. OLYMPIC** women's water polo team celebrates after defeating Spain 14-5.

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