

Artistic explorations of change

Irvine Fine Arts Center presents two new exhibitions with works from artists inspired by transformation and new realities.

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

Virginia Arce, exhibitions program coordinator at Irvine Fine Arts Center, insists the gallery's new exhibition, "End as Beginning," was not made in reaction to the recent presidential election.

"Thematically, the exhibition has kind of an evergreen character to it," said Arce.

But she understands why it's hard for viewers not to compare the themes of the sculptural and installation-based works of Randi Hokett, Zara Kuredjian and Patricia Liverman on view in the Main Gallery to the current cultural climate.

"Randi Hokett, for example, is very interested in volcanoes and very dramatic shifts in space as a metaphor for personal growth," said Arce. "A dramatic rift into the everyday that forces us to recalibrate and think about how we are and how we make due with this new, very radically changed landscape that we are in."

Of course, the exhibition, one of two that opened at the Irvine Fine Arts Center on Nov. 16, was in the works long before election night. The Irvine Fine Arts Center emphasizes contemporary artists who are in an emergent place in their careers, and their intuition most certainly plays a role in the themes their work reflects.

"I think artists are always tapping into

See *Artistic*, page A8



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

THE "FOR ME and You" exhibition at the Irvine Fine Arts Center features "Playing at the Polluted Land" by artist Ann Phong. Another exhibit, "End as Beginning" explores similar themes and is running concurrently at the location.



Now open in Irvine

UCI Health

Chao Family Comprehensive Cancer Center

Supervisors mull probe following corruption case

Members discuss but delay taking action following ex-supervisor Andrew Do's bribery scheme conviction.

BY GABRIEL SAN ROMÁN

In the wake of former Orange County Supervisor Andrew Do's conviction on bribery charges, an outside audit of contracts related to his tenure on the board may be on the way.

During Tuesday's board meeting, supervisors debated hiring independent investigators to vet contracts "directed or influenced" by Do for any possible corruption.

Supervisor Vicente Sarmiento made the push for the external audit.

He cited the example of Anaheim contracting with an outside firm to issue a corruption report

in the wake of an FBI investigation that led to the conviction of former mayor Harry Sidhu.

Assemblyman Avelino Valencia wrote a letter to the board expressing his support for an external audit. During his time on Anaheim City Council he voted in favor of its own independent corruption probe.

"In the past three years, there have been two federal probes involving former elected officials," Valencia wrote. "These corrupt actions will not be tolerated and it is imperative that we take decisive action to prevent future abuses."

Last month, Do pleaded guilty to steering more than \$10 million in federal pandemic relief funds through a nonprofit connected to his daughter, Rhiannon, for personal gain. He admitted to receiving more than \$550,000 in bribes

See *Case*, page A7



Photos by James Carbone

GRADUATES OF an eight-week program that teaches students how to start their own in-home child-care businesses celebrate Wednesday at the Boys & Girls Club of Garden Grove.

Big Five O.C. class helps women build oases in a child-care desert

BY SARA CARDINE

Costa Mesa's Scarlett Lobo was working in the mortgage loan industry but left her job two years ago to start a family. Now mother to a 15-month-old son, she's looking to reenter the workforce without having to leave his side.

Dennine Gardenhire, 57, of Mission Viejo, had to quit her job as a truck driver in 2019 due to an injury and now hopes to leverage her natural affinity and love for children in her next business venture.

Crystal Morillon, raising a young son in Anaheim, used her degree in child and adolescent development at various school districts but now wants to apply what she's learned in a more personal workplace — her home.



SCARLETT LOBO, of Costa Mesa, with son Lucas Butsko, completed a licensed in-home childcare training program offered by First 5 O.C. and the O.C. Women's Business Center, among other organizations.

See *Class*, page A2

ALSO FROM THE DAILY PILOT:



Courtesy of Winter Fest OC

WINTERFEST OC'S SNOWY WONDERLAND RETURNS TO THE ORANGE COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS PAGE A4

One of O.C.'s wealthiest enclaves seeks its own ZIP code — and lower sales taxes

BY GABRIEL SAN ROMÁN

North Tustin, a hillside community of luxury homes dotted along narrow, winding roads, may soon get its own ZIP code — and a clear exit from one of the highest sales tax rates in Orange County.

Republican Rep. Young Kim, whose 40th congressional district encompasses the enclave, has cosponsored a bill that would designate single, unique ZIP codes for North Tustin and several other communities across the nation within 270 days of its passage.

The largest unincorporated island in the county is designated by the Census as North Tustin, but the U.S. Postal Service assigned it a ZIP code shared with Santa Ana. Another ZIP code is shared with Tustin.

"Its status as an unincorporated area can cause confusion," Kim said of the community in a press statement. "Providing North Tustin with a unique ZIP code will create certainty for residents who have called North Tustin home for decades and clarity for tax purposes, to surrounding areas and the USPS."

Richard Nelson, a 55-year North Tustin resident and president of the Foothill Communities Assn., noted that he and his neighbors have talked with Rep. Kim's office for a year about the importance of the commu-

nity having its own ZIP code.

"Until 1996, North Tustin did have its own ZIP code and then the post office needed some more addresses in Santa Ana, so they expanded it into the eastern part of Santa Ana," He said. "Now we share the ZIP code, and that has generated a lot of problems for people in North Tustin."

According to Census data, 69% of North Tustin's roughly 25,000 residents are white, and the median household income is \$174,000.

Its hillside homeowners in neighborhoods like Lemon Heights, Cowan Heights and Red Hill include current and former politicians like Curt Pringle, a onetime Anaheim mayor turned lobbyist, and Don Wagner, current chairman of the Orange County Board of Supervisors.

Over the years, residents have been sticklers against any annexation attempts, halted a shopping center development and even a proposed Gelson's supermarket. They have pushed for their own ZIP code amid protests of being overtaxed, especially in the past five years.

In 2018, Santa Ana voters passed Measure X, which raised its sales tax rate to 9.25% for the next decade to shore up budget woes and fund key civic services like public safety for its largely



Los Angeles Times File Photo

HOMES IN the wealthy Cowan Heights neighborhood of North Tustin in a photo from 2008.

Latino, immigrant residents.

The city shares the highest sales tax rate in the county alongside cash-strapped Los Alamitos and Westminster.

"The people of North Tustin did not vote for that," Wagner said. "The tax revenue goes to Santa Ana, not North Tustin."

But sharing a ZIP code with the city can mean that North Tustin residents who use their home addresses while buying a car or shopping online for big ticket purchases like furniture or appliances are sometimes assessed Santa Ana's higher sales tax rate.

"If you're buying something for \$10 on Amazon, that's not a problem," Nelson said. "But if you're buying a \$50,000 automobile, it can get to be a big deal."

Nelson has had to negoti-

ate refunds on a company by company basis.

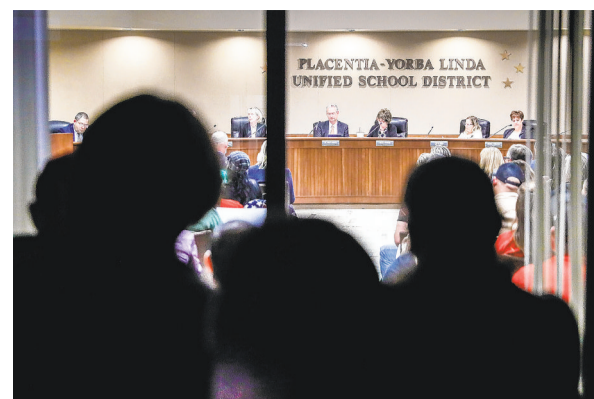
Wagner called the ZIP code issue "taxation without representation" in supporting Rep. Kim's legislative efforts.

On Wednesday, the House Oversight Committee passed the bill out of markup.

If it becomes law, North Tustin residents would fall under the jurisdiction of the county with the board of supervisors overseeing its tax rates. Currently, the county's sales tax rate is 7.75%.

"People just want to get back to where we were, and it can be done," Nelson said. "The post office just has to do it."

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Robert Gauthier | Los Angeles Times

A PLACENTIA-YORBA Linda Unified school board meeting in 2021. The board's current majority voted to make it harder to fire Supt. Alex Cherniss.

Conservative PYLUSD trustees move to shield superintendent after elections

BY GABRIEL SAN ROMÁN

A majority of Placentia-Yorba Linda Unified School District trustees voted to shield top-level administrators, including Supt. Alex Cherniss, from any possible headwinds following local elections.

As voters appear poised to flip conservative control of the board, current trustees approved changes to Cherniss' contract during Tuesday's school board meeting that would make it more difficult for him to be fired.

Trustees can now only terminate his employment, with or without cause, by way of a super-

majority vote of the five-member board, a threshold that sunsets at the end of 2026.

The contract change, which was also approved for two assistant superintendents and one deputy superintendent, drew much protest during the packed school board meeting.

Tricia Quintero, a teacher and past PTA president, spoke in opposition of the changes. She is set to be elected to the school board by a commanding margin in winning the Area 1 seat Trustee Shawn Youngblood is vacating.

See **Trustees**, page A7



UCI Health Chao Family Comprehensive Cancer Center & Ambulatory Care

UCI Health

Chao Family Comprehensive Cancer Center



CLASS

Continued from page A1

"I thought, since I just had a newborn baby, this would be the best opportunity to finally move from employee to CEO," the 35-year-old said of her professional journey.

Orange County has been identified by the public policy group Center for American Progress as a "child-care desert," where just one licensed day-care slot exists for every 21 infants and toddlers.

The scarcity of services can have big impacts on families, particularly mothers, as they weigh the value of paying for costly commercial day care against the possible income loss associated with staying home with their children, says Cristina Belvins, a senior program officer for First 5 Orange County.

"We've found there were \$2.27 billion lost in earnings because of the number of families who stay home to take care of their child, and there are 36,000 lost jobs due to lack of child-care," Belvins said in a recent interview. "For our county, that's \$202 million lost in tax revenue."

To combat that trend, a new program is giving women like Lobo, Gardenhire and Morillon the training and assistance they need to transform their own homes into licensed businesses that can alleviate shortages in their own neighborhoods.

Operated by First 5 of Orange County, and with backing and support from several organizations, including the Orange County Women's Business Center, an eight-week child-care incubator program walks participants through the process of establishing and licensing their own businesses.

Through a combination



Photos by James Carbone

GRADUATES OF a program offered through First 5 Orange County and the Orange County Women's Business center celebrate their completion of an eight-week program.

of in-person and online courses offered in English and Spanish, students learn to draft a business plan, keep track of their finances, project budgetary needs and market their businesses through social media.

Students, many of them mothers and grandmothers, earn stipends up to \$5,000, offered in stages as they reach certain benchmarks, such as applying for and obtaining a child-care license through the California Department of Social Services.

The program also provides them with a peer guide — either a former program participant who's opened her own business or another Orange County in-home childcare operator — along with a business coach who can advise them on logistics and best practices.

Lobo, the Costa Mesa mom, is among a fifth cohort of about 30 students to receive the training, since the program began in the

spring of 2023. She says she appreciates learning more about the business aspects of childcare, which can be intimidating to beginners like her.

"They have been able to simplify it as much as possible and go into detail about how to reach the customer, how to come up with a name, how to deal with social media and how to think about the competition," she said Monday. "It has been so useful."

The 31-year-old created a business plan for Costa Mamas Family Care Center, which she hopes to be fully licensed and ready to open sometime next year. A native of Venezuela, Lobo is planning on offering a bilingual program that includes fun hands-on activities for kids and parents.

"I took Mommy and Me classes and would love to do some events like that, where we can all get together," she said. "As a mom, I think it's key to meet other parents and moms. The idea of finding

your tribe — that's something that's important to me."

In a graduation ceremony Wednesday at the Boys & Girls Club Family Center in Garden Grove, Lobos celebrated with others in the fifth cohort and the program's many backers, including the Newport Beach nonprofit Community for Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Leadership Opportunities (CIELO), which funds students' stipends.

Gardenhire, whose daughter enrolled in the program earlier in the year, shared with her fellow students her desire to impact children the way important teachers and mentors did for her when she was a child.

"I just feel like boys and girls need care, they need nurturing. Parents need to know when they go to work their children will be cared for and they're going to be treated like they are at home. That's what I want to offer," she said of her busi-



SCARLETT LOBO, of Costa Mesa, poses with her county-licensed in-home childcare training program certificate.



CRYSTAL MORILLON, of Anaheim, holding her son, Ian Hernandez, 10 months old, smiles after receiving her childcare training program certificate Wednesday.

ness, Kids R My Heart Childcare.

Mike Daniel is network director of the Orange County/Inland Empire Small Business Development Center network, which worked with First 5 of Orange County to establish the program as a pilot and provide business coaches for each student.

"When they're done with this they can now apply for their license and they can still see us, there are 150 of us in the network, and we can get them connected to the right people at the right time," Daniel said Wednesday. "Hopefully from here they can move on to start commercial childcare businesses, this is just the start-

ing point."

So far, 177 individuals have completed the curriculum in the program's first three cohorts, opening 41 in-home childcare businesses, while another 50 or more are waiting to obtain their licenses, Joan Lundbaum, a First 5 consultant, said at the graduation.

"When they do, this group will have provided over 500 spots for young children in Orange County. And that's in addition to all of you who will be opening your homes," she added. "That is so amazing — congratulations to all of you."

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Dr. Farshid Dayyani is a nationally recognized medical oncologist who specializes in the advanced treatment of gastrointestinal and hepatobiliary cancers.



A Winter Fest wonderland returns to O.C. fairgrounds

BY ERIC LICAS

Snowball fights and dazzling lights returned Friday to the Orange County fairgrounds in Costa Mesa for the 10th anniversary of Winter Fest OC.

The holiday celebration fills 10 acres of the event space, making it the largest of its kind in Southern California, its executive producer Mark Entner told the Daily Pilot. It offers people in and around Orange County a chance to enjoy a snow day without having to pack a set of tire chains and drive up a mountain to a ski resort.

"When we open, it's a good-sized village," Entner said. "We've got 200 to 300 people who work every night in support of the thousands of people who come to Winter Fest. It's an amazing experience for everyone working Winter Fest OC to just see the smiles on people's faces."

A team of about three dozen people also work year-round to plan the annual celebration, Entner said. They strive to offer new and returning event-goers a balance of nostalgia-inspiring moments hearkening to their childhoods, as well as fresh experiences to spark new cherished memories.

About 150,000 visitors attended last year's festival, Entner said. This year

brings back many staple attractions that have been updated or augmented for 2024.

The light show depicting Santa's house and other winter scenes is one of the most iconic features of the event. It will be synchronized to music played twice every hour and illuminated by 2 million bulbs, twice as many as it had been packed with last year.

It, along with a nine-lane ice slide, access to a play area filled with freshly produced snow and other photo friendly attractions are included with the cost of admission. Tickets start at \$24.99 for kids and \$29.99 for adults.

"It's really been our goal to keep the experience affordable and accessible to everyone in Orange County," Entner said.

S'more-roasting in VIP igloos, 45-minute ice-skating sessions and other activities are also offered for an additional cost. This year's carnival features over 50 whimsical diversions, including 26 rides for visitors of all ages.

Plenty of treats will be for sale at Winter Fest to help fuel revelers' holiday cheer, including tacos, pizza, churro bites, ice cream cones or corn dogs topped with ingredients inspired by Korean cuisine. Many will go on special for only \$5 during a sort of



Photos courtesy of Winter Fest OC

KIDS POSE for a photo before riding a trolley at Winter Fest OC.

happy hour from 4 to 6 p.m. each night.

The 35-night festival runs through Jan. 5, and New Year's Eve is one of the most popular dates during its run, Entner said. Attendees get two chances to ring in 2025 with one countdown at 9 p.m. and another at midnight. Both feature fireworks and performances by Taylor Swift tribute band, Taylor Nation.

"For those with kids who don't want to stay out till midnight, the 9 p.m. celebration is a perfect opportunity to be with the family."

Tickets and additional information can be found at winterfestoc.com.

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A CHILD SMILES before riding down an ice slide at Winter Fest OC.

The Barclay's programming set to bring holiday cheer

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

The Irvine Barclay Theatre rings in the holiday season with a full schedule of Christmas programming throughout the month of December.

The classical piano ensemble made up of five siblings known as the 5 Browns will bring a selection of familiar and lesser known holiday carols to the Barclay. The Juilliard-trained quintet has been featured on "The Oprah Winfrey Show" and "60 Minutes" and has performed concerts around the world from Carnegie Hall to Beijing's National Center for the Performing Arts. "Christmas with the 5 Browns" will take place on Dec. 1 at 4 p.m., and tickets start at \$34.

The Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra will bring its annual tour spreading holiday cheer to Orange County, with a performance featuring its two star vocalists, Ekep Nkwelle and Robbie Lee. Music director and trombonist Chris Crenshaw will lead the orchestra through a soulful songbook of holiday classics from greats



Gilberto Tadday | Jazz at Lincoln

THE JAZZ at Lincoln Center Orchestra's "Big Band Holidays" tour comes to the Irvine Barclay Theatre on Dec. 5.

like Duke Ellington, Dizzy Gillespie and Benny Goodman. "Big Band Holidays with the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra" will take place on Dec. 5 at 8 p.m., and tickets start at \$44.

Canadian Brass will perform a concert of seasonal songs in a show presented by the Philharmonic Society of Orange County. Avuncular tuba master and original member Chuck Daellenbach will lead Jeff Nelsen on horn, Keith Dynda on trombone and Mikio Sasaki and Joe

Burgstaller on trumpet through songs like "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year." "Holidays with Canadian Brass" is scheduled for Dec. 12 at 8 p.m., and tickets start at \$42.

British a cappella ensemble the King's Singers will perform festive music inspired by its touring travels. Founded in 1968 at King's College, Cambridge, by six choral scholars, the group continues to tour and bring holiday cheer with a program that includes carols like "Silent



File Photo

CAST MEMBERS perform an abridged performance of "The Nutcracker" at the Irvine Barclay Theatre. This year's performance takes place from Dec. 7 through Dec. 24.

Night" and "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas." The show will also include songs honoring the magic of 100 years of Disney like "When You Wish Upon a Star." "The King's Singers: Christmas Time is Here" will take place on Dec. 13 at 8 p.m., and tickets start at \$34.

Beginning on Dec. 7, the Festival Ballet Theatre will return to the Barclay for "The Nutcracker." Tchaikovsky's full-length holiday classic is choreographed and directed by Salwa Rizkalla, Festival Ballet Theatre's artistic director. In addition to the magical costumes and captivating scenery on stage, the lobby will be fully decorated along with a Nutcracker boutique for Christmas shopping. There



THE KING'S SINGERS will perform a special Christmas program.

Courtesy of Irvine Barclay Theatre

are also a limited number of tickets for a preshow tea party at the Barclay's Jade Room one hour before the performance. Characters from the ballet, like Clara, will join guests as they dine on gourmet finger sandwiches, petit fours and scones with tea and lemonade. "The Nutcracker Presented by Festival Ballet Theatre" is

scheduled for multiple performances from Dec. 7 until Dec. 24, and tickets start \$54.

To purchase tickets and view the full schedule of holiday programming at the Irvine Barclay Theatre, visit thebarclay.org.

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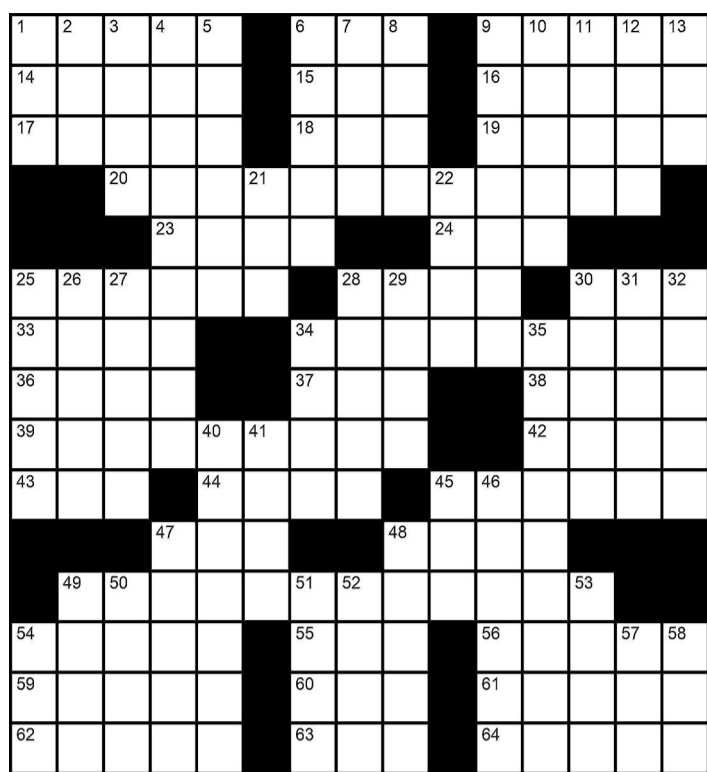
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THE DAILY COMMUTER PUZZLE

By Stella Zawistowski

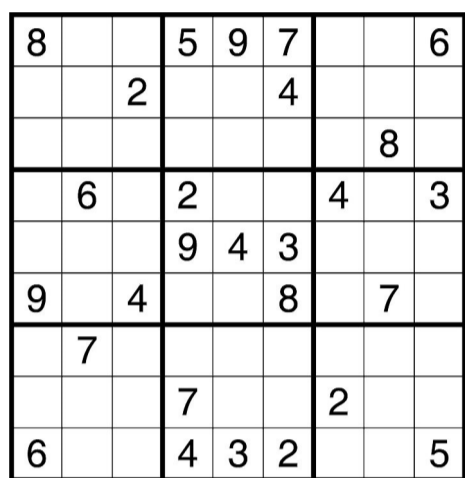
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 1 Mosque leaders
 6 Small taste
 9 Serious TV show
 14 _ Polo
 15 Athlete with a salary
 16 Take it easy
 17 Milan fashion label
 18 Comedian Costello
 19 Frighten
 20 Classic Springsteen song: 4 wds.
 23 Tidy
 24 Your and my
 25 Ailment
 28 Managed-care groups: Abbr.
 30 Civic or Camaro
 33 Dastardly
 34 Place to buy novels
 36 Tear to shreds
 37 Extremely long time period
 38 Sign of the future
 39 Musical increase in loudness
 42 Grow faint
 43 For what _ worth
 44 Fedoras and boaters
 45 Oscillate wildly
 47 Trash-talk
 48 Deodorant soap brand
 49 "Tell me more": 2 wds.
 54 Kitchen appliance
 55 Thanksgiving veggie
 56 Impolite look
 59 Land area measures
 60 Environmentally friendly prefix
 61 Say aloud
 62 "We hold _ truths..."
 63 Fox's home
 64 Chicks' sounds
- DOWN**
 1 Little demon



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 A4.

- 2 Damage
 3 Jordanian, typically
 4 The Golden Arches
 5 Flew high
 6 Gymnast's move
 7 Smooth out the creases
 8 Make a face
- 9 "The Cat in the Hat" author: 2 wds.
 10 Happen again
 11 "It's too bad..."
 12 Actress Rooney
 13 Wood-chopping tool
 21 No vote
 22 Catchy part of

- a song
 25 French "thank you"
 26 Prevent
 27 Script parts
 28 Sweatshirt parts
 29 Not stereo
 30 Senseless states
 31 Boxing venue
 32 Continue to subscribe
 34 Not straight
 35 Wet nap
 40 From Guangzhou, say
 41 Sunrise direction
 45 Sibling's nickname
 46 Relishes: 2 wds.
 47 Plummet
 48 Fiend
 49 Allergic reaction
 50 Extra amount
 51 Looked over
 52 Contest of speed
 53 Romantic outing
 54 Plopped on the couch
 57 Sales force member
 58 Hospital parts: Abbr.

Tribune Media Services

Disneyland Resort invites guests to make new holiday memories

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

The holiday season is in full swing at the Disneyland Resort, and this year there are a few new gifts to unwrap as the Anaheim parks add new experiences to the traditions guests have come to expect.

Tiana's Bayou Adventure, formerly Splash Mountain, officially opened on Nov. 15. The water-based attraction has been closed since May 2023 in order to transition the ride and the surrounding area from a "Song of the South" theme to focus instead on Disney's 2009 animated film "The Princess and the Frog."

"Disneyland is very fortunate to have a New Orleans Square; we are the only park that has that," said Kim Irvine, executive creative director of Walt Disney Imagineering.

Tiana's Palace restaurant opened last summer in the space that was formerly the French Market restaurant. The building, Irvine said, was the inspiration for Tiana's Palace in the movie.

"You can tell that very clearly from the architecture, and we enhanced it by putting the smokestacks and wheelhouse on top and then creating an interior that was Tiana's dream come true of having a palace restaurant," said Irvine.

The reimagined ride features Tiana and other memorable characters from the movie, like alligator friend Louis with an original story that invites riders to help Tiana find a band for her Mardi Gras soiree. The ride includes new arrangements of songs from the movie by musician Terence Blanchard, like "Gonna Take



Courtesy of Disneyland Resort

"A MUSICAL Christmas with Mariachi Alegría de Disneyland & Miguel" at Disney California Adventure is new to the park and inspired by Las Posadas.

You There," "Down in New Orleans" and a new song, "Special Spice," written, produced and performed by Grammy-award winner PJ Morton with vocals by Anika Noni Rose. And of course, there is still the 50-foot drop.

Critter Country has transitioned to Bayou Country making it more of an extension of New Orleans Square with new retail shops, like Ray's Berets and Louis' Critter Club. Eudora's Chic Boutique is inspired by Tiana's dressmaker mother and sells home goods and decor as well as sauces and seasonings.

Irvine said the Imagineering team worked hard on the changes, and he referenced Walt Disney's philosophy that Disneyland would never be complete.

"Disneyland is such a sacred place to a lot of people, and it has a lot of memories. It is hard to figure out how to enhance things and make things better without destroying those memories," said Irvine. "But Walt very much wanted to have a park where he could keep adding things and chang-

ing things." That careful balance of making room for new memories is also implemented at Disney California Adventure. The park welcomes the return of Festival of Holidays, which celebrates the diverse traditions of the season.

Now through Jan. 6, guests can visit the Festive Food Marketplace for a taste of the holidays in the form of seasonal food and beverage offerings. Favorites from years past, like braised pork belly adobo with garlic rice and barbacoa tamal de res with Oaxaca cheese and tomatillo salsa are back, but there are new dishes to try too.

A festive yule log filled with chocolate chip cookie dough and covered with chocolate buttercream or the Mickey-shaped sticky toffee pudding macaron stuffed with vanilla buttercream, date cake and salted toffee sauce go beyond traditional Christmas cookies. The turkey croissant muffin slider imagines your Thanksgiving dinner in savory cupcake form, topped with cranberry

See **Resort**, page A8



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From wearable devices to robotic surgery, the horse has left the barn

With the holidays upcoming, it's a safe bet that personal electronics will top the list of desired gifts...



It's a responsible, common-sense strategy. But now many in the education community have begun to ask: What about smart watches? Should these new policies include those devices as well?

Good questions, and there will be more. Wearable technologies are coming in hot and fast, and the fact is we have no idea what the full impact of these products will be.

But the usefulness comes at a cost, and we're nowhere near certain how great that cost could become.

It's not just that we're scrambling to catch up with a runaway horse. When it comes to our tech-addicted society, the horse isn't just out of the barn. The barn has burned to the ground and the horse has galloped so far ahead that we fear we've lost the ability to bend it to our will.

That's been our operating procedure throughout human history: Invent something that will alter society forever and figure out the consequences later.

I've heard of many people who

have declared their intent to take a break and go offline for awhile in order to disengage from the toxicity that proliferates on the internet and social media.

I recently got a taste of how difficult it is to get by in this world without constantly engaging in cyberspace. This opportunity came to me through a relative who is, to put it mildly, technologically challenged.

This family member needed help navigating a crisis, which would have been impossible to accomplish on their own. I spent many hours dealing with agencies, banks, medical professionals and other entities, explaining over and over again that, no, you can't email or text my relative. No, they can't provide an e-signature on online documents.

I'm not complaining. OK, I guess I am a little. But the point remains that without someone to assist them through a world that now requires engagement with technology, this relative would have been left adrift and without viable options for moving forward.

On the other hand, I have also had reason lately to be immensely grateful for the progress that technological innovations can deliver. I've had two major surgeries this year, both robotically assisted, which provided many benefits, including smaller inci-



Al Seib | Los Angeles Times

THE WEARABLE ocean medallion with scanner at the Majestic Princess cruise ship docked at the Port of Los Angeles, World Cruise Center in 2021.

sions and faster recoveries.

Right before the second surgery, I had a moment to glimpse the robotic equipment in the operating room. "Don't worry," the surgeon had assured me. "It will be me telling the robot what to do." And, indeed, I spotted the machine that he would use to control the robot's movements. I was awestruck. And then I was out.

Later, during my recovery, I had time to ponder the surgeon's words, and the fact that he had felt the need to reassure me that he was controlling the robot — and not vice versa. I imagine that many patients had expressed concern and he had become accustomed to bolstering their

confidence over who was in charge.

Yet it's precisely that feeling that we are no longer in charge, not entirely, that worries us — from students who can't concentrate because their phones are wrenching their attention away from studies to older folks who just feel lost in a technological maze. That niggling thought will be with us as we dole out goodies this Christmas — and possibly forever after.

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.

MAILBAG

Happy about new project, residential or not

As a senior who has resided in Huntington Beach for 62 years, I welcome the positive vote on the zoning map amendment for the Bolsa Chica Senior Care Community (Huntington Beach senior housing project passes second reading on split vote, Daily Pilot, Nov. 21).

Whether it turns out to be commercial or residential, these 134 assisted living units are surely needed by seniors in our community. Since three conservative members were opposed to this project it must mean that what was the usual minority plus Councilman Tony Strickland are on the right track for the construction of this worthwhile project.

Richard C. Armendariz Huntington Beach

Fearing the future

The Huntington Beach City Council held its last full meeting on Tuesday featuring the outgoing members of the council minority (Natalie Moser, Rhonda Bolton and Dan Kalmick). Their spaces at the dais were covered in floral bouquets as was the desk of retiring City Clerk Robin Estanislau. Dozens of public comments by a five-to-one margin applauded the leadership and service of the three who were deprived of reelection by a nasty turn to the right with a political red tide which swept through a grievance-fueled electorate.

Surf City's local government is now headed into uncharted territory with seven right-wing council members and a new and inexperienced conservative city clerk, Lisa Lane Barnes, whom they had endorsed.

Factoring into the mix is a pugnacious right-wing city attorney, Michael Gates, and the city will be entering a new and confrontational period with its local control and reputation on the line. The concern is palpable.

Many in the community fear the amateur authori-

tarians on the dais will plunge Surf City into endless civic turmoil.

This will, in turn, affect surrounding coastal communities as the powers that be in Sacramento decide how the conditions here in areas like housing, voting rights and the environment could affect other Orange County cities.

Lawsuits, penalties, restrictions and loss of local control could be visited upon Huntington Beach if it persists in defying state laws.

Hopefully, cooler heads will prevail before the ideological and idiocy on the dais rampages further. Local elections matter. But so does the damage caused.

Tim Geddes Huntington Beach

Fearing the state

Gov. Gavin Newsom continues to ignore the 40% of Californians who voted for Trump and to allow cheating with the law against voter ID. H.B. City Atty. Michael Gates argued that voter ID is common sense that prevents fraud and keeps elections fair.

The courts sided with Gates (O.C. judge dismisses challenge to Huntington Beach Voter ID laws, Daily Pilot, Nov. 15),

and Huntington Beach can proceed with its voter ID requirements. It's sad that the Democrats do not get it, especially Newsom, but they soon will, especially on Jan. 20 when Trump takes office.

Peter Anderson Huntington Beach

Pleasant stories in the Pilot

My subscription to the L.A. Times includes the print version on Sundays, which also comes with a Daily Pilot & TimesOC. This past Sunday reading through The Times was depressing: issues in Ukraine and Israel, President-elect Trump putting forth frightening candidates for multiple cabinet positions, even sports teams I would like to see win lost. Bummer. Then I turned to the Daily Pilot — three pleasant, uplifting articles on the first two pages. The horse stable kind of therapy, dynamic ways for children to spark creativity and on page 2 a nonprofit that won't say no to pets.

Thank you so much for turning a depressing news morning into a pleasant sense that we are going to be OK.

Dudley Johnson Newport Beach

A WORD, PLEASE JUNE CASAGRANDE

Delete the S? The dictionary suggests yes

Every time I see the preposition "towards" in an article I'm editing, I delete the S. I've been doing this as long as I can recall, decades, and it's been going on so long I don't even remember why.

This habit stands out among my other brain-on-autopilot edits because I never recheck this one. I never do a quick search of my AP Stylebook or my dictionary. I just delete the S.

I think about it so little that, in the 20-odd years I've been writing about grammar, it's never crossed my mind to make "toward" and its cousins including "backward," "forward" and "afterward" subjects of a column.

It's time. And I'm pleased to report that the Associated Press Stylebook — that is, the rulebook I follow for most of my editing work — backs me up. It says, quite simply, in its entry for "toward": "Not towards."

That's the whole entry. Whew. My laziness hasn't come back to haunt me the way it did when I kept spelling out "percent" years after AP style switched to using "%."

Of course, that rule really only applies in edited text. So what about everyday writing? Is "towards" allowed there? In my reading of Merriam-Webster's online dictionary, the answer is yes.

Merriam's dictionary doesn't have an entry for "towards," but it lists it under its entry for "toward" as a "variant." This tells us two things: 1. It's OK to use "towards," and 2. Merriam's dictionary prefers "toward."

Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of English Usage, which is a usage guide and not a dictionary, goes deeper: "Many commentators have observed that 'toward' is the

more common choice in American English, while the preference in British English is 'towards.' Our evidence confirms that such is indeed the case. Both words are commonly used in the U.S., but 'toward' is undoubtedly prevalent."

The word dates back in Old English to sometime before the year 899, when it was written "towardes." According to Chambers Dictionary of Etymology, "towardes" came from combining "to" with "weard," which was a noun meaning direction, plus "es," which indicated possession. Sometime before the year 1300, Old English seemed to drop the S, using just "toward." And within a century or two, "toward" and "towards" had appeared.

Back in the 1800s, "towards" was dominant in all the printed sources reflected in Google's Ngram Viewer, which includes lots of American publications. But shortly after the turn of the 20th century, "toward" overtook "towards," and has dominated ever since, despite a slight reversal of that trend that started just about seven years ago.

As American English speakers became less inclined to add the S, British speakers kept it. Today, both spellings are correct in the U.S., though "toward" is the best choice if you want to emulate professionally edited writing.

As for "afterward" and "afterwards," it's the same story: American publishing usually drops the S, while British sources may keep it, according to Merriam's usage guide. Merriam's dictionary, meanwhile, doesn't have an entry for "afterwards" and instead reroutes those searches to its entry for "afterward," where it says the S-spelling is a variant.

See Word, page A8

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CASE

Continued from page A1

from assistance approved to provide meals to elderly residents during the pandemic.

“These were public dollars that were diverted,” Sarmiento said. “We have to demonstrate to them [that] this is an objective finding.”

Though supportive of Sarmiento’s initiative, Supervisor Katrina Foley sought to broaden the scope of any potential outside probe.

“This external audit needs to be expanded to all contracts, not just isolating the ones by ex-supervisor Do,” she said. “Over the past 2½ years of attending these meetings, I have yet to see any contracts that were ever denied and not unanimously approved by the entire board.”

Foley also wanted to ensure that there wasn’t any overlap with county efforts already underway in the aftermath of the Do scandal.

During the same Sept. 24 meeting when supervisors censured Do, they also voted to direct the county’s internal auditor to carry out a risk assessment of American Rescue Plan Act funded contracts within 90 days.

On Tuesday, Foley asked



Gary Coronado | Los Angeles Times

SUPERVISOR Vicente Sarmiento is spearheading the effort to hire independent investigators.

if that included all federal pandemic relief funded contracts.

Aggie Alonso, the county’s internal audit director, noted that over 2,000 such contracts existed and that, within the time frame given, his office could only carry out a sample with recommendations before the Dec. 24 deadline.

“If we’re going to do something so grand, we’d probably have to contract it out,” he said.

In August, the county also

filed a lawsuit against Viet America Society — the non-profit affiliated with Do’s daughter at the center of the scandal — alleging that it had “brazenly plundered” pandemic relief funds for personal gain.

County counsel Leon Page noted during Tuesday’s meeting that auditors would be retained to review documents obtained through discovery.

The lawsuit gave Foley pause about the timing of hiring independent investi-

gators.

“I don’t want this to impact ... our ability to litigate our case because we want to get the money back,” she said.

Sarmiento doubled down on the importance of ordering an independent probe on top of everything else the county is doing on its own.

“What I’m asking staff to do ... is have an outside, independent firm do a review of not only what we’re doing internally, but again, any

gaps that we may have missed,” Sarmiento said. “Our item ... that we adopted on Sept. 24 was pretty thorough. That doesn’t mean it was completely thorough.”

Board Chairman Don Wagner did not support hiring outside investigators.

“We can audit until the cows come home, and at the end of the day, we will not root out willful misconduct,” he said. “As good intended as these policies are, I think they end up being window dressing.”

The board also considered a proposal by Supervisor Doug Chaffee to approve a policy revision on transparent and ethical contracting. Chaffee moved to have the county’s office of campaign finance and ethics publish quarterly reports on all required disclosures from supervisors, contractors and third parties.

Supervisors found in violation could be censured or referred for criminal prosecution, and contractors would stand to be banned from doing business with the county in the future.

The proposal raised more questions from Foley, who otherwise supported the idea behind the effort. Pointing back to the Sept. 24 board meeting, she reiterated that supervisors

moved to have quarterly reports on contract disputes come from the county’s procurement office.

Foley also noted that the county doesn’t have a debarment law to ban contractors found in violation.

Michelle Aguirre, the county’s interim CEO, weighed with recommendations for how to manage the layers of oversight being requested in the wake of scandal, including the call for an independent investigation.

“By process of elimination, we would identify those contracts that are not currently being looked at, and then those would be on the list to make sure that we’re looking at those contracts,” she said. “That would be by the independent auditor hired by internal audit.”

Sarmiento found much agreement with the recommendation but also wanted to allow for any independent investigation to have a broader scope than what was outlined by the Sept. 24 vote on internal audits.

With all the outstanding questions, supervisors voted to revisit the proposals during their scheduled Dec. 3 board meeting.

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TRUSTEES

Continued from page A2

“These changes are being proposed with the guise of bettering school community,” Quintero said. “Unfortunately, the impression I have of these changes is not what is best for the community but, instead, is best for a select few.”

Board President Leandra Blades framed the contract changes as legal and not a departure from past contracts with supermajority vote clauses.

“The problem that we have here is what appears to be some retaliatory acts from our teachers’ union,” she said. “Is that because we have people on our exe-

cutive cabinet, our superintendent holding people accountable for these things?”

Since 2020, the school board has become a stalwart in right-wing culture war issues.

The board became the first in Orange County to pass a ban on critical race theory instruction in 2022. The following year, a conservative majority voted to hire Cherniss as superintendent, and he has been seen as closely aligned with them since.

At his request, trustees also passed a parental notification policy by a 3-2 vote that sidestepped terms like “gender identity” and “transgender” but raised concerns that it was purposefully vague to target

LGBTQ+ students.

Before Tuesday’s meeting, the California Teachers Assn. addressed a cease and desist letter to Blades and Cherniss on behalf of the Assn. of Placentia-Linda Educators. The union’s staff attorney argued the proposed contract changes would violate education law and invite lawsuits.

“This is a naked attempt to shield the outgoing board’s preferred administrators from termination once the newly elected board is installed,” the letter read. “The proposed amendments conflict with the law and therefore would not be enforceable.”

Trustee Marilyn Anderson questioned Blades’ favorable interpretation of

the legal opinion offered by the district’s counsel.

She wanted to make the legal opinion public, a move that did not find majority support.

“My opinion and President Blades’ opinions of this opinion do not match up,” Anderson said. “It’s a really poor comparison to compare the two contracts of prior superintendents because they had a simple majority for cause to get fired. It just breeds corruption.”

On Tuesday, a judge denied Placentia resident David Radlauer’s filing to enjoin the school board from making the contractual changes, which argued that the amendments “are specifically designed to tar-

get only the incoming board, as they expire automatically approximately 30 days after the next election.”

Youngblood framed the previous school board meeting as one where teachers openly displayed a clamor for Cherniss’ termination — a move that he would readily safeguard against in his remaining time on the board.

“This is about the kids and their education,” Youngblood said. “If I, myself, want to insulate Dr. Cherniss and this amazing staff that he’s got around him then I will do so.”

Trustee Todd Frazier, who rounds out the board’s conservative majority alongside Blades and

Youngblood, claimed he would have no problem voting to change directions with top-level administrators should the need arise.

But Trustee Carrie Buck countered that the change to Cherniss’ contract would effectively tie the hands of board members against that.

“By making decisions now, you’re actually legislating for the future board, which is against the law,” she said.

The current board voted 3-2 to add the supermajority clauses. A new board will be seated on Dec. 17.

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- Bungalow Prawns (Five dollar supplement)**
Spicy cocktail sauce

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Tier 1 | Sixty dollars per guest

- Pan Roasted Turkey Breast**
White & dark meat, whipped Yukon Gold mashed potatoes, house made stuffing, turkey gravy
- Blackened Wild King Salmon**
Yukon Gold mashed potatoes, avocado relish, honey jalapeno beurre blanc
- Pasta Primavera**
Linguine pasta, roasted fennel, yellow squash, celery, carrots, marinara sauce
- Braised Short Ribs**
Slow braised in a Cabernet veal stock, Yukon Gold mashed potatoes, braising jus

Tier 2 | Seventy dollars per guest

- Prime Rib of Beef**
Au jus, creamy horseradish, whipped Yukon Gold mashed potatoes, broccoli
- Prime Rib of Beef & Pan Roasted Turkey Breast Combination**
Whipped Yukon gold mashed potatoes, house made stuffing
- Prime Filet Mignon**
Eight ounce prime filet mignon, whipped Yukon Gold mashed potatoes
- Miso Marinated Chilean Sea Bass**
Soy glaze, coconut rice, stir-fried vegetables, mushrooms, lemongrass ginger beurre blanc

Tier 3 | Eighty dollars per guest

- Prime Bone-In Rib Eye**
Sixteen ounce prime bone-in rib eye, whipped Yukon Gold mashed potatoes
- Northern Australian Lobster Tail**
10 ounce tail, drawn butter, grilled lemon, Yukon Gold mashed potatoes

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A 3% processing fee will be added to all credit card transactions. For guest that choose to pay with cash, the 3% fee will be waived. 20% Gratuity will be added to parties of eight or more. *The chef respectfully requests no splits or substitutions please.



RESORT

Continued from page A5

marmalade. Scannable Sip and Savor passes are available in four- or eight-coupon versions, redeemable for select food and nonalcoholic beverages in the Festive Food Marketplace.

There is also new live entertainment. The ¡Viva Navidad! Street Party returns but is only featured on Saturdays and Sundays this year, opening up room for new acts. "Mirabel's Gifts of the Season" is a new presentation, showing multiple times each afternoon Monday through Friday in Paradise Gardens Park.

"It is a daytime storytelling show with songs," said Tobi Longo, show director with Disney Live Entertainment.

The show features Mirabel from Disney's 2021 animated feature "Encanto" along with her sisters, parents and other characters as they decorate the Christmas tree and celebrate their special gifts.

Over on Buena Vista Street at Carthay Circle, Mariachi Alegría de Disneyland joins Miguel from Pixar's "Coco" Monday through Friday for multiple nighttime showings of "A Musical Christmas with Mariachi Alegría de Disneyland & Miguel!"

"I took the inspiration from the Mexican tradition of Las Posadas," said Longo, who is also the director of

the new show.

Typically Las Posadas celebrations commemorate the journey Mary and Joseph made searching for lodging in Bethlehem, signified with a procession of lanterns or candles. The Disney version features folkloric dancers and mariachi musicians performing bilingual holiday carols.

"We have our own in-house mariachi group that joins us and for a sing-along street show," said Longo. "We bring children up at the end and we give them candles to sing 'Silent Night.'"

Downtown Disney gets in on the holiday magic to go with a new "snow" moment happening each night in the outdoor dining and entertainment area. A sprinkling of "snow" is a signature part of Disneyland's "Believe ... In Holiday Magic" Fireworks Spectacular, but this year guests don't need to have a park ticket to see snow in the forecast.

"That will happen evenings as a surprise and delight in the Splitsville Luxury Lanes area," said Disneyland cast member, Arielle Harris. "It is a nice big open area, and you'll have a great view of it."

The holiday season runs through Jan. 6 at the Disneyland Resort, giving guests plenty of time to visit for a chance to make new holiday memories.

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ARTISTIC

Continued from page A1

these kind of things and it is natural for their work," Arce said.

Some of Hokett's pieces, like "This Eruption Undoes," visualize a split with black drywall opening to reveal a kaleidoscope of reds, oranges and yellows, signifying basaltic lava with the magma underneath. Hokett is also well-known for using mineral crystal growth as an element in her art, and a white sparkling mass crystallizes and spreads on an installation of black shards shooting up from the ground like jagged pieces of obsidian.

"This will change as the exhibition continues and it is absorbing moisture in the air," Arce said of the crystal. "I like this idea that it is bursting through the ground as a metaphor that whether you want to or not there are these shifts in life that force you to adapt."

Zara Kuredjian, on the other hand, examines perceptions and uses the cosmos as a way to consider our temporality here on earth. As an interdisciplinary artist, Kuredjian taught herself how to make mirrors and casts sculptures in silver and resin. A new work called "Vertical" makes its debut at the exhibition. Made from tinted epoxy and silver, the black bars reveal sparkles of the metal when the light catches the interior of the rods.

"Zara is also interested in the light and space movement," said Arce. "Seeing this piece and how it is activated throughout the course of the day as the light moves up, you are seeing different views of the material inside, your relationship to it changes."

Patricia Liverman's pieces take inspiration from natural formations and geological events. Made from layer upon layer of oil paint peeled from a surface, the works



"NAMESAKE," LEFT, by artist Gloria Gem Sanchez the Irvine Fine Arts Center.

Photos by Don Leach | Staff Photographer



"WE OPEN the Earth to Search for Treasure but Find Only Trash" by artist Ann Phong.

have movement in their fragility and the strategic placement of the pieces by Arce helps them to take flight.

"Something I really wanted to consider in all of the artwork is to think about space. It is nice to be able to allow for some improvisation," said Arce. Liverman's "Cities in Dust" creeps up the wall like a black wing but also spreads onto the floor, for example.

In Gallery 1, an entirely different exhibition is taking place. "For Me and You" highlights multidisciplinary artworks by Ann Phong and Gloria Gem Sanchez who draw attention to ecosystems we live in and what we leave behind for the generations that follow.

Phong's work is informed by her immigrant experience, having been born in Saigon and leaving Vietnam as a refugee

in 1981. She is concerned with the environment but manages to explore it while maintaining a level of optimism. She cracks open futuristic globes to reveal found objects and complicated infrastructure in pieces like "Human Traces of Earth" and "We Open the Earth to Search for Treasure but Find Only Trash." In another piece, "Clothes in the Sea," she captures the beauty of the ocean in a painted tapestry of an aquatic scene that upon closer examination contains a baby onesie and a lone baby shoe floating in its waves.

Like Phong, Sánchez is conscious of waste and tries to avoid buying materials just for her art, using instead found objects and upcycled mediums.

"They didn't know each other; they met each other through this exhibition, but their work has a lot of

resonance," said Arce of the two artists.

"Mahal Ko Kayo," Tagalog for "I love you," is made using preserved palm leaves, cowrie shells, bougainvillea flowers, jasmine vines and braided hair that references Sanchez's heritage while honoring generations passed with reproductions of family photos. Her sculpture "Linisin:Limpia" uses preserved pandan leaves, guava and palm leaves with a Walis Tambo, a traditional style broom found in most Filipino households, which holds meaning as a housekeeping tool used to steward the home but also alludes to a spiritual cleaning.

Arce said she feels a responsibility to provide the Orange County community with a wide range of artwork they can enjoy, and the two shows certainly accomplish that.

"I also want to balance supporting contemporary artists and showing artwork that has either some material or conceptual element that is interesting that sets it apart," said Arce. "We are creating a space where the local community can see interesting work."

Both "End as Beginning" and "For Me and You" are on view at the Irvine Fine Arts Center at 14321 Yale Ave. in Irvine through Jan. 25.

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WORD

Continued from page A6

"Backward" seems least controversial. Merriam's usage guide doesn't consider the issue worth mentioning at all, while the dictionary lists the S-spelling only as a variant of the more standard "backward."

Here's where things get weird: "forwards," which I don't recall ever hearing outside the expression "backwards and forwards," does have its own entry in Merriam's dictionary, sug-

gesting it has more legitimacy than all those other S-forms we talked about above. But because its definition refers readers to the entry for "forward," without the S, it's clear that, just like "toward," "afterward" and "backward," "forward" is more proper without the S.

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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