

# Daily Pilot & Times OC

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2023 // Serving the coastal cities of Orange County and beyond // dailypilot.com

## Fair board weighs goals for future of Equestrian Center

Officials look to expand Costa Mesa facility in a more public direction, leaving private model intact at least until June.

BY SARA CARDINE

Equestrians who host horseback riding lessons, classes and therapy sessions at the O.C. fairground's Equestrian Center have until June to continue operating their private businesses, before a new model for delivering more public-facing programs is imple-

mented.

The decision to expand public uses at the 44-year-old facility — bringing it more in line with other public-benefit offerings at the Costa Mesa complex — was made Thursday by board members at the end of an hours-long meeting over the fate of the center.

Directors of the Orange County Fair & Event Center, which oversees operations of the annual county fair as California's 32nd District Agricultural Assn., weighed whether to continue allowing mostly private business to take place under an operator's

contract or permanently take the reins of the facility and guide it in a more public direction.

For the past year, OCFEC officials have managed the center and currently estimate it will lose about \$960,000 annually if something isn't done to improve tenancy and bring the physical infrastructure up to speed.

A contractor previously oversaw programs and in 2022 brought in roughly \$201,000 to the center, which in turn spent nearly \$70,000 on utility costs,

See **Goals**, page A2



James Carbone

O.C. FAIRGROUNDS staffers walk "Regulus," who made an appearance Thursday outside the OC Fair & Event Center board meeting, back to the fairgrounds' Equestrian Center.

## Philanthropy runs in the family



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

**THREE GENERATIONS** — Catherine Paige Lowe, Shirley Pepys and Renee Pepys, from left — have all been involved in the Orange County-based nonprofit Orangewood Foundation for more than 30 years as a family.

Three generations of women have given back via the Orangewood Foundation, supporting foster, community youth.

BY MATT SZABO

Shirley Pepys' house on Balboa Island is known as "The Penguin House," and it's abundantly clear why during the holiday season.

Many cute decorations adorn the Newport Beach home, which was built in 1913. Pepys brings a team in to work on them, and she was named a Newport Beach Christmas Boat Parade Ring of Lights waterfront home decoration competition winner.

"It makes people happy," she said. "Now it's a production company that does this."

This is one way that she brings joy to her community. In the philanthropic realm, she's also been doing that for decades with the Orange County nonprofit Orangewood Foundation, which offers programs to assist foster children and also provides community youth services.

Pepys was a founding board member and served for decades before becoming an emeritus member in 2008. A year later, her daughter Renee Pepys Lowe joined the board to represent the family.

Renee's daughter, Catherine Paige Lowe, has also been giving back to Orangewood through busi-

See **Family**, page A3

## Kids help kids in Miracles effort

BY SUSAN HOFFMAN

The co-founder and chief executive officer of Miracles for Kids for 19 years, Autumn Strier was once on the receiving side of the charity, where she personally felt the changing impact of helping someone in need.

"I decided to dedicate my life to service as a result," said Strier, who obtained a degree in public service in order to do so. "I'm very hands on, and I love to stay deeply connected to the families as a volunteer as well as do the administrative serving as the organization's executive."

Miracles for Kids is a nonprofit organization serving children who suffer from life-threatening illnesses and conditions and who also provide programs that assist families financially and emotionally. "We serve the Los Angeles and Orange County children's hospitals," said Strier, who herself adopted five families as recipients.

In keeping with the spirit of



Susan Hoffman

**FROM RIGHT**, Cathey Curtis, with Laguna Beach Girl Scouts Mia Moss and Lyla Simpson, sample treats during Saturday's Miracles for Kids Holiday Basket of Miracles gift drive in Irvine.

the season, the Holiday Basket of Miracles was held Saturday at Miracle for Kids office facility in Irvine. The annual event is in-

tended to brighten the lives of low-income families facing the

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### ALSO FROM THE DAILY PILOT:



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

**WOODS COVE UTILITY UNDERGROUNDING PROJECT GETS THE GO AHEAD** PAGE A2

**IT'S NOT A DRIVE-THRU, BUT A MOTORIST STILL PLOWED THROUGH A SMOKE SHOP IN FULLERTON** PAGE A3

**APODACA: A SIMPLE, PERHAPS BORING WISH FOR CHRISTMAS** PAGE A7

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# Utility undergrounding project gets go ahead

BY ANDREW TURNER

A significant utility underground assessment district in the Woods Cove neighborhood of Laguna Beach got the needed support of affected property owners Tuesday night.

The fate of the project depended on the final tally of ballots returned by property owners within the district. A weighted vote based on total assessment value determined that 61.1% of the returned vote contributed to the passing of the district.

"I think this is wonderful news from a public safety standpoint," Councilman Bob Whalen said in addressing the district-supporting residents. "Thank you for your heroic efforts."

Pierre Sawaya, a senior project manager for the city,

said 326 ballots were returned from the 380-parcel district, although 19 of the ballots were deemed invalid. The public was invited to observe the tallying of the ballots.

"The no vote count was 129 votes," Sawaya said in breaking down the assessment ballot results. "The yes vote count was 178, and as stated, there were 19 votes that were incomplete, so that results in a total assessment amount of yes votes [of] \$7.3 million; a total assessment amount of no votes, approximately \$4.65 million."

The council voted 4-0 to proceed with the district. Councilman George Weiss recused himself from the matter as a resident of the district.

As part of the action tak-

en by the panel, a contract was awarded to Hot Line Construction, which entered the low bid of \$9.25 million to perform the work. Construction is expected to get underway in June, following a cash collection period and the issuance of bonds.

Property owners within the district will also have the opportunity to apply for an assessment deferment loan. The program was recently revised to make it more accessible, dropping the age requirement from 62 to 55, among other changes.

Mayor Sue Kempf was asked her thoughts on the success of the district in a phone interview following Tuesday night's eight-hour



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

**POWER LINES** connect from poles along Glenneyre Street in the underground utility district near Fire Station No. 2 in the neighborhood of Woods Cove in Laguna Beach.

See **Utility**, page A4



Photos by Susan Hoffman

**THE CHINESE** American Lions Club of O.C. helped out Saturday at the Miracle For Kids holiday gift event in Irvine.

## KIDS

Continued from page A1

difficult challenge of caring for critically ill children by delivering to them gifts, food and household necessities.

During the 2½ hour event, 300 volunteers gift-wrapped and boxed 3,500 toys, food items and essentials that had been both purchased and donated for delivery to over 380 families.

The volunteers who worked like elves were made up of Scout troops, service organizations such as the Chinese American Lions Club of Orange County, corporations and individuals, including kids.

Among them was Laguna Beach resident, Cathey Curtis, who invited the Laguna Beach Girl Scout troop, thinking it would be a learning opportunity to enlist children to volunteer. "I really believe in all the work that the Miracles team does," said Curtis,

"and I wanted to share it with our Girl Scouts."

Two of the Scouts, Mia Moss and Lyla Simpson, shared their enthusiasm and echoed one another saying, "We're here to make kids happy and we want to give back to our community."

Costa Mesa resident Jennifer O'Keefe, from LBA Logistics who brought her 10-year-old niece, Amelie Munoz, said, "She's just learning about volunteering to help other kids. She's wrapping for 10-year-old Liam, who is in [Children's Hospital] Los Angeles," said O'Keefe. "My nephew, her cousin, was at Children's Hospital L.A. because of his heart defects."

Deanna Wright of Santa Ana, who has a personal connection, has been a volunteer for the organization since 2020 and helped during Saturday's Baskets of Miracles event.

Her son had been a recipient of support from

See **Kids**, page A4



**VOLUNTEER DEANNA** Wright holds a photo of her son, who died in November from a bone marrow defect. She has volunteered with Miracles for Kids since 2020.

## GOALS

Continued from page A1

maintenance and repairs, according to a spokeswoman for the center.

Officials in November reviewed a request for proposals in an attempt to find a new operator who could take on the Equestrian Center and make needed improvements under a minimum 10-year contract.

But some had concerns about whether doing so constituted a gift of public funds for a privately run enterprise.

Thursday's meeting was an attempt to determine how the center might be transformed into something a bit more like the site's Centennial Farm or Heroes Hall veterans museum, which operate at a deficit but provide an obvious public benefit.

"You can go to Heroes Hall pretty much any day of the week as a member of the public," said OCFC Chair Nick Kovacevich. "You can also go to Centennial Farm and interact with the animals there. But I don't believe members of



James Carbone

**SASHA WALTERS**, of Huntington Beach, left, Charlotte Sheppard and Riley Kearney, both of Newport Beach, hold signs supporting the O.C. fairgrounds' Equestrian Center.

the public can go to the Equestrian Center and interact with the horses on their own.

"The reason that we're here is we're trying to make the best decision for our

fair and fairgrounds but also for the community at large."

Nearly 70 area residents, horse trainers, boarders and members of the public gave testimony on how the

programs currently offered at the site, albeit through private means, have helped countless people recover from injury and illness or discover a new passion and purpose in life.

Cora Cordova coaches with O.C. Vaulting, a group that offers equine yoga, acrobatics and horsemanship classes at the center. A former student, the practice helped her get through a divorce.

Today, she brings seniors from her day job as an enrichment director to the center's annual Halloween Parade and is stunned by their reaction to being around horses.

"This wasn't just an entertaining outing for these residents — it was an event that brought meaning to their lives at a point where they questioned whether their lives were worth living," she said.

A contingent of minors, from elementary school students to high schoolers, took to the podium to explain how their initial visits to the property, over time, turned into an almost daily ritual of riding, caring for and learning about the majestic animals.

Gibran Stout, a Back Bay resident who founded O.C. Vaulting and operates from the fairgrounds, said most of the people who work or

board horses at the center are happy to share their love with visitors of any age, whether it's in the form of a lesson, a class or outing.

"We do free tours — we want people to come and learn," she said in an interview ahead of Thursday's meeting. "It's open to the public. All you have to do is drive up to the gate."

Many among the group are fearful the Equestrian Center is being eyed for closure, after state officials attempted to auction off the 150-acre fairgrounds to the highest bidder in 2009 and were met with a wall of opposition.

In 2018, a master site plan for the property included a proposal to demolish the center's barns and offices and replace them with carnival parking and storage, restrooms, showers and "multipurpose ground space." Equestrians rallied, and the plan was put on ice.

Orange County Supervisor Katrina Foley — who extended an invitation for

See **Goals**, page A3



# Driver plows through smoke shop

BY ASHLEY AHN

Surveillance video caught a driver crash straight through a smoke shop in Fullerton on Wednesday morning in an accident that police say was due to the motorist driving under the influence.

About 3 a.m., a white Mercedes-Benz pulled into the parking lot in front of Cobra Smoke Shop & Vape Store on Euclid Street. The driver seems to lose control of the vehicle as it accelerates into the glass storefront, through the store, and out the back, according to the video footage. Two individuals — the owner in the back of the store and a part-time worker at the cashier — were in the store at the time of the incident but

were not injured, according to Fullerton police.

"In the video, you can see it seemed like she stopped and then she put her hands up and then the car just accelerated," Seja Karim, 22, the manager of the family-owned smoke shop, said when describing the footage shot by a closed-circuit security camera. "I think she hit the gas instead of the brake and ran into the whole store."

The owner came out from the back of the store, thinking the car crash was part of a robbery scheme and someone from the car would start stealing inventory, Karim said.

Fullerton police identified the sole occupant of the car as a 22-year-old woman from Santa Ana. Sgt. Ryan O'Neil, a Fuller-

ton Police spokesperson, said the woman was arrested on suspicion of driving under the influence and taken to the Fullerton Police Department, where she was cited and released.

"The message we want to send is that during the holiday times, be safe and make good decisions when you go out drinking," O'Neil said. "Line up a sober ride so you can get home safe to your family."

As one of the few smoke shops in the area open 24/7, the shop is popular among customers even around midnight, Karim said. She said it was fortunate that no customers were in the store at the time of the car crash.

"Around that time, it gets pretty crowded, but thankfully, there was no

one here at this store," she said.

The car cleared the shelving cases but plowed into the "cigar room" where the shop keeps all of its cigars, some of which sell for \$80 each, and a humidifier used to maintain a certain humidity level in the room. Karim estimates the loss to be over \$100,000 from the cigar room alone.

Before workers had the chance to fix the gaping hole in the storefront, customers trickled into the smoke shop that same morning, stepping into the open-faced store to get their nicotine fix.

"We never closed," she said. "We just cleaned up the area and got right back to business."

Ashley Ahn writes for the Los Angeles Times.



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

SHIRLEY PEPYS, Catherine Paige Lowe and Renee Pepys Lowe stand outside Shirley's home, "The Penguin House."

## FAMILY

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ness connections she has as the owner of the Scout Guide Newport Beach.

So the Pepys/Lowe family offers three generations of philanthropy to Orangenwood. One highlight of the season comes Tuesday night, when the Orangenwood Advanced Studies program holds its annual holiday party at the Marke apartments in Santa Ana.

Advanced Studies was established by Shirley and Renee, along with Dan Houck, in 2010. It's a scholarship program for former foster youth who have received a college degree and want to continue on.

Tuesday night's gathering will include plenty of alumni, who now often have children to proudly bring.

"Each cohort comes together twice a year, with a summer party and a holiday party that are typically hosted by Shirley and Renee and Dan," Orangenwood Foundation chief development officer Kendra Puryear said. "They share their challenges, their struggles, what's going on with them. Over the years, it's been really fun to watch those events shift. You see these people saying, 'I've got this great job now,' or, 'I've overcome these challenges and I'm here to offer support to anyone else.'"

"It's really become a community for young people who are pursuing advanced degrees and don't really have traditional family support to do so, to really come together and support each other through that process."

The impetus for the Advanced Studies Program happened when Houck met a former foster youth, Kim, who had been accepted to Harvard University and was short on means.

Shirley's late husband, Eric, also had mentored an Orangenwood youth named Kyle who studied at UC Irvine. After Eric Pepys died in 2009, an annual golf tournament was established in his honor for several years to raise money for scholarships.

This year, the Advanced Studies Program passed \$1.5 million in fundraising, with more than 200 student awards given. The program's mantra is that young adults should be able to go as far as they can dream in their educational pursuits.

"We give them a check to help with expenses," Renee Pepys Lowe said. "It doesn't

**"It's really become a community for young people who are pursuing advanced degrees and don't really have traditional family support to do so, to really come together and support each other through that process."**

— Kendra Puryear

Orangenwood Foundation chief development officer

cover their entire tuition, but it maybe allows them to not have to have a second or third job. It helps pay their rent. At the end of the day, it's about mentoring and coaching. We wanted to create a community."

Foster youth have maintained a special place in the Pepys/Lowe family's collective heart for a long time. Shirley adopted a son, Max, from the Albert Sitton Home (which later became the Orangenwood Children's Home) decades ago.

Max became Shirley and Eric's fourth child. It took seven years in the court system to adopt him after fostering him at the age of 2, but that journey shaped their philanthropic journey and desire to give back.

Max Pepys, now in his early 50s, lives in Texas with his wife and three children. Shirley's other children, Tiffany and Noel, have also been involved in Orangenwood Foundation auxiliary groups. And now it's Catherine, Shirley's 20-something granddaughter, who is helping to foster the next generation of support for Orange County foster youth.

"With Orangenwood being our charitable partner, I've been able to involve local small businesses and bring awareness," she said. "Last week, a few of my clients and I went to Orangenwood and we did a night of self-care. We were able to actually interact with youth that are still in the system, which was cool."

Catherine Lowe added that people often want to

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# UCI Health



## GOALS

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fairground operators to work with the county to see where partnerships and funding opportunities might be forged — recalled rallying to save the fairgrounds in 2009, saying it was important to preserve the county's equestrian community.

"I, too, am concerned about the direction this is going," she said.

Kovacevich on Thursday assured the public there were no plans to demolish the center or to replace it with a parking lot, a rumor that had been galloping around in the days before the meeting. He even interrupted speakers who brought it up.

"Let's stop throwing out parking lots and closures that have never been discussed," he said during one comment. "It's just false, and we're not going to have that in the public comment."

After receiving more than four hours of testimony from speakers, OCFEC directors discussed whether to continue the process to find a new operator or chart a new course.

Director Doug La Belle said that while other vendors who sell goods or services on the state-run



ATTENDEES HOLD signs supporting the equestrian center during the OC Fair & Event Center board meeting.

facility do so through a bidding process, equestrians were the only ones who — because of the

previous management agreement — were operating without approval and consideration from

the board.

"To get to the bottom line and determine whether we have a

profit-making center, the only way to do that is to solicit proposals from trainers," he said. "Give us some numbers. Let us, as a board, evaluate what it is that you are doing that provides a public benefit."

Other directors listed things they'd like to see happen at the Equestrian Center, from after-school programs for kids to veteran therapy programs to a mounted public safety unit.

"I'm not in favor of closing the Equestrian Center. What I am in favor of is giving more public access to that facility," said Director Barbara Bagneris. "I want to see it stick around, but not in the model we're using."

The board ultimately voted to put the request for proposal for a new operator on hold and to convene a series of public meetings between fairgrounds staff, residents and Equestrian Center stakeholders to jointly and openly develop a public-programming model of operation.

As such, trainers and those with businesses based at the center will be transitioned to whatever new model is approved by the site's leadership sometime in June.

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James Carbone



# O.C. authorities crack down on burglary ring

## BY CITY NEWS SERVICE

Orange County Sheriff Don Barnes and Orange County Dist. Atty. Todd Spitzer on Thursday issued a stern warning to thieves targeting Orange County as they discussed details of a crackdown on a burglary ring they say was responsible for nearly three dozen break-ins.

Nine suspects were rounded up in a sweep on Wednesday, with law enforcement still seeking 11 more suspects. Prosecutors have charged 20, including five juveniles, in connection with a burglary ring tied to 34 break-ins across the county, with an estimated loss of about \$500,000 in cash, weapons and valuables.

Barnes told reporters it was the result of “months of hard work,” starting in September when authorities began working a case involving three residential burglaries, two in unincorporated Santa Ana and one in Yorba Linda. That prompted a team of investigators to work on building a bigger case, Barnes said.

Fullerton police have

been investigating 19 burglaries, with the rest being handled by sheriff's deputies, Barnes said.

The 20 defendants have ties to Los Angeles-based gangs, Barnes and Spitzer said.

The thieves are “organized” and utilize sophisticated methods involving monitoring social media messages to see who is out of town, surveillance of affluent homes to get patterns of coming and going of residents and even breaking in through a second-floor balcony to avoid security system motion detectors, Barnes said.

Spitzer said the gangs are recruiting juveniles to help with the heists because they tend to face lesser punishment from the system because of their age.

During the sweep this week, law enforcement recovered seven guns, two of which were stolen, multiple high-capacity magazines and \$40,000 in cash, jewelry and handbags, Barnes said.

He said he hopes residents “can sleep a little better” knowing the thieves were arrested.

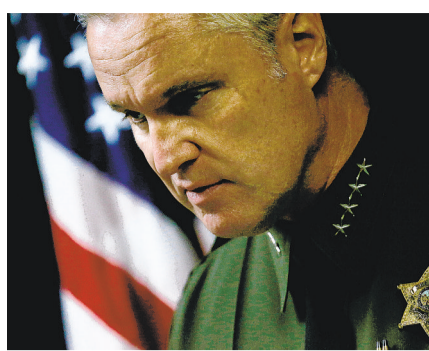
“To the criminals associated with these crews, we will find you, we will arrest you,” Barnes said. “And you will do your time in Orange County ... You're not going to get out next week.”

The sheriff reminded residents to make sure they lock all their doors and windows, consider padlocking side gates, which are popular points of entry for thieves, and ensuring their homes are well lit. He added that putting lights on a timer and installing a security system with cameras will also help steer thieves away.

Spitzer said Orange County was “different than other counties in California,” in that law enforcement “cares deeply about victims” and will push for stiffer punishments of defendants.

“We still believe that people should go to state prison when appropriate,” Spitzer said.

As he has in the past, Spitzer criticized efforts to reduce jail and prison overcrowding. Spitzer said his office understands extending some mercy to first-time offenders, but he wants to crack down on re-



**ORANGE COUNTY** Sheriff Don Barnes speaks during a monthly media briefing in Santa Ana in 2020.

Luis Sinco | Los Angeles Times

cidivists.

“If you're going to commit crimes in Orange County, you've got to know we'll handle it differently here,” Spitzer said.

“We believe in some reforms,” Spitzer said. “But when it comes to hardcore crimes, we're putting our feet down.”

Spitzer said the burglary ring is a “dangerous, prolific crew.”

The defendants charged in the ring include:

- Deautri Hamilton, 30, of Los Angeles;
- Jesus Alberto Guerra, 29, of Los Angeles;
- Javier Guerrero, 31, of Los Angeles;
- Michael Jason Serrano, 21, of Los Angeles;
- Tyrell Benyon Haley, 23, of Compton;
- Michael Jason Serrano, 21, of Los Angeles;
- Nathaniel Eric Roberts, 25, of Los Angeles;
- Jeris Je Young Abalos, 34, of Los Angeles;
- Tahj Kamare Richardson, 21, of Los Angeles;
- Keven Von Claudell Holland, 35, of Los Angeles;
- Kadin Isaiah Williams, 22, of Lakewood;
- Jamari Nijje Devon Manning, 19, of Los Angeles;
- Quaion Jayvion McClenton, 23, of Compton;
- Deion Robert Franklin, 19, of Los Angeles;
- Mika Mark McGee, 20, of Compton and;
- Joshua Jeremiah Rivas, 20, of Los Angeles.

- Michael Jason Serrano, 21, of Los Angeles;
- Nathaniel Eric Roberts, 25, of Los Angeles;
- Jeris Je Young Abalos, 34, of Los Angeles;
- Tahj Kamare Richardson, 21, of Los Angeles;
- Keven Von Claudell Holland, 35, of Los Angeles;
- Kadin Isaiah Williams, 22, of Lakewood;
- Jamari Nijje Devon Manning, 19, of Los Angeles;
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- Deion Robert Franklin, 19, of Los Angeles;
- Mika Mark McGee, 20, of Compton and;
- Joshua Jeremiah Rivas, 20, of Los Angeles.

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## KIDS

Continued from page A2

Miracles for Kids for 13 years before he died last month at age 16. “Alexander was born with a bone marrow defect,” said Wright. “There is no cure, and when the blood transfusions and steroids didn't work he had to have a bone marrow transplant when he was 18 months old at City of Hope, which his body rejected.”

With Alexander in and out of the hospital during most of his life, Wright emphasized that she wanted to give him the best quality of life for as long as he had to live.

“Miracles for Kids was right next to us the whole



Susan Hoffman

**JENNIFER O'KEEFE** holds a package as her niece, Amelie Munoz, 10, applies tape to the wrapping paper.

time, giving us backpacks, surf camp, Easter baskets, and gave us a place to live,” said Wright. “Miracles for Kids is an inclusive group, for siblings, parents — not just for the

sick child,” Wright said. “I can't even express what their support meant to me.”

Susan Hoffman is a contributor to TimesOC.

## FAMILY

Continued from page A3

give back, but don't always know how, and Orangewood offers plenty of programs that can be plugged into.

“Looking at Newport Beach and Orange County, there's so much wealth,” she said. “People think that you just have to write a check to be able to give back, but there's a lot of other ways to do it. We help get businesses get exposure too, and it's a win for everybody.”

Puryear agreed. She said Orangewood has asked Catherine Lowe to join Orangewood's Business Advisory Council to really help the nonprofit

continue to tap into those small businesses but also just that younger demographic.

“I think young, up-and-coming business owners look to [the Pepys/Lowe women] as a road map for how to get involved with philanthropy and integrate it into your life, how to be a part of your family culture,” Puryear said. “People are looking for ways to give back, and they want to involve their family. I think you're more likely to sustain your philanthropic giving and involvement if you can involve your family and integrate it into your holiday traditions.”

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## UTILITY

Continued from page A2

council meeting.

“With climate change and the unpredictability of our weather and the insurance issues that people have in town, it's a good thing,” Kempf said. “I'm glad that they got it through. I understand people's objection, but they had their right to vote. I think it's a good thing in the long run, and I think it will be good for people's property values, too.”

“I like the fact that we have a deferment loan program. It helps people who are on fixed incomes. They weren't necessarily expecting to get an assessment later in life or after they've retired or something, so if we can help do that, I think we're all happy to do that.”

A push for undergrounding projects has largely been motivated by the community's concern over fire danger. Recently, Laguna Beach bore witness to the Emerald and Coastal fires in 2022.

Community members began rallying neighbors to form an assessment district in Woods Cove about a decade ago. Petitioners came before the council in hopes of forming an assessment district for a portion of the neighborhood in September 2014.

The council declared its intent to form the 380-parcel district on Sept. 26, at which time city staff said the average of the assessments came in at \$38,132. Assessments were assigned with consideration given to the benefits of safety, neighborhood aesthetics and removal of view obstructions.

The city will contribute \$1.58 million for the general benefit, and an additional \$1.18 million will go toward the public safety benefit for undergrounding portions of Glenneyre Street, which some residents have described as a thoroughfare. Approximately \$1.3 million will be set aside for project-related expenses and construction change orders.

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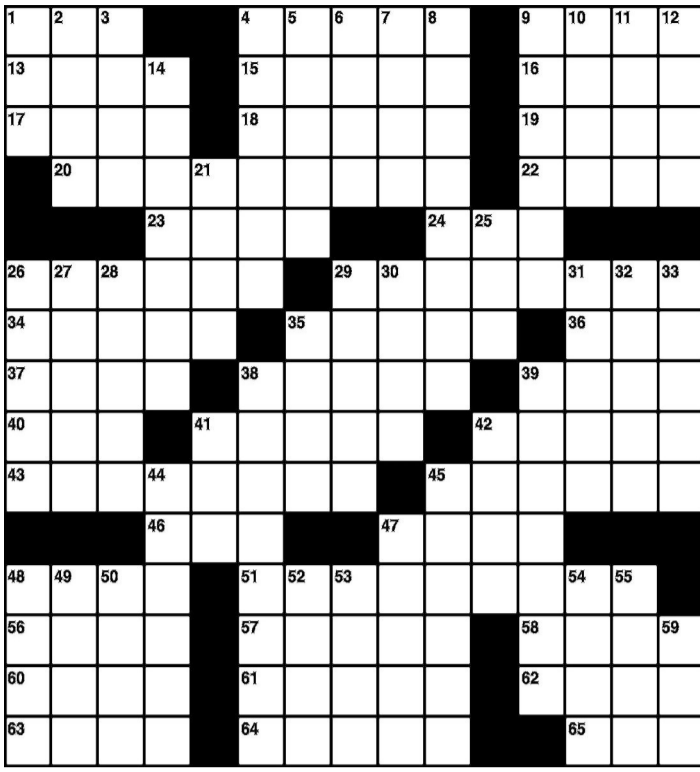
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**THE DAILY COMMUTER PUZZLE**

By Jacqueline E. Matthews

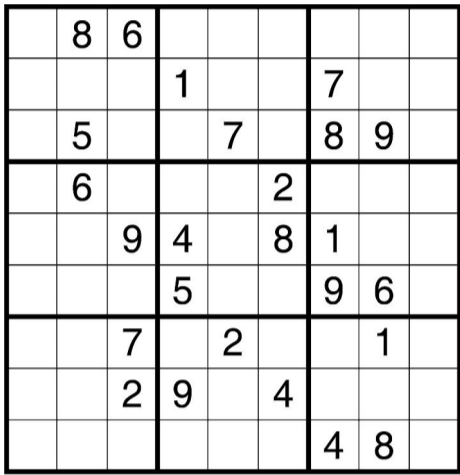


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 56 Roll along the runway  
 57 Over  
 58 VW forerunners  
 60 Fortas & Beame  
 61 Playing card  
 62 Bodies of water  
 63 Corned beef concoction  
 64 Strain  
 65 Genetic code letters
- DOWN**  
 1 Anger  
 2 Starring role

**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](http://sudoku.org.uk).



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

- |                                  |                                 |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 3 Part of the musical scale      | 8 Diminished                    |
| 4 Down’s opposite, in crosswords | 9 19th-century U.S. president   |
| 5 Small fruit                    | 10 Uncovered                    |
| 6                                | 11 Jungle beast                 |
| Chocolate/caramel candy          | 12 Loose _; unfinished business |
| 7 Cake decorator                 | 14 Forsakes                     |

- 21 \_ Christian Andersen  
 25 Spoil  
 26 Not taut  
 27 Comforting drink  
 28 Walk \_; leave behind  
 29 Stringed instrument  
 30 Leaves speechless  
 31 Furious  
 32 Rarin’ to go  
 33 Begins to wake  
 35 Storage tower  
 38 Buy  
 39 Shooting stars  
 41 Chitchat  
 42 Supermarket section  
 44 Tastelessly showy  
 45 Ma or pa  
 47 Concrete layer  
 48 Home of the Jazz  
 49 “Ali \_ and the Forty Thieves”  
 50 Old flames  
 52 Mountain goat  
 53 Reason to wed  
 54 Not new  
 55 Man’s nickname  
 59 Neighbor of Mex.
- Tribune Media Services

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- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Corn Chowder</b><br>Fresh corn, applewood smoked bacon                        | <b>Lobster Bisque Soup</b><br>Northern Australian lobster, sherry wine, diced chives                             |
| <b>Caesar Salad</b><br>Chopped hearts of romaine, herb croutons, shaved manchego | <b>Bungalow Salad</b><br>Mixed greens, hearts of palm, feta, olives, red onion, bay shrimp, tarragon vinaigrette |
| <b>Butternut Squash Raviolis</b><br>Sage brown butter, pistachios                | <b>Bungalow Prawns</b> (Supplement five dollars)<br>Spicy cocktail sauce   |

**ENTRÉE SELECTIONS**

**Tier 1 | Eighty-Nine Dollars Per Guest**

- Braised Short Ribs**  
Slow braised in a Cabernet veal stock, Yukon Gold mashed potatoes, braising jus
- California Chicken Breast**  
Pan-seared chicken breast, oven-roasted tomatoes, avocado, Yukon Gold mashed potatoes, pan au jus
- Blackened King Salmon**  
Yukon Gold mashed potatoes, avocado relish, honey jalapeño beurre blanc
- Pasta Primavera**  
Linguine pasta, roasted fennel, yellow squash, celery, carrots, marinara sauce

**Tier 2 | Ninety-Nine Dollars Per Guest**

- Prime Rib Of Beef**  
Au jus, creamy horseradish, Yukon Gold mashed potatoes
- Prime Filet Mignon**  
Eight ounce prime filet mignon, Yukon Gold mashed potatoes
- Prime New York Strip**  
Fourteen ounce prime New York strip served with horseradish potato gratin
- Miso Marinated Chilean Sea Bass**  
Soy glaze, coconut rice, stir-fried vegetables, mushrooms, lemongrass ginger beurre blanc

**Tier 3 | One Hundred Nine Dollars Per Guest**

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

**DESSERT SELECTIONS**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Pumpkin Cheesecake</b><br>House made whipped cream                          | <b>Chocolate Bundt Cake</b><br>Chocolate cake, vanilla bean ice cream, chocolate sauce |
| <b>Berries and Ice Cream</b><br>Fresh seasonal berries, vanilla bean ice cream | <b>Vanilla Creme Brulee</b><br>Vanilla custard, fresh raspberries                      |





**forum**

**COLUMN | PATRICE APODACA**

# A SIMPLE, PERHAPS BORING WISH FOR CHRISTMAS

**I** have finally decided what I want for Christmas. I want to be bored.



lists ever-expanding.

Boat parade, check. Christmas walk, check. Tree-lighting ceremony, check. Gifts, cards, decorations, check, check, check. Even the good stuff can run us ragged. Just ask Santa.

A little tedium would be a welcome respite.

In fact, I think boredom gets an entirely bad rap.

That which we call boredom by any other name would seem so much cooler. If I told someone I wanted more time for quiet contemplation or reflective meditation, they might consider this a healthy impulse and urge me to follow through. They might pause and consider that they, too, would appreciate some restorative down time.

Just don't call it boredom. There's too much negative baggage associated with that word, as if

being bored is something to be ashamed of and to actively avoid. Boredom definitely needs better P.R.

It's not surprising that there are some terms in other languages that, while not precisely translating into English, address a kind of thoughtful detachment from our anxiety-inducing environments. Consider that a few years ago there was much discussion about "hygge," the concept popular in Denmark and Norway that's about taking time away from the rush of daily life to be alone or with loved ones, to relax and enjoy quiet pleasures.

Some people suggested that the closest English translation is "cozy." Which, to me, sounds like a more appealing way of advocating for boredom.

The Italians are more poetic, calling their version of boredom "il dolce far niente," which translates as "the sweetness of doing

nothing."

So it appears that I'm not the only fan of boredom. Even science has given its blessing. In fact, there's a substantial amount of research that has demonstrated the benefits of fitting boring time into our schedules.

One study published a few years ago, for instance, found that boredom can spark individual productivity and creativity. The trick, the researchers concluded, is knowing how to

do it properly.

That's right. There are good ways to be bored — and bad ways.

A bad route to boredom, but a common one, involves turning to the Internet, social media and channel surfing as escape mechanisms. This often leads to more anxiety and mental exhaustion, not less, and does precious little to ignite our imaginations.

Authentic boredom, or at least the healthier kind,

requires minimizing external stimulation and, for lack of a better term, zoning out. Often a familiar but repetitive task will provide the right environment, allowing the mind to wander and daydream — the kind of state that's conducive to problem-solving and light-bulb inspirations.

I totally get this. When I feel stuck on a writing project, I go for a walk.

See **Apodaca**, page A9

**CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU ANSWERS**

I	L	L		A	P	R	I	L		A	B	L	E	
R	E	A	D	C	R	O	C	E		R	A	I	N	
K	A	T	E	R	O	L	E	S		T	R	O	D	
D	I	S	H	O	N	O	R	S		H	E	N	S	
				E	A	S	E			E	M	U		
S	C	O	R	N	S		C	A	N	A	R	I	E	S
L	O	U	T	S		S	E	W	E	R		R	A	T
A	C	T	S		P	I	L	E	D		M	A	G	I
C	O	O		G	U	L	L	S		D	E	T	E	R
K	A	N	G	A	R	O	O		P	E	T	E	R	S
				A	B	C			P	A	L	E		
U	B	E	R		H	I	L	A	R	I	O	U	S	
T	A	X	I		A	B	O	V	E		R	S	T	U
A	B	E	S		S	E	V	E	N		S	E	A	S
H	A	S	H		E	X	E	R	T		D	N	A	

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

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**By Timothy W. Gibson, M.D.**  
 medical director, MemorialCare Joint Replacement Center at Orange Coast Medical Center

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MAILBAG

# 'Beach' turns out to be a rather important word



File Photo

**CREWS WORK** on the Seal Beach Pier as a surfer enters to water after large waves damaged several pylons last January.

In the article regarding replenishing sand to Orange County beaches (Groundbreaking held for Surfside-Sunset Beach sand replenishment project, Daily Pilot, Dec. 14), a quote from Newport Beach Mayor Will O'Neill reading, "Without sand, Newport Beach would simply be just called Newport" triggered something rather interesting. At times people refer to Newport Beach just as Newport or Huntington Beach only as Huntington or Laguna Beach as just Laguna.

There are, however, some beaches in O.C. that necessitate using the word "beach," or the first word could very easily refer to

something entirely different. Take for example the most northern beach in O.C., which is Seal Beach. If the word "beach" was left out of that, one would say, "Hey let's take a drive up to Seal." And your buddy would most likely reply, "Seal what? Seal an envelope or one of those slippery creatures that swim in the ocean?" Or how about Sunset Beach? Driving to just Sunset could easily denote chasing down a setting sun out in the ocean and being romantic with someone while enjoying the closing of a day. Driving north on PCH from Sunset Beach, one enters L.A. County and the city of Long Beach. Can we shorten

Long Beach to just Long and assume that people know the difference? I think not. What about an extreme example of some friends planning on taking a drive from San Diego to Manhattan Beach just above Redondo Beach in L.A. County with someone saying, "OK, we'll see you in Manhattan in a few hours." A few days later the Manhattan drivers arrive in New York on the East Coast wondering what happened to their friends. The moral of all this is just that certain beaches require the word "beach" for total and correct completion or we take the chance of winding up a

See *Mailbag*, page A9

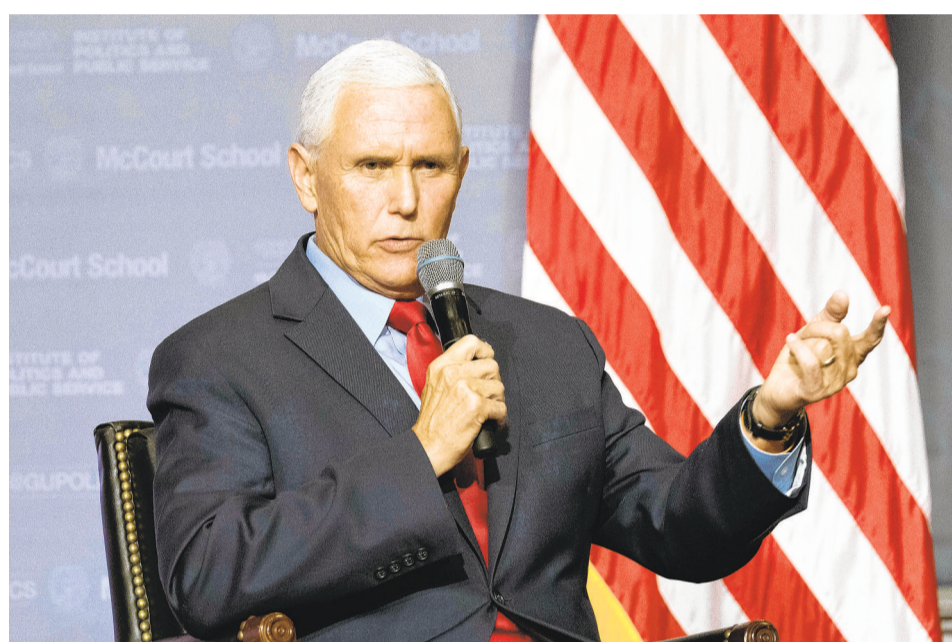
A WORD, PLEASE | JUNE CASAGRANDE

## Your meaning can hinge on a comma, and that's that

"You know, I don't think I have the authority to change the outcome." That single line from former Vice President Mike Pence's book "So Help Me God" contains what Pence reportedly told



investigators is a serious punctuation error: the comma. Pence was talking with Donald Trump on Christmas Day 2020 when he told the then-president either "You know, I don't think I have the authority" or "You know I don't think I have the authority." According to ABC News, Pence told investigators looking into the Jan. 6 insurrection that what he really said was the no-comma version: that Trump knew that Pence didn't believe he had the authority to change the



Jose Luis Magana | Associated Press

**FORMER VICE PRESIDENT** Mike Pence speaks to students at Georgetown University in Washington in October 2022.

outcome of the presidential election. But either Pence or one of his editors stuck a comma in there, changing the meaning of the sentence and offering a perfect example of just how important commas can be. Commas have a number of jobs. They can separate

coordinate nouns, like "We have a cat, a dog and a hamster." They can separate coordinate adjectives, like "Our cat is cute, cuddly and playful." They can separate whole clauses that are connected with a conjunction, like "Our cat is cute, but our dog is cuter." They can set off a direct address, meaning when you call someone by a name, which is why "Let's eat, Grandma" means something quite different from "Let's eat Grandma." They can separate nonrestrictive information, which means clauses that don't influence the meaning of the noun: "The man, who was driving, was drunk" means there was just one man, but "The man who was driving was drunk" means you're singling out the guy behind the wheel from some other guys.

In Pence's book, the comma is doing yet another job: setting off an introductory clause. Here's an example of how commas do this: "Because everyone is usually here on the first Tuesday of every month, we hold our meetings

then." The main clause of that sentence is "we hold our meetings then." All the stuff that comes before it is just an introduction to the main clause, which is set off with a comma.

Punctuating introductory phrases and clauses isn't an exact science. For some short introductory phrases, the comma is optional: "On Tuesday we have a meeting" and "On Tuesday, we have a meeting" are both acceptable.

But Pence's sentence isn't one of those the-comma-makes-no-difference situations. Instead, a comma changes the meaning. With a comma, the "you know" is an aside. The main clause, in that case, would be "I don't think I have the authority."

Without a comma, the main clause changes. It becomes "you know," and the stuff that follows becomes an object of the main clause. The sentence then means: You know (that) I don't have the authority.

It's both interesting and,

See *Word*, page A10

### Daily Pilot

A Times Community News publication.

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Rebecca M. "Becky" Ricker, 101, went home to be with the Lord on the evening of 11/12/2023 at her home in Corona del Mar, California and passed away peacefully in her sleep. Becky is survived by her son, Keith W. Ricker; a daughter-in-law, Chris Ricker; two grandsons, Kellen Ricker and Patrick Mazzulli; three granddaughters, Kandice Morache, Shari Butler and Elizabeth Timmler along with 11 great-grandchildren. She also left behind her two cherished pets, Pippa and Kandikat. In accordance with Becky's wishes, no funeral, memorial or celebration of life service is currently planned. If the family decides to have a memorial service at a future date, that information will be passed along accordingly.

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## APODACA

Continued from page A7

Almost without fail, the ideas will start flowing. All this goes for kids too. We're all familiar with the modern view of parenting, which has succumbed to the thinking that children must be busy at all times, whether with schoolwork, extracurricular activities, sports, entertainment options or socializing. Many kids don't get breaks because their parents fear they will get left behind in the race to become perfectly molded humans. But it has been recognized for some time now just how wrongheaded and potentially damaging that view is, in part because it

leaves precious little room for kids to be bored. Mental health professionals tell us that allowing or even encouraging kids to be bored some of the time is beneficial, because it helps them learn how to address those feelings and come up with coping mechanisms. And, as with adults, it gives them the opportunity to stretch their creative muscles. I'm reminded of Leonardo da Vinci's penchant — which was fully on display, even as a child — for wandering off to engage in seemingly mundane pursuits such as studying the shapes of clouds, the flow of water or the flapping of an insect's wings. I think we all know that such bouts of what might have

appeared, to a casual observer, to be sheer idleness, in fact led him to some spectacular insights. I read this as Leonardo's ringing endorsement of boredom. Who are we to argue with one of history's most celebrated geniuses? So please take the following in the spirit in which it is intended: I wish you all a merry Christmas and a happy New Year. May your holidays be filled with love, good cheer and a hearty dose of boredom.

**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.



**LUCIA REYNOSO**, 5, yawns during the first day of school in 2019. Keeping kids busy all the time can be detrimental, writes Patrice Apodaca, who puts boredom at the top of her Christmas list.

File Photo

## MAILBAG

Continued from page A8

few thousand miles off course.

**Bill Spitalnick**  
Newport Beach

### Mayoral selection a sign of the times

You really can't truly appreciate the appointment of Gracey Van Der Mark as mayor without considering Huntington Beach's descent into complete municipal madness. Before November 2022, it would have been difficult to envision just how far our community has regressed. Sure, outsiders remind Huntington Beach residents of our city's history of racial tensions and ties to extremism. Still, for most H.B. residents, this is simply our home. And while our community has an unfortunate habit of attracting out-of-town zealots, miscreants and kooks, most of us simply avoid or ignore these unwanted interlopers. Now, however, this undesirable element is unavoidable. Once extremists took control of the Huntington Beach City Council, they gleefully set aside all existing norms and

policies to appoint one of their own as mayor. Before last December, our city government had largely been spared the nonsensical culture wars of today's American politics. While there were many disagreements and some controversies, most City Council discussions attempted to focus on common municipal issues. Discussions of infrastructure, community services, public safety and funding sources consumed most public meetings. Established norms and traditions were followed, and the everyday work of running a city went on without much notice or fanfare. Unfortunately, that unnoticed competence of local governance is no longer a given. Reckless and extreme choices made by H.B.'s new leadership have left our community at risk, and the recent exodus of senior city staff speaks to the dysfunction taking hold. The loss of administrative and subject matter expertise was always going to be a liability, but when you combine this with multiple "own-goals" like the secretive multimillion-dollar payoff to a political ally, an irregular and seemingly haphazard budget roll-out, the needless at-

tempt to micromanage library services, conspiracy-inspired restrictions on consumer choice, and the deliberate violation of state law, our community finds itself in a perilous position. The long-term consequences remain largely unknown, but the reality and our prospects are stark. Electing cosplaying culture warriors rather than responsible individuals committed to competent public service was always going to be problematic. Now, the residents of Huntington Beach are left only to wait and reap what was sown in the elections of 2022.

**Steve Shepherd**  
Huntington Beach

Thank you for your detailed coverage of the far right extremist take over of Huntington Beach. In the last months, citizen's rights have been trampled and our city has become severely divided. There is no effort by our council majority to compromise with or even to simply listen to residents with a different viewpoint. Instead of working on improving infrastructure, solving our homeless problems and providing for public safety, this backward majority is bent on attacking librarians

and restricting access to books in our public libraries. Even more worrisome is their gutting of our human dignity statement and the dissolving of the human relations committee that served our city well for more than 20 years. Now, with public input disregarded and disrespected and with extremist groups like Proud Boys and Moms for Liberty welcomed, please continue to actively report on our city. Our new mayor, Gracie Van der Mark, refuses your interviews as she and her three colleagues thrust us toward dangerous, dark ideologies. Help us bring back a family-friendly, democratically run city. The expert journalism offered by the Daily Pilot and L.A. Times gives us hope. Please continue reporting on the travesties.

**Nora Pedersen**  
Huntington Beach

### They're quiet on vote for a reason

On Wednesday of this week the House of Representatives, by a narrow margin, voted to impeach President Biden. Among those Republicans who voted to impeach were two Orange County representatives who are facing diffi-

## HOW TO GET PUBLISHED

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cult elections next year, Young Kim of Anaheim Hills and Michelle Steel of Seal Beach. Both representatives know that their vote may be unpopular with their constituents and as a result have not made significant remarks about impeachment. The Republicans in the House justify their votes to impeach, claiming that Biden benefited from his son's overseas' business dealings. Absent specific information or proof, Kim and Steele are treading in difficult waters with their votes because both represent districts that went for Biden in 2020. In fact, a majority of the population in Orange County is now Democratic. Being a Republican is no longer a sure win in federal, state or local elections proven by the victories in recent years of Harley Rouda and Katie Porter to the House of Representa-

tives and Dave Min and Cottie Petrie-Norris to the state legislatures, and Katrina Foley's election to the Orange County Board of Supervisors. The biggest coup of all for Orange County will be if Katie Porter gets elected to the U.S. Senate Seat made vacant by the death of Diane Feinstein. It is unfortunate but not surprising that Steel and Kim have little to say about the current impeachment proceedings, perhaps because they know that many of the people they represent do not like to see politicians going on this futile and time-wasting journey. Many constituents feel that they should be working on serious issues the country is facing such as passing a budget or providing desperately needed aid to Ukraine.

**Lynn Lorenz**  
Newport Beach

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# Holiday craft: Make marbled candles by hand



Paula Lavender Tucker via AP

**MARBLEIZED CANDLES** in a mix of Christmas colors, created by Paula Lavender Tucker of Vermont.

## BY JENNIFER FORKER

Candles, already an integral part of Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa and New Year's Eve, can be made even more special when they carry a personal touch. Try marbleizing them by hand, or simply using candlelight in creative ways.

Paula Lavender Tucker of Bel-lows Falls, Vt., started marbleizing simple white candles about five years ago.

Before that, she marbled quilt fabrics. Both are for sale at her Etsy site, HippyDippyDyed.

Her marbleizing process is simple and inexpensive, and the results are mighty (directions below).

"You want to think about using

contrasting colors," says Lavender Tucker. "Black and white are a stunning combination."

She recommends learning how to marbleize candles with only two or three colors, and the holidays carry traditional color combinations: red, green and white for Christmas; blue and white for Hanukkah; red, green and black for Kwanzaa; and black, white and gold, or dark blue, light blue and white for New Year's Eve.

## SCENE SETTERS

One easy way to display holiday candles is to wrap a small Mason or jelly jar with ribbon and insert a small pillar candle inside, says Oma Blaise Ford, executive editor of Better Homes & Gardens maga-

zine. Accent them with seasonal items such as a small pine cone and a sprig of evergreen.

"You can customize the display for whatever holidays you're celebrating," she says.

While marbled candles — tapers, pillars or spheres — can decorate the home for Kwanzaa, traditional black, red and green candles are used in the holiday's seven-candle Kinara, or candle holder.

The Kinara is lit daily during the holiday's seven days, from Dec. 26 to Jan. 1.

Erica Jones of Duluth, Ga., sells 300 to 400 hand-carved Kinaras each year at her Etsy site, BlackandFIT, and at Walmart online. "There aren't too many

things the Black community can say, 'This celebrates our greatness.' This holiday does that," Jones says.

## BEYOND CANDLES

For a New Year's Eve party, Blaise Ford suggests filling jars with strings of tiny (called fairy) lights and tying the jars with velvet ribbon in shades of icy blue, winter white and pale pink. Wrap that in metallic star garland for extra sparkle.

"The added benefit here is that no one has to remember to blow out the candles after the midnight toast," Blaise Ford says.

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## HOW TO MARBLEIZE A CANDLE

### SUPPLIES:

- Unscented, paraffin wax candles (Lavender Tucker recommends shopping at a discount store), in a votive, taper or pillar shape
- Disposable cup or small container that is taller than your candle
- Tight gloves, such as surgical Paper towels
- Newsprint or drop cloth
- An oil-based, marbleizing paint available in craft stores and online

### DIRECTIONS:

- Put on the protective gloves. Cover your workspace with newsprint or a drop cloth.
- Fill a plastic cup with water and add just three drops of paint from each of two or three contrasting colors. Slightly swirl the color in the water. Lower a candle into the cup, twisting it while doing so (the twist creates the swirly design).
- Skim the surface of the water with a small piece of paper towel to clear the water of ink, so the candle won't pick up more ink, creating a muddled design, when you withdraw it. Remove the candle.
- Place the candle on a drying rack or clip it to a hanger by its wick.
- Before dipping your second candle, skim the water surface with another piece of paper towel to clean it.
- Proceed with second and subsequent candles in this same way.
- Throw away your gloves, cup, and other soiled supplies to avoid staining your skin and other surfaces.

## WORD

Continued from page A8

in this case, unfortunate that English lets you drop the word "that" in some cases. For Pence, a simple "that" in the sentence

would have prevented any doubt that his point was that Trump knew Pence's position.

There's a term for this: the zero relative. And it's very standard in English. "I know you want more cake" means "I know *that* you want more cake."

"Wanda got the job she wanted" means "Wanda got the job *that* she wanted."

"The movie we saw was great" means "The movie *that* we saw was great."

In every case, you have the option of dropping the relative

pronoun, "that," without losing any meaning. But do so with caution, because your sentence might be less clear without it.

The lesson here is to choose your words and your punctuation marks carefully. A comma can change your meaning entirely,

and the relative pronoun "that" can help ensure that your reader understands what you mean.

**JUNE CASAGRANDE** is the author of "The Best Punctuation Book, Period." She can be reached at JuneTCN@aol.com.

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