

Daily Pilot & Times OC

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TAKE A HIKE

Crystal Cove offers tips to newbies and those wanting to take their hiking game up a notch

BY SARA CARDINE

Public parks became havens during the coronavirus pandemic, providing reprieve from the soul-crushing monotony of sheltering in place and vast acreage where people could exercise, get a dose of Vitamin D and be surrounded by the beauty of nature.

But with the steep rise in park use came some unintended consequences, according to Winter Bonnin, an interpretive naturalist at Crystal Cove State Park just north of Laguna Beach.

"One of the things we were seeing during the pandemic was many people coming to Crystal Cove State Park who'd never done this before and were using the parks as their gyms," she said. "They were also bringing their urban habits like loud music and leaving trash."

At the other end of the spectrum were people like Debra Ross, who used parklands responsibly but felt a lack of expertise kept her from taking on more advanced hiking adventures.

"I've been hiking with my friends without know-

See **Hike**, page A5



ABOVE: John Hunter, top, helps hikers use a compass and trail map during a "Hiking 101" class Tuesday at Crystal Cove State Park.

LEFT: State Parks volunteer and longtime hiker Dana Hunter stresses the importance of boot insoles with a stable arch.

Photos by
Kevin Chang
Staff Photographer

'Painted Words' honors artist's story

Huntington Beach resident Clara Woods is an exhibiting artist, despite having suffered a prenatal stroke.

BY ANDREW TURNER

The night reached its end, but no one left the Laguna Beach Cultural Arts Center — not immediately, anyway.

Guests had just enjoyed a one-person, onstage production detailing the life of one very special girl in Clara Woods, 16, who has made a name for herself as an artist despite significant obstacles.

Clara suffered a prenatal stroke, which rendered her unable to read, write or speak. What began as an exercise to improve her fine motor skills has become her salvation — and others' inspiration — as she has learned to express her innermost self through painting.

Dozens of her paintings are on exhibit at the Laguna Beach Cultural Arts Center, the venue that hosted Clara's family and supporters for a performance of "Painted Words." Lavinia Constantino, an actress and art therapist, developed the show to give a voice to Clara and empower

See **Artist**, page A4

Seal Beach Naval base has its first woman at the helm

Capt. Jessica O'Brien recently left a job at the Pentagon and took the helm of Naval Weapons Station Seal Beach.

BY DANIEL LANGHORNE

Capt. Jessica O'Brien recently took the helm of Naval Weapons Station Seal Beach, becoming the first female commanding officer in the base's 78-year history.

With nearly 25 years of service as a naval officer, O'Brien comes to Orange County from the Pentagon, where she worked for three years under the Chief of Naval Operations in cooperating with foreign militaries. She relieved Capt. Jason Sherman at a July 15 ceremony but had been learning the ropes for the past few months.

O'Brien previously broke a glass ceiling as the first female commander of Beachmaster Unit One, a Coronado-based landing craft unit that trains to move sailors, Marines and their equipment from ships onto adversarial coastlines.

Coincidentally, O'Brien entered the U.S. Naval Academy in 1993.

See **First**, page A2

FINDING NORI

Fishing for the most affordable sushi meals in Orange County

BY EDWIN GOEI

Let's be clear: Sushi has never been, nor will ever be, a cheap food. Its quality is inextricably tied to price — the more you pay, the better the experience. There is, however, a threshold at which your money stops paying for the sushi and starts paying for the atmosphere, location and whether the chef has been on TV.

This list trims all unnecessary fat to reveal three of the most affordable Orange County sushi restaurants where you can order omakase, choose your meal from a menu or pluck it from a sushi conveyor belt. Not included are all-you-can-eat sushi restaurants, which exist and thrive, but whose value proposition works only if you have a bottomless stomach and guiltless soul.



Edwin Goei

See **Sushi**, page A7

INSIDE KAIGEN, where chefs prepare sushi at the Orange eatery on Tustin Street.

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FIRST

Continued from page A1

In 1994, Congress repealed the combat exclusion laws that had prevented women from serving in combat ships and aircraft.

“Throughout my career, I’ve been the first female in so many instances. I’m on that bow wave of females who have really had an open path ahead to serve on combatants. Even since then females can do more. We’ve got females on submarines now and everything is really open,” O’Brien said.

As a woman who entered the male-dominated profession of driving warships, O’Brien said she’s proud to have laid the groundwork for fellow female officers.

“It wasn’t something I wanted to highlight because I never did in my career. I just tried to do my job and earn the trust and respect of everyone,” O’Brien said.

A defining moment in O’Brien’s early career arrived on Oct. 12, 2000, during her first deployment on the dock landing ship USS Anchorage. The warship had pulled into port in the Seychelles, an archipelago off the coast of East Africa. O’Brien was helping paint a schoolhouse when the ship blasted its horn and hoisted a flag signaling all of its crew were recalled from shore.

“We pack up and come running down the hill and get told there was an explosion on a ship in Yemen,” she said.

The guided missile destroyer USS Cole was bombed in a suicide attack while refueling in Aden, Yemen. The blast killed 17 sailors and injured 39 others. Al-Qaeda terrorists would claim responsibility for the attack.

Anchorage steamed toward Yemen to help the damaged Cole and was the first American ship to arrive, O’Brien said. The amphibious ship’s crew provided security, food, clothing and medical care to the Cole’s sailors. For the then-



Kevin Chang | Staff Photographer

NAVY CAPT. Jessica J. O’Brien is the new commanding officer for the Naval Weapons Station in Seal Beach. O’Brien is the first woman to command the base and previously led a San Diego-based landing craft battalion that trains to move Marines from ships onto adversarial coastlines.

junior officer, the bombing drove home the real dangers of military service — even on the waves.

“It certainly changed for me the importance of what I was doing and really understanding how much I love this job,” O’Brien said.

O’Brien lands in Seal Beach in a bustling moment for the 5,256-acre base. It’s likely she will see the completion of a \$154-million construction project to reconfigure Anaheim Bay and replace a World War II-era ammunition pier by late 2024. In April, construction crews drove the last of over 660 concrete piles that will support a new pier.

For the first time, the planned pier and causeway will be able to accommodate 844-foot-long amphibious assault ships or simultaneously service two guided-missile destroyers. In a first for the base, ships will be able to siphon power from the pier rather than running their own generators, which is expected to free up sailors to handle missiles and cut the service’s fuel usage.

Every ship based in San Diego comes to San Diego to load and offload missiles between missions. The next closest ammunition depot is over 1,000 miles away in Washington state.

“It’s no secret that we’re still in a great power competition with China and

with the pivot to the Pacific this is strategically significant to the Pacific Fleet and being able to increase the capacity here is important to the Navy,” O’Brien said.

The civilian boat channel to Huntington Harbour has already been reconfigured to end the practice of vessels passing through Navy’s inner harbor. This dramatically shortened the time pleasure craft must wait while warships maneuver around the ammunition pier.

In a separate project, the Navy is conducting an environmental study for future uses on 28.89 acres of largely vacant federal land at the northeast corner of Pacific Coast Highway and Seal Beach Boulevard. Affordable housing for military families or civilians would help Seal Beach meet a state mandate to plan for the region’s housing needs.

O’Brien said she’s grateful for the opportunity to be one of 70 sailors in charge of U.S. naval bases.

“It’s not the ship driving and all of the excitement being out at sea that kept me in the Navy. It’s the culture, it’s that camaraderie and that’s throughout the Navy,” she said. “Here I get to build that with this team and outside of our fence line in the community.”

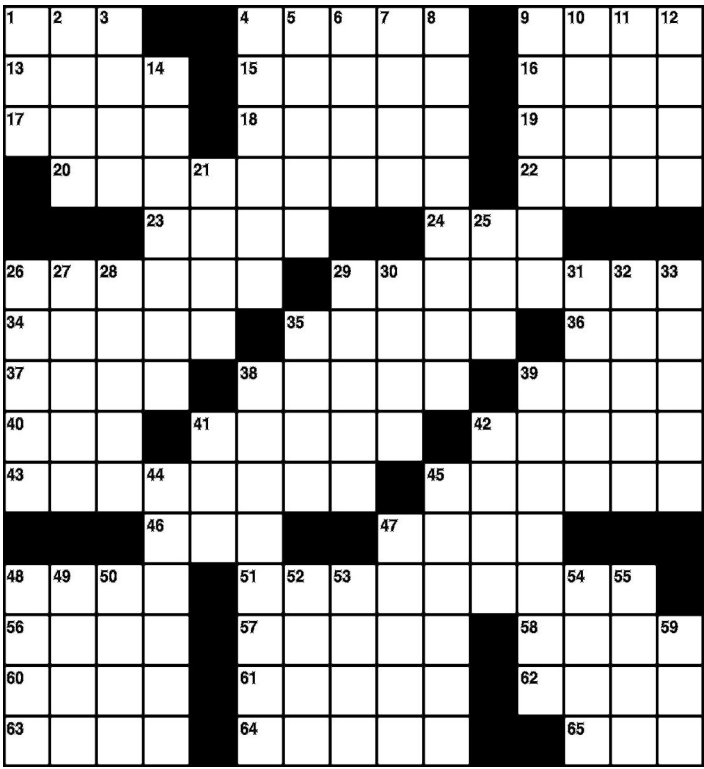
DANIEL LANGHORNE is a contributor to TimesOC.

THE DAILY COMMUTER PUZZLE

By Jacqueline E. Mathews

ACROSS

- 1 Boeing 747, for one
4 Doesn't include
9 Skin mark
13 "As I was going to St. _"
15 Lake boat
16 Largest Caribbean island
17 Hair on a mare
18 Crowd scene actor
19 Depend
20 Male horses
22 _ up; spends all of
23 Word attached to dark or bath
24 Trucker's compartment
26 No-nonsense
29 Piling up
34 Old ice cream maker part
35 Halts
36 Conjunction
37 Ladder piece
38 Silly as a _
39 "He _ Quiet Man"; 2007 film
40 Class _; outstanding person
41 Bedsprings
42 Dogma
43 Soldier's dining room
45 Swiss or American
46 Singer Tillis
47 _ up; absorb
48 Like water _ duck's back
51 Stamp collecting
56 Actor Baldwin
57 External
58 Shipshape
60 Smell to high heaven
61 Loses traction
62 "How _ you!"; cry of outrage
63 Back talk
64 Take one bite of
65 Ike's monogram



SUDOKU

By The Mepham Group

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

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

For answers to the crossword and Sudoku puzzles, see page A4.

DOWN

- 1 Croce or Carrey
2 Sra. Per-n & others
3 Canvas shelter
4 Wild feline
5 Proverbial saying
6 Take _ account;

- consider
7 Having mixed feelings
8 Ocean painting
9 Surgeon's attire
10 Signals to actors
11 Suffix for favor or honor

- 12 Sunbeams
14 Charring
21 Door fastener
25 Donkey
26 "Beat it!"
27 Cease-fire
28 Angry speeches
29 Lagoon island
30 Forest floor growth
31 Ridiculous
32 Facial features
33 Shred cheese
35 Sully
38 Upright piece on a football field
39 Long _; 3-day period
41 Revolutionary Guevara
42 "All _ Jazz"; "Chicago" song
44 Honey _; Kellogg's cereal
45 Sandpaper grade
47 Slumbered
48 Boat propellers
49 Hopping insect
50 Charges
52 Wahine's dance
53 " _ what it is"
54 Main role
55 Kids' play area
59 20th letter

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Dolce&Gabbana



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COLUMN | **PATRICE APODACA**

Public schools face a decline in enrollment, exacerbated by the pandemic

Three years ago I wrote about the long-term trend of shrinking public school enrollment, driven largely by falling birth rates. But something happened on the way to a steady, fairly predictable decline in the school-age population based on demographic and migratory patterns. COVID-19 threw education into chaos and accelerated the enrollment losses, leaving many districts — also grappling with high levels of chronic absenteeism and a host of other issues — forced to make increasingly difficult decisions about how to plan for the future. This nationwide phe-

nomenon is felt keenly in California, where slightly more than 5.89 million students attended public schools at the start of the 2021-22 academic year. That represented a substantial loss of 110,283 students, or 1.8 percent, from the previous year, and continued a multiyear string of enrollment declines, including a record 2.6% drop a year earlier, according to the state Department of Education.

In Orange County, where the high cost of living is also believed to be a contributing factor as families move to more affordable areas further inland, public school enrollment fell to 448,729 in the last school year from 456,572 the year before, and well below the peak of 515,464 in 2003-04. Complicating the picture

is the fact that enrollment declines have not been evenly distributed. Some districts have seen larger decreases, and there are differences among ethnic and racial groups and by grade level. School administrators face a complex task analyzing the data and are confronted with many questions that aren't easily answered.

Have some parents merely delayed sending their kids back to school, even though most campuses are fully reopened? Is economic distress largely to blame? If pandemic restrictions were a driving factor, why aren't more students returning now that mask mandates and other measures have eased?

Where are the missing students going? Did they move away, switch to private schools, or are they being homeschooled? Have some just dropped out?

Will we see a rebound, or are some COVID-related losses permanent?

These are far more than academic questions. In California, public schools receive funding based on daily attendance. Declines in student populations and lower attendance numbers can impact the financial well-being of schools, which remain burdened by high levels of fixed costs and demands to improve student outcomes.

Pending legislation that would base funding on enrollment, rather than attendance, would be a positive step, but it wouldn't solve the most pressing issues.

A prospective decline in funding for some schools is

particularly worrisome considering that we've gone through a period of significant learning losses and higher levels of student mental-health issues stemming from the pandemic. Also, the difficulties schools are encountering in attracting and retaining skilled teachers could worsen.

"We were getting to the point where we were getting good at predicting," said Fermin Leal, chief communications officer for Santa Ana Unified School District. "The pandemic put a big wrench in it."

In the early 2000s, Santa Ana Unified was bursting at the seams with about 60,000 students, and that created a raft of other issues for the district to contend with — crowded classrooms, portables on campus, overworked staff and stretched resources.

But that was then. After years of steady declines, the district is now projecting about 43,000 students for the school year that will begin Aug. 15, down from 44,500 the year before.

"It's still very fluid," said Leal, but he anticipates that over the next decade numbers could reach as low as the high 30,000s.

In the past four years, six of the district's schools were merged into three, and Leal said further consolidation can't be ruled out. Staffing levels have taken a hit, and the focus now is on targeting areas of greatest need.

Federal and state pandemic relief funds have helped soften the impact so far. Santa Ana Unified used

See **Apodaca**, page A6

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Vincent "Vince" Ned DeRosa

October 5, 1920 - July 18, 2022

Vincent Ned DeRosa died peacefully on July 18, at 101 years old. Vince was preceded in death by his wife, Sally Ann DeRosa, and beloved siblings Martha, Jack, Richard, and Mary.

Vince was born on October 5, 1920, in Kansas City, MO. He was the first in his family born in America, the oldest child of Italian immigrants. The family moved to Los Angeles in 1932. During his lifetime, Vince came to call three places home, La Canada-Flintridge, CA, Whitefish, MT and Maui, HI.

Vince met his wife, Sally Jordan, a radio actress, on a blind date to the USO in 1944. Their chance meeting only took place due to an ankle injury that sidelined Sally from attending a tour with the Ice Follies. They were married in 1945 and remained so until her death in 2014.

Vince, who was a descendent of career musicians, started studying the French horn at 10 years old. He was forced to start an early career due to the death of his father when Vince was 15. During World War II, Vince enlisted and was assigned with the California Army Air Forces radio production unit. After the war, Vince started his career on contract at Fox Studios and as a freelance studio musician.

His unique and distinctive sound was featured by Hollywood's greatest composers including John Williams, Henry Mancini, Bill Conti, and Alfred Newman. As his career progressed, many pieces were composed for him specifically. His film credits include E.T., Rocky, The Sound of Music, and Jaws. He also recorded for television scores including Dallas, Batman, Bonanza, and The Simpsons and played for live telecasts and variety shows including The Academy Awards, Sonny and Cher and The Judy Garland show.

His credits beyond Hollywood include classic recordings across genres of jazz, classical, pop and rock, on albums by Frank Sinatra, Ella Fitzgerald, Louis Armstrong, The Monkees, Frank Zappa and The Beatles. Among his accomplishments, his work with Laurindo Almeida on The Intimate Bach earned a Grammy nomination for Best Classical Performance-Chamber music in 1962.

Inspired by his mentor, Alfred Brain, Vince used his time outside of the studio to teach other aspiring horn players. Vince was a faculty member at USC for over 30 years and continued to offer private lessons well into his retirement.

Outside of his career, Vince was the beloved center of his family. He was cherished deeply as a father, grandfather, and great-grandfather and his loss simply cannot be overstated. He always filled hearts with a lot of laughter and instilled a deep love of music and a great bowl of pasta with "a hunk" of cheese.

Vince is survived by his pet parrot, Cheech; his son John DeRosa and his wife Dee of Corona del Mar, CA; his daughter Betty DeRosa of La Canada-Flintridge, CA; his six grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren. His grandchildren and great-grandchildren are Ian Ullman of New York, NY, J.D. DeRosa, his wife Perry and their children Sebastian and Madeline of Brentwood, CA, Deanna and Tom Coale and their children Paul and Laura of Mission Viejo, CA, Jacob Ullman, his wife Xandi and their children Sklyar and Nolan of Newport Beach, CA, Dr. Vincent DeRosa, his wife Ann-Marie and their children Dominic, Nico and Joe Hamilton of Santa Barbara, CA, and Ashley MacLaren of Seattle, WA.

A private family celebration of life will be held in August. In lieu of flowers, the family suggests contributions to an endowed scholarship honoring his work: The USC Vincent DeRosa Endowed Scholarship in French Horn Fund.

ARTIST

Continued from page A1

others who face their own unique challenges.

"My aim with Clara's story is to help people re-connect to their own way of being different without thinking that being different is something wrong, but it is of value," Constantino said. "It's something that can really help us build more resilient and more diverse communities."

Constantino first learned of Clara in 2018, when the young artist still lived with her parents in her native Italy. She sought out the family, feeling that Clara's story was one that needed to be told. After meeting regularly with the artist's family and friends, "Painted Words" was developed as a traveling show that could teach audiences about diversity, equality and inclusivity.

"Clara is the example that there's also such a sunny side of life for a person with a disability that can still be developed and nourished," Constantino said. "... For me, [the play is] not just about Clara's life. That is the beginning, but the meaning, what I really hope that the audience can get is that we all feel different at some stage in our life. All of us, we have been the one who didn't fit



Photos by Don Leach | Staff Photographer

ACTOR AND ART therapist Lavinia Constantino performs in "Painted Words" at the Laguna Beach Cultural Arts Center in Laguna Beach. The traveling show is based on the true story of 16-year-old Clara Woods, who had a prenatal stroke and has learned how to express herself through art.



AN EXAMPLE of the artwork by Woods on display during "Painted Words" at the Laguna Beach Cultural Arts Center.

in, because we were not meant to fit in. We are meant to be different."

An embrace was shared between the two artists at the end of the play, for which Clara's younger brother Davi, 10, ran the introductions.

Those instances illustrate part of the support system around Clara, and it was an hour after the show before attendees began to make their way down the stairs and back onto the Promenade on Forest Avenue.

In that time, they inter-

acted with Clara's family and viewed her artwork. Dozens of acrylic paintings on canvas — many incorporating the use of glitter — were hanging from the walls.

Poised to enter her junior year of high school at Edison in Huntington Beach, Clara has already held 30 exhibitions on three continents. Those include appearances in Florence, Italy, where she was born in 2006; Art Basel in Miami, and in Japan. She has sold more than 700 paintings

around the world.

"I think always that art came in our [lives], and I couldn't imagine anymore without [it], because for Clara, and for us and the family, [it] gave hope that we can do something different and that Clara can be someone and do her thing," Clara's mother Betina Genovesi said. "It's a kind of sacrifice because it's a lot of work, but I think everything that you want to accomplish in life, it's sacrifice. Our goal, in the end, is to be able also to help other kids with disabilities to do the same."

"We have so much kids and people with disabilities with talent, and they don't have any support to be able to rise and shine. ... Our goal is to create something that in the future we can help others to do the same."

Those interested in seeing Clara's latest exhibition, "Rainbow River," can view it at Laguna Beach Cultural Arts Center from Aug. 15 through Sept. 1. Clara's family plans to attend between 4 and 7 p.m. daily.

"When we do events and people come, it's really nice to see the reactions and how they feel," Genovesi said. "We never imagined that what we are doing can touch so many lives."

"... [Clara] took her life and her difficult situation and transformed bad [into] good, and I think it's the most important thing of everything we are doing — to be able to connect and to help people to see things with other eyes."

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Pioneer of whale watching honored in Dana Point

Don Hansen, who passed away in January, is honored with a special plaque dedication.

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

Dana Point bills itself as the Dolphin and Whale Watching Capital of the World, but city officials and business leaders acknowledge such a distinction was made possible in large part by one man.

“The Harbor would not be what it is today without Don Hansen’s vision and leadership,” said Bryon Ward, president of Burnham-Ward Properties and a partner of Dana Point Harbor Partners.

Donald K. Hansen founded Dana Wharf Sportfishing & Whale Watching and is credited with being

the first in Orange County to host whale watching and establishing the Dana Point Festival of Whales. On Aug. 3, Dana Point Harbor Partners honored Hansen, who passed away in January at 87, with a special plaque dedication.

“It is important to us that visitors and future generations know Don Hansen’s story, which is why this plaque will be incorporated into the Harbor revitalization to ensure his legacy will live on forever through the Hansen Plaza,” said Ward.

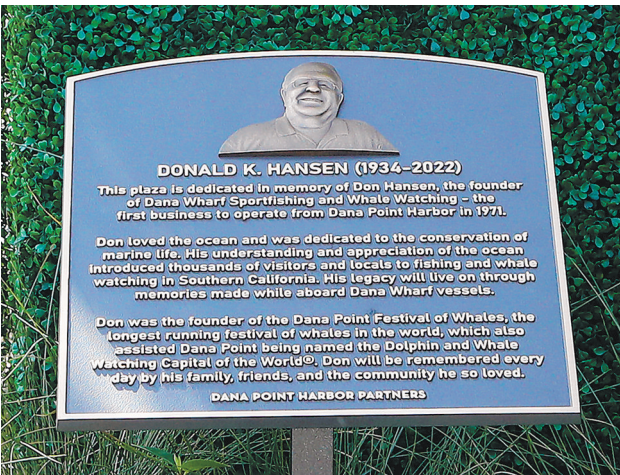
The plaque isn’t the city’s first acknowledgement of Hansen’s impact. In February, the City Council voted to designate a portion of Dana Point Harbor Drive as Don Hansen Memorial Drive.

“Since the passing of Don Hansen on Jan. 5, we have

worked closely with Dana Point Harbor Partners to find a way to permanently honor Don’s many contributions to the community and his legacy as a pioneer of whale watching and sportfishing in Southern California,” said O.C. 5th District Supervisor Lisa Bartlett.

Hansen first traveled from his hometown of Iowa City, Iowa to Orange County to visit family in San Clemente in 1938. His family soon moved there, and in 1947, Hansen worked his very first job as a sixth grader, hauling fish off the San Clemente Pier in a little red wagon for tourists. He spent summers working in high school as a deckhand.

After serving in the U.S. Coast Guard during the Korean War, Hansen found work at San Clemente



Kevin Chang | Staff Photographer

THE HANSEN PLAZA plaque was unveiled at Dana Wharf Sportfishing & Whale Watching on Aug. 3.

Sportfishing, eventually buying the business. He began using his fleet to take local students on tours to see dolphins and whales, Orange County’s first-

known whale-watching tour. In 1971, he became Dana Point Harbor’s first tenant, when he renamed his business and moved it to the Harbor.

Dana Wharf Sportfishing & Whale Watching turned 50 in 2021. Hansen is survived by a large family that includes three sons, three daughters and 15 grandchildren. Hansen’s daughter, Donna Kalez, was present for the dedication and thanked Dana Point Harbor Partners for the plaque and the renaming of the plaza.

Bartlett said the efforts are a great tribute to Hansen’s work.

“Visitors to the Harbor, and guests departing on whale watching or fishing adventures, will now be able to gather in Hansen Plaza and read the plaque to learn about Don Hansen’s legacy,” Bartlett said.

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HIKE

Continued from page A1

ing right or wrong,” the Laguna Woods resident said. “I really like to hike, and I thought if I really want to do this, I need to be more serious.”

A class held Tuesday at Crystal Cove State Park — Hiking 101 — aimed to elevate visitors’ understanding of the outdoor resources available to them and how to enjoy them safely and responsibly, offering wisdom on what gear works best for different terrains and temperatures, what to put in a pack or first aid kit and other tricks of the trade.

Co-hosted by California State Parks and the nonprofit Crystal Cove Conservancy, the session opened with a 3-mile trek around a loop trail led by Dana Hunter, a park volunteer who’s been hiking for decades and is happy to impart what she’s learned with others just starting out.

“A lot of people think you just go out, it’s no big deal. People go out in flip flops, they’re not bringing water,” Hunter said. “But it’s not necessarily just walking. It requires a little bit more diligence, a bit more wari-



Kevin Chang | Staff Photographer

WINTER BONNIN, with California State Parks, speaks at a “Hiking 101” Class Tuesday at Crystal Cove State Park. The agency partnered with the Crystal Cove Conservancy to host the event.

ness. It’s not a controlled environment — things can happen.”

After Tuesday’s warmup Hunter, accompanied by husband John, led a casual information session that covered what to wear, bring and understand before you hit the trails. A class of about 20 participants received items to add to their own packs, including granola bars, hydration powder and duct tape.

“You will find many uses for duct tape,” Hunter advised. “You can use it for first aid to immobilize somebody’s shoulder. You can use it for a blister if you don’t have moleskin.”

The husband and wife hikers demonstrated the proper lacing

of a boot, how to hold and use hiking poles and measured attendees’ torsos, giving them dimensions they could use to select a right-sized backpack.

“It’s really a misnomer when they say ‘backpack’ because you want to disperse the weight onto your shoulders and waist. Backpacks should also have a waistband, because that’s where the weight is going to transfer to,” Hunter said.

“I never knew that,” Ross said to a woman sitting next to her. “I just picked it by the color.”

John Hunter showed participants how to use a compass — both the cellphone app version and the analog tool — to reorient themselves if they should become lost.

“I’ll be bold and say in Crystal Cove Park you shouldn’t get lost,” he said. “But when you’re out in the mountains or in an unfamiliar area, that’s how you do it.”

He held the device to a map of the park and asked 10-year-old Cristian Damm to locate true north. Consulting the instrument, the boy pointed to a ridge-line behind the amphitheater and received a brand-new compass for his correct answer.

Cristian’s mom, Linda Ortiz Ponce, said she brought her son

and his 8-year-old brother, Emilio, from their home in Coto de Caza to learn some tips for when they walk at Crystal Cove and other Orange County parks.

“We started hiking when the pandemic started, and we did it by ourselves, so I figured this could really enhance our skills and knowledge in the outdoors,” Ortiz Ponce said after the class.

Cristian said he’d spent some time in the Cub Scouts before the pandemic and learned some basics but was happy to have picked up some new tricks in the Hiking 101 class.

“I learned about how to use the proper insoles in your shoes, so it doesn’t hurt,” he said. “And that you need to change the length of your poles when you’re walking downhill.”

For Bonnín, any little bit of knowledge that can be passed on to help visitors stay safe is worth sharing.

“The goal is to make sure people who come into our parks are well prepared and understand the land and understand what it means to be out on a trail,” she said. “I’m sure we’ll do this again.”

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2 Newport Coast listings surpass \$60M

BY LILLY NGUYEN

A Newport Coast mansion may be on track to beat out the not-too-long established all-time price record in that enclave, provided that it doesn't get beat out by another property first.

The property at 46 Deep Sea is an estimated 12,066 square feet and was listed earlier this summer for an asking price of \$62 million.

Inside its three stories are six bedrooms, 10 bathrooms and a fully equipped kitchen, according to the listing. It also boasts a 3,500-square-foot garage with four charging stations. Outdoors, the landscaped property includes a 78-foot infinity pool.

The home falls short in square footage by at least 7,000 square feet compared with the record-setting \$61-million mansion sold in Newport Coast in 2020, though the listing notes the lot size is relative to it at 19,627 square feet.

"From its location in a double-gated community, to unobstructed views of the Pacific Ocean and self-sustaining design, 46 Deep Sea is a truly unique offering in Newport Coast," said Compass listing agent Aaron Kirman in a statement Friday.

"Luxury buyers are looking for a residence that matches their high-end lifestyle in a coveted neighborhood, while remaining secluded and private from the rest of the world," Kirman said. "In Orange County, these listings are few and far between and don't stay on the market for long."

Fellow Compass agent Marcy Weinstein, who holds the listing for another Newport Coast property priced at \$69.8 million at 6 Midsummer, noted that Realtors are selling properties at record prices and that there are special buyers for the level of detail included in such estates.



Juwan Li / Compass

THE PROPERTY at 46 Deep Sea is about 12,066 square feet and has been listed for \$62 million.



Compass

A LOOK AT the foyer for the 6 Midsummer property, which is listed for \$69.8 million.

The Midsummer property is an estimated 15,500 square feet and sits on a lot of about 26,600 square feet. Noted in its listing are white Jordanian marble floors and floor-to-ceiling onyx walls.

The property, also known as the Palais de Cristal, is about three stories high and boasts of an office or library with views

of the ocean, formal and informal living rooms, ensuite guestrooms, a formal dining room, fully furnished kitchen and a second equipped prep kitchen and outdoor kitchen. Also included is a climate-controlled 3,725 square foot, 10-car garage and a pool.

The listing notes there are seven bedrooms and 13 bathrooms.

Records on the Compass website indicate the property has been listed for close to a year, but Weinstein said it has been on and off the market as some modifications to the house were made. The homeowners had the home custom built for themselves and their children but ultimately decided to sell.

"The quality of what is in there is unduplicable," said Weinstein.

The average asking price in Newport Coast averages around \$4.5 million, according to Redfin.

Looking to broader Orange County, the average cost of a home is around \$1 million — up 12.6% compared to last June, even as the number of homes sold declined by 33.1%.

"The Orange County market is currently in a very interesting position. We are seeing more and more new inventory come to market daily, while existing inventory sits on the market much longer than

the past 24 months," Morgan Trent, who is the managing director of Aaron Kirman Group's Orange County division, said in a statement.

"A true sign of this market change is the amount of price deductions we are seeing on existing inventory," said Trent.

"While we are still seeing strong sales in Newport Beach in comparison to other less expensive areas in Orange County, sellers' dream days of overpricing their homes and receiving multiple offers are long gone," said Trent. "46 Deep Sea is a special property in a very special location."

"Regardless of mortgage rates or other market trends, there will always be a few trophy properties around for that one buyer that wants something that only comes around every decade or so. Deep Sea is that type of property."

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APODACA

Continued from page A4

a large share of that funding to target "wellness," Leal said, because the community was hit hard by COVID-19. Many students lost relatives and experienced severe trauma, so the district hired more school counselors and psychologists.

Families also suffered extreme financial burdens, so that has been another area of focus. Homelessness and housing insecurity worsened, and the district has entered partnerships with organizations such as food banks and housing agencies to provide greater assistance.

But the government aid will dry up in a few years, and at that point many districts could face a harsh future of stingier budgets and uncertain outlooks.

As public schools struggle with the seismic changes wrought by long-term forces, as well as the shock of the pandemic, it's important to remember that the issues they face are far more than a numbers game.

Even before COVID, education was in a bad state. In virtually every way imaginable — reading and math levels, the teacher brain drain, outdated teaching methods, the list goes on — we have been failing. Now the threat of funding cutbacks, which would disproportionately impact the students most in need, could set us back even further.

Short-term patchwork won't cut it. Big changes to public education, starting with the way we fund schools, are necessary. We know this. The most salient question that remains unanswered is whether we have the will to do something about it.

PATRICE APODACA is a former Los Angeles Times staff writer and is coauthor of "A Boy Named Courage: A Surgeon's Memoir of Apartheid." She lives in Newport Beach.

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SUSHI

Continued from page A1

Read on to find the best sushi meals without getting into deep sushi debt.

MOST AFFORDABLE OMAKASE

Kaigen, 1736 N. Tustin St., Orange

When you say “omakase” at a sushi bar, it gives your itamae (sushi chef) a blank check to give you a multi-course sushi meal with the best he has to offer. The average rate at Sushi Noguchi in Yorba Linda — one of the best places for “omakase” — is \$70 to \$150 per person, a reasonable rate considering the chef’s skills, the quality of the fish and the quantity of food. Nobu in Newport Beach charges between \$150 to \$200 per person. At Ootoro in Irvine, omakase will set you back \$300 to \$500 per person.

By comparison, Kaigen’s \$39 sushi omakase — for a nine-piece nigiri, one hand-roll, a bowl of miso soup and salad — is an anomaly. Not only is it on the lower end of the price spectrum for omakase in today’s inflationary times, it would’ve been considered cheap 10 years ago.

Kaigen’s chefs slice good quality fish. But just as important is the rice, which is prepared perfectly — not mushy, not dry — exactly the right consistency. It doesn’t fall apart on your chopsticks yet melts in your mouth.

As with all omakase, what you will be served will vary from visit to visit, but there will likely be thick cuts of scallops sprinkled with black pepper and the coveted piece of fatty tuna belly called toro. All pieces will be dolloped with a topping or dosed with a sinus-clearing amount of wasabi.

To get the most of Kaigen’s omakase, it is best to sit at the sushi bar in front of a chef, not at the tables. Not only will the nigiri come out at a prescribed pace, prolonging the enjoyment, there is a better chance that your



Photos by Edwin Goei

AN EMPTY BAR is the norm at Eat’s Sushi in Costa Mesa. The eatery has some of the best bargains on sushi in Orange County, writes restaurant critic Edwin Goei.

itamae might slip in an extra piece at no additional charge.

Even though it opened in 2016, Kaigen is presently enjoying a boost in popularity on Instagram where its \$39 omakase price caught the attention of local influencers who descend upon this strip-mall eatery to document it on their own social media feeds. It still, however, exists in relative obscurity; waits longer than 15 minutes are uncommon.

MOST AFFORDABLE FOR ORDERING FROM THE MENU

Eat’s Sushi, 1175 Baker St. E25, Costa Mesa

Though Eat’s Sushi has a bar counter, no one sits there. This isn’t the kind of sushi joint where you can toast a cup of warm sake or build a rapport with your sushi chefs. Instead, you will be seated at a table or booth, surveying the picture menu and then marking your order on a sheet of paper.

What you see pictured in the photographs is what you get on your plate. There are no surprises here — except for the prices, which are at bargain rates.

Since it opened late last

year, Eat’s Sushi is out to build customer loyalty. The service is obsequious, but the prices are quite possibly the most affordable in O.C. for a non-conveyor belt sushi restaurant. A four-piece California roll currently stands at under \$5. Other four-piece rolls range from \$5.75 to \$7. An amazing four-piece jumbo scallop sashimi plate with truffle oil and yuzu is offered at \$8. But the real deals lie in their nigiri, which starts at \$1.75 a piece for morsels that fetch higher costs at comparable restaurants.

The madai is topped with a pinch of yuzukosho (a paste made from yuzu and chilies); the unagi is burnt with a caramelized edge; and the bay scallops are creamy. A Yelp check-in even entitles you to a free can of soda.

Don’t ignore the cooked foods, though. The tempura and fried soft-shell crab are rushed to your table crispy, hot and greaseless. If you order a salmon skin salad, you get a big bowl of greens with crunchy pickled carrots, cucumbers and shards of salmon skin that affirm it’s the best crouton ever invented.

Salmon collar — the



SALMON SKIN salad at Eat’s Sushi in Costa Mesa.

boomerang-shaped piece from near the gills with meat as soft as whipped cream — is broiled delicately and served with a ponzu sauce amped up with chili.

Twenty-five dollars per person is all you need to budget to have a filling meal here. But be warned: With the prices and the dizzying selection of Japanese dishes (Eat’s Sushi even offers ramen and udon), it is far too easy to overorder.

MOST AFFORDABLE REVOLVING SUSHI

Kaisen, 3855 S. Bristol St., Santa Ana
Many conveyor belt sushi



THE CONVEYOR belt delivers affordable sushi options at Kaisen in Santa Ana, but customers are encouraged to also check out the restaurant’s order sheet.

restaurants have come and gone in Orange County over the past decade. But after more than 15 years, Kaisen still brings in its loyalists who might remember that once upon a time, its cheapest plate cost 99 cents. Though those days are gone, the lowest priced nigiri plate is still \$1.25 while its higher tiers tick at \$4.50. This may explain Kaisen’s longevity and enduring appeal: the value.

If you’re still unfamiliar with the concept of conveyor belt sushi: Picture sitting in front of a miniature baggage carousel while plates of sushi ride by in plastic domes. You see something you like, you take it. And at the end, a server comes by to tally up your stacks of color-coded empty plates to get your total.

All told, since each nigiri plate comes with two pieces, you can feast on potentially 24 pieces of sushi after having only spent \$15. For comparison, at Kura in Irvine — arguably the most popular conveyor belt sushi in O.C. at present — all plates are \$3.35, more

than double Kaisen’s price for its lowest tier.

And though Kaisen isn’t as popular as Kura, where the wait can exceed three hours, there’s always a constant flow of diners to ensure turnover of the stock.

You should not, however, limit yourself to what’s pre-prepared for the conveyor belt. Pick up an order sheet, scribble your table number on top, and order the live oysters, the salmon skin hand-roll and the scallop nigiri.

If there’s anything that’s changed over the years (other than the plastic sheets that now separate the booths and the sushi chefs), it’s that the conveyor belt offerings tend to lean on salmon and California-roll-based pieces. You may never see the delicate anago nigiri or fish roe sushi unless you request it explicitly from the order sheet. Though it turns the experience to that of a non-belt sushi restaurant, you still pay the rock-bottom prices.

EDWIN GOEI is a contributor to Times Community News.

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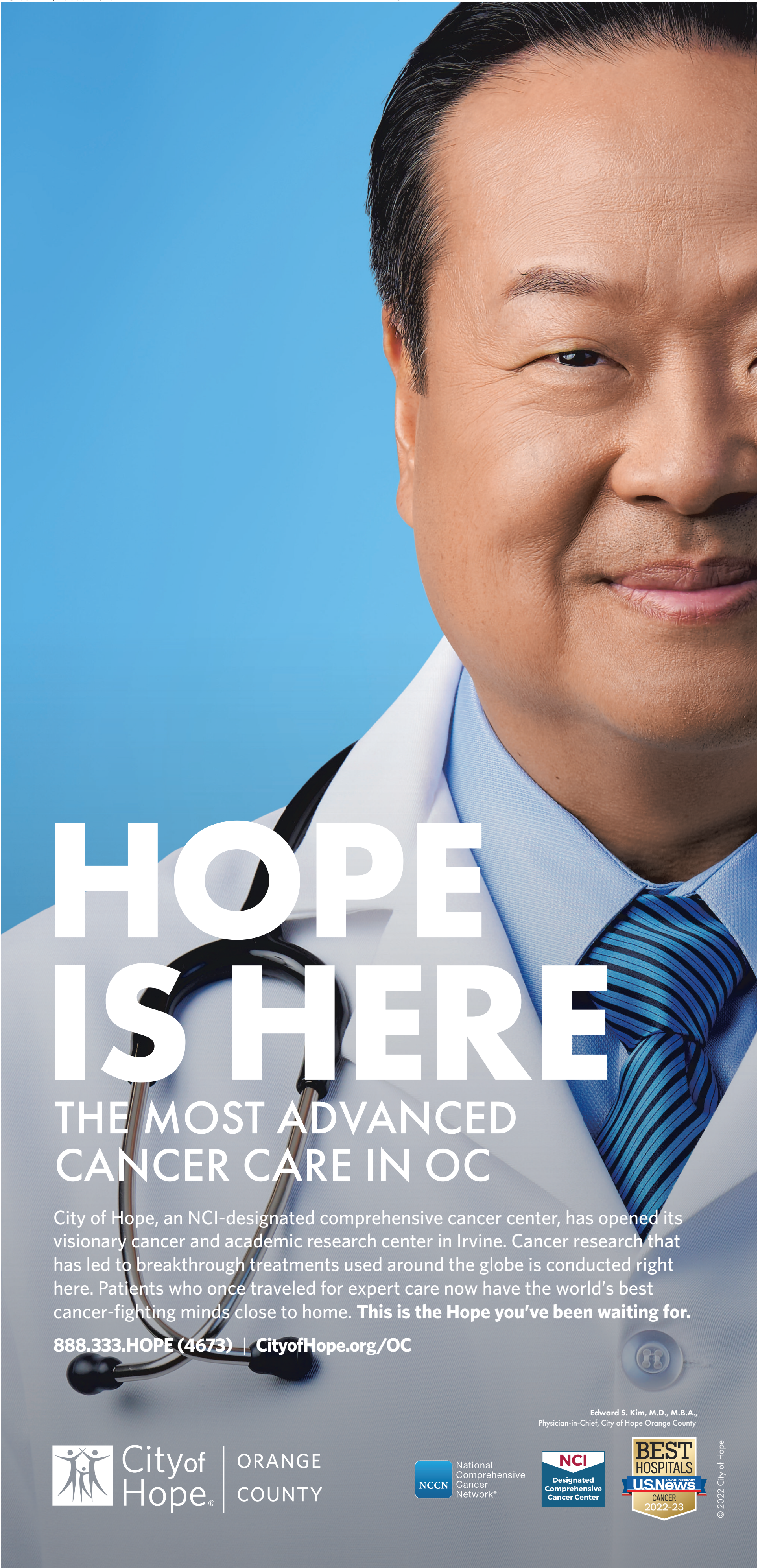
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