

## A stable pastime in south O.C.



**ABOVE:** A horse's name tag hangs from a stall at the Ortega Equestrian Center stables in San Juan Capistrano on Wednesday.

**RIGHT:** Riders at the Ortega Equestrian Center ride on a dusty trail nearby.

**FAR RIGHT:** Taylor Stopnik removes the shoe of a horse named Doc after a ride.

*Photos by Don Leach  
Staff Photographer*



## Homes coming to San Juan Capistrano hillside as equestrian center stalls

BY MEGHANN M. CUNIFF

Nearly 25 years in the making, the development plans for one of south Orange County's few undeveloped hillsides remain lofty.

The homes, shopping and office buildings are somewhat standard fare, but San Juan Capistrano residents were presented with a particularly enticing amenity when they approved the plan in 2011: A 41-acre equestrian center fit for 500 horses, with trails, RV parking and plenty of opportunities for community gatherings.

But with the 10-year anniversary of the referendum vote on the Distrito La Novia-San Juan Meadows project approaching, nothing's been built, and the town is grappling with the prospect that the homage to its equestrian culture is still wracked with uncertainty.

"It would really be a tragedy to see the equestrian aspect of this property not happen," said San Juan Capistrano Planning Commission Chairman Harrison Taylor during a meeting Tuesday.

Commissioners are recommending the City Council impose a fee if the equestrian center isn't approved.

Developer Robb Cerruti, principal at Advanced Real Estate Services, told TimesOC he's committed to the stables.

"It's always been our intent to put an equestrian center up there," said Cerruti, who lives in San Juan Capistrano. "Obviously we've got a lot of work to do in meeting the requirements of the various agencies."

The would-be location of the horse stables presents the most pressing problem: It's an old landfill at the base of the popular Patriots Hill hiking area, east of the 5 Freeway, and it's regulated by the San Diego Water Quality Control Board.

Geologists analyzed multiple versions of the plans before developers removed the equestrian center and focused only on plans for the landfill closure and maintenance. The board authorized that in December 2016, and now Cerruti hopes to begin constructing the homes by the end of the year. His company already crushed vegetation "prior to the nest-



*Don Leach  
Staff Photographer*

**ABOVE:** A view of the foothills looking south from Paseo Placentia toward the Patriots Hill hiking area in San Juan Capistrano.

**LEFT:** Approved by San Juan Capistrano voters in 2011, the 154-acre Distrito La Novia-San Juan Meadows development is to include 94 homes, 130 apartments, office and retail space as well as a 500-horse equestrian center. Developers are ready to build the homes but have not yet won approval of the equestrian center from the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board.

*Courtesy of Advanced  
Realty Services, Inc.*



See **San Juan**, page R5

## Vaccine mandate for O.C. students opposed

The Board of Education votes 4-1 against it, while some compare the idea of vaccine passports to practices of the Nazis.

BY BEN BRAZIL

As Orange County wrestles with vaccine hesitancy, the county's Board of Education on Wednesday night approved a statement against mandatory vaccinations and a resolution against digital vaccine passports.

The board voted 4-1 in favor of each, with the only dissenting vote coming from board member Rebecca Gomez, who serves Fountain Valley, Santa Ana, portions of Garden Grove and portions of Tustin.

"The Board stands side-by-side with Orange County residents against mandatory vaccinations, particularly of school-age children," the board's statement reads.

"The Board has repeatedly proven itself to be a strong supporter of parental rights and vehemently condemns and opposes any effort to curtail parents' authority to make the best choices for their children. Schools are for inculcating facts and knowledge, and not advancing vaccination mandates for children who are at

**"What the O.C. Board of Education is doing is making a statement that they won't allow involuntary vaccination of Orange County children, but nobody's saying that that's going to happen."**

— **Andrew Noymer**  
UC Irvine professor

very little risk of the COVID-19 pathogen. The Board is grateful to our constituents for coming out to our meeting, sharing your voices and participating in our great American democratic experiment. And most of all, thank you for advocating for your children and their future."

Board member Ken Williams read a portion of the resolution against vaccine passports aloud during the meeting.

"Therefore the Orange County Board of Education declares its opposition to vaccine or health digital passports, mandatory COVID-19 vaccinations or any future legal use of digital documentation of health records," Williams read.

Recently, county Board of Supervisors' meetings have been overtaken by dozens of members of the public who have railed against vaccine passports. Many have compared the idea of a pass-

See **Vaccine**, page R6



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# Santa Ana could soon start to clear homeless encampment outside Mexican cultural center

BY BEN BRAZIL

After clashing with the city of Santa Ana for months, a Mexican cultural center agreed in March to work with the city to clear a homeless encampment in its parking lots that has grown since the beginning of the pandemic.

That partnership has dissolved, and the city has attained an abatement warrant to clear the encampment.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, homeless people have been living in El Centro Cultural de México's lots. The numbers steadily grew to an encampment of about 40 at any given time.

El Centro, which is a linchpin for the local Latino community, faced pressure from the city for months to clear the encampment, including being fined about \$1,800 for not keeping the area clean.

But El Centro continued to allow homeless people to live in the lots despite pressure from the city, contending that individuals without housing should not be criminalized.

The center and city came to an agreement in mid-March after the city sent El Centro a proposed plan to clear out the homeless encampment within 45 days.

The city agreed to work with El Centro to connect homeless people with services and waive the fines. Ben Vazquez, a long-time volunteer and board member with El Centro, said at the time that the cultural center largely agreed to the terms because of the city's threat of the abatement warrant.

The 45-day deadline ended on April 30.

Vazquez said this week that there were still about 20 homeless people living in the parking lots. He said El Centro sent a request

for an extension to the city.

Santa Ana city spokesman Paul Eakins said the city has not granted the extension request and considers El Centro to be in breach of the agreement. On Tuesday, the city obtained an abatement warrant to clear the property.

"No extension has been granted, and we consider El Centro to be in breach of the settlement agreement," Eakins said.

It's unclear what the clearing of the encampment could look like, and Eakins would not discuss when or how the city would serve the warrant.

Eakins said that the majority of the homeless people at the encampment declined offers for shelter, but El Centro contends that the city hasn't had available shelter beds for those they are trying to connect with services.

Vazquez said the city closed one of its homeless shelters, the Link, making it more difficult for El Centro to connect the homeless with services.

El Centro has been working with various nonprofits, including Wound Walk and Brooke Weitzman of the Elder Law and Disability Rights Center in Santa Ana.

"They really gave us no place to place people," Vazquez said of the city.

Vazquez said he hoped that the city would grant the extension and reopen the Link so the homeless staying at the encampment could have access to those beds.

Eakins said the Link closed last week because it was considered to be a temporary shelter and is supposed to be replaced by the city's Carnegie Avenue shelter, which hasn't yet opened. The homeless people who were housed at the Link were relocated to the Illumination Foundation's shelter in Fullerton.



Photos by Raul Roa | Staff Photographer

ONE OF ABOUT 40 people who had been living on a parking lot at El Centro Cultural de México in February.

Eakins said the only physical homeless shelter in the city right now is the Yale shelter, but there are beds available for Santa Ana residents at the Fullerton shelter.

Paul Leon, chief executive of Illumination Foundation, said all 51 people who were at the Link were transferred to the Fullerton shelter, which has a capacity of 150. He said there are about 45 more beds open for Santa Ana homeless people.

"People wanting help in Santa Ana is not the same as agreeing to be shipped from city to city like property any time their mere existence is inconvenient," said Weitzman, who represents homeless people.

The closure of the Link came just a few months after the county shut down its only walk-in homeless shelter, the Courtyard, in downtown Santa Ana.

Weitzman said the Courtyard was supposed to be replaced by the county's new Yale shelter, but due to COVID-19 distancing guidelines, the new shelter has fewer available beds.

Weitzman said many of the homeless people at the encampment were hoping to be admitted to the Yale shelter or the Link.

"The only walk-in shel-

ter closed, the only place you could walk up to the front door and say I need help today," Weitzman said. "There is no longer a shelter in Orange County where, if you don't have a phone or a caseworker, you can walk in. Now you have to go find a police officer or case worker and convince them to give you a referral for a shelter bed. So the limit on access went away when that last walk-in shelter closed."

Eakins said the city, as part of the agreement, provided four portable restrooms, a wash station and two outreach events to El Centro to connect the homeless with services.

Eakins said about 17 people were brought to a shelter after the outreach events. Vazquez said El Centro didn't keep count of how many people it connected with services.

During the outreach events, the city partnered with several health and social service organizations to provide COVID-19 testing and vaccines, social services, medical care, legal assistance and other aid, Eakins said.

"The city of Santa Ana has worked closely with El Centro Cultural de México to find a compassionate solution to address the unpermitted homeless en-



VICTORIYAH EWING, 22, of Santa Ana was living on a parking lot at El Centro Cultural de México in late February.

campment at the organization's property that has negatively impacted the surrounding neighborhood and become a public health and safety concern," Eakins said.

In a Voice of OC opinion article posted Tuesday, Councilman Phil Bacerra said El Centro has hurt the community by not attempting to partner with the city sooner to get homeless people connected to services.

He specifically called attention to residents of the nearby Willard neighborhood who have been contacting the city with complaints about the conditions of the homeless encampment.

"The current conditions at El Centro's site, such as open defecation and used drug needles scattered

about, are creating a danger to public health for the families and children of the surrounding Willard neighborhood as well as the Civic Center employees who use the parking structure across the alley from the El Centro site," Bacerra wrote.

"What El Centro has done on their site to the schools and residents of the Willard neighborhood should never be tolerated on any private property in Santa Ana. El Centro should stick to their stated mission of promoting an understanding and awareness of the Mexican culture, because by allowing the homeless encampment to continue to exist on their site, El Centro continues to fail the com-

See **Homeless**, page R4

## After retiring its 'racist' mascot, Saddleback College seeks public's help in choosing a new symbol

BY BEN BRAZIL

After getting rid of its former mascot for being "racist," Saddleback College is asking for the public's help in deciding its new school symbol.

The college's original mascot, the Gaucho, was the subject of controversy for years. Many took umbrage with the mascot's depiction of an angry Mexican man riding a horse. A gaucho is an Argentinian cowboy.

The mascot had long drawn comparisons with the Frito Bandito, considered one of the more racist brand logos and retired by Frito Lay in 1971.

Saddleback President Elliot Stern made the decision earlier this year to retire the Gaucho mascot following a petition signed by hundreds of people, several community forums and recommendations from the school's three governing bodies.

"It became our college's Confederate flag," Stern said of the Gaucho.

Since that decision, the college's Mascot Workgroup narrowed down more than 330 proposed mascots to three finalists

— Bobcats, Mountain Lions and Rattlers — after hosting four public forums where attendees discussed the pros and cons of each option and took a survey from the community.

To cut down the list of potential replacements, the work group used a specific criteria, including that the mascot must be unifying and representative of the Saddleback College experience and history. The mascot must also work equally for both men's and women's sports teams, the work group determined.

The public can submit a vote through May 11. The new mascot will be revealed before the end of the semester.

Saddleback College listed three main reasons why officials decided to get rid of the Gaucho — the mascot was a cultural appropriation that dishonored a part of South American culture, the mascot design relied on stereotypes, and the Gaucho was representative of an all-male culture and excluded women at the school.

The college has been under fire for its mascot

**"It became our college's Confederate flag."**

— Elliot Stern  
Saddleback president

for at least a decade. But the movement intensified last year amid nationwide protests against racism and police brutality.

A faculty-led group, Retire the Gaucho, played a substantial role in spreading the message on campus and getting people involved in the movement.

The group collected more than 200 signatures on a petition in favor of scrapping the mascot.

The group held that the mascot played into a stereotype of Latino men that has been perpetuated in movies and other forms of entertainment in the U.S. The group also contended that the use of the Gaucho was a form of cultural appropriation.

About 30% of the Saddleback College community is Latino.

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# California State Guard activates O.C.-based unit for disaster response

BY DANIEL LANGHORNE

The California State Guard is standing-up two volunteer units exclusively tasked with responding to natural disasters and civil unrest, following the busiest year for state service members since the Korean War.

A 200-member contingent called Team Shield will train and muster as a security force at Joint Forces Training Base Los Alamitos. During wildfires and civil unrest they could be deployed throughout the state to assist police agencies with traffic control and manning checkpoints.

By June, another 150 volunteers with Team Blaze will make up a firefighting task force that trains alongside Cal Fire to staff hand crews. These firefighting ranks are slated to grow to 300 by next year.

Maj. Gen. Jay Coggan, commanding general of the California State Guard, said he envisions the teams as a

“release valve” for a California National Guard that has been increasingly tapped for state missions while also training for combat deployments.

“There’s no indication that this is going to subside, especially in the natural disaster area,” Coggan said. “I think this is what we have and will have for a long time.”

The State Guard’s activation of the two-team Emergency Response Command on Feb. 20 was largely prompted by the increasing severity and number of the state’s wildfires, Coggan said.

These citizen soldiers will be led by career public servants: Capt. Christopher Merlo, who is employed as a Los Angeles police lieutenant, and 2nd Lt. Mathew Epstein, who serves as fire chief at the Dry Creek Rancheria Fire Department.

Following a major earthquake, for example, Team Shield would muster at Los

Alamitos to be armed and coordinated before moved by truck, helicopter or plane to hard hit areas.

Upon arriving they’d augment police officers, deputy sheriffs and the California Highway Patrol. They would not be tasked with patrolling neighborhoods or making arrests, Coggan said, and all members would be state certified on their firearms before hitting the streets.

The State Guard, which has roots going back to 1941, has seen interest from military veterans, retired law enforcement and Californians who never served in uniform. This reserve status would allow them to wear California military fatigues without ever having to leave the state, Coggan said.

While the Orange County Fire Authority has not requested National Guard assistance on wildfires in the last 10 years, Team Blaze’s formation was welcomed



California State Guard photos by Staff Sgt. Bernadette Ramirez

**CALIFORNIA STATE GUARD** Cpl. Nestor Ayson and his partner check a driver’s identification while the state guard’s Emergency Response Command trains to operate a traffic control post April 24 at Joint Forces Training Base, Los Alamitos.

by the county’s top fire chief.

“We are pleased the state is taking measures to address the current shortfall in hand crew firefighters through an innovative program such as California State Guard’s Team Blaze,” Orange County Fire Authority Chief Brian Fennessy said in a prepared statement.

“Nearly 10,000 wildfires burned more than 4.2 million acres in 2020 — making it the largest wildfire season

in California. All predictions point to another tough wildfire season ahead, and we welcome these valuable resources.”

The number of available prison inmate hand crews available to Cal Fire in early April was a little more than a third of the total seen three years ago, a department spokesperson said. The dearth in manpower is partly due to changes in state law that shifted custody of many inmates eligible for fire service to the county jail systems.

Although Team Blaze will be based in Northern California, members will regularly visit Los Alamitos to train with Team Shield. Commanders anticipate about 70% of the members from both contingents will be Southern California residents.

Orange County calls for state assistance, commanders said.

“Whether or not you need us today, don’t be so convinced that you’ll never need us,” Coggan said.

During the pandemic, Orange County requested the National Guard’s assistance with food distribution to seniors and staffing food banks. County officials also trained with the Guard a few years ago on how to set up and run an emergency supplies point of distribution at Orange County Great Park.

Amid all of these humanitarian missions, soldiers with the California National Guard’s 40th Combat Aviation Brigade were training in April on UH-60 Blackhawk and CH-47 Chinook helicopters at Fort Hood, Texas, ahead of a deployment to the Middle East.

The State Guard’s expansion is aimed in part in preventing soldiers from burning out as federal and state missions bump into each other.

“The men and women of the National Guard are tired and beat up, and the State Guard are here to help relieve them,” Coggan said. “The reality is if our people are capable of making their lives easier we’re absolutely here.”

**DANIEL LANGHORNE** is a contributor to TimesOC.



MEMBERS OF THE California State Guard’s Emergency Response Command practice operating a traffic control post.

## Rossmoor self-guided garden tour and marketplace returns May 16

The Rossmoor Spring Garden Tour and Outdoor Marketplace returns May 16.

Hours for the event are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Masks and social distancing will be required.

The self-guided tour will showcase landscaping, pools, outdoor kitchens and other design elements in five private yards in Rossmoor, an unincorporated enclave between Seal Beach and Los Alamitos. The event is sponsored by the Rossmoor Woman’s Club.

A marketplace will offer plants and outdoor decor, other wares and refreshments.

Tickets may be purchased in advance for \$15 from any Rossmoor Woman’s Club member.

Tickets will also be sold the day of the tour at the Outdoor Marketplace set up in the parking lot behind Farmers & Merchants Bank in the Shops at Rossmoor, 12535 Seal Beach Blvd., Seal Beach.

A third option is to purchase tickets in advance



**ROSSMOOR’S ANNUAL** Spring Garden Tour and Outdoor Marketplace is back on May 16 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Photo courtesy Rossmoor Woman’s Club

online at [rossmoorwomansclub.com](http://rossmoorwomansclub.com) and pick them up the day of the tour at the Outdoor Marketplace.

This option costs \$16 per ticket, which includes a \$1 handling fee. The tickets include the addresses of homes on the tour and a map.

— From staff reports

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## HOMELESS

Continued from page R2

munity.”

At a Santa Ana City Council meeting on Tuesday night, council members and supporters of El Centro voiced their opinions on the encampment issue.

Several people spoke out in favor of El Centro and a few took aim at Baccerra’s opinion piece.

Hairo Cortes, executive director of Chispa — an immigrant rights organization in Santa Ana, said he hoped that the city would continue to work with El Centro. He also addressed Baccerra’s post.

“It was a very foolish op-ed,” Cortes said.

Resident Tim Rush was critical of El Centro.

“It is astonishing to me that these folks who are calling in and wanting to advocate for El Centro never for a moment stop to make any accommodation for the folks who live in that neighborhood,” Rush said, adding that he regularly sees the “mess” outside El Centro.

At the request of Councilman Johnathan Hernandez, the council discussed whether the city could



Raul Roa | Staff Photographer

**ABOUT 40 PEOPLE** lived on lots at El Centro Cultural de México in Santa Ana when this photograph was taken on Feb. 24. The city is planning on clearing the encampments and relocating the homeless people who remain.

look into utilizing Project Roomkey to help with the El Centro encampment.

Project Roomkey is a statewide program started during the pandemic that places homeless Californians in hotel rooms. The program, which was used by Orange County, was called overly restrictive by some local homeless advocates.

City Manager Kristine Ridge said at the meeting that the city can use Project Roomkey if it comes across an individual who qualifies for the program.

“I know some of us are

on the opposite sides of the spectrum when it comes to this particular encampment, but if there’s one thing that we can all come to terms with, it’s that nobody by any circumstance should be living on the street,” Hernandez said.

“It’s a very harsh reality, and I want to see these folks get the supportive services that they deserve, rather than just going in and clearing out this encampment.”

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# Artist Jaana Baker talks about motherhood, her culture in first solo show

BY VERA CASTANEDA

After giving birth to her daughter, artist Jaana Baker felt an urgency to paint.

She had dropped out of Cal State Fullerton's art program years prior and decided to return. Becoming a mother made Baker reevaluate her upbringing, identity and her voice.

"I always wanted to have my voice be heard, but I just didn't know how to do it," Baker said via Zoom from her home studio in La Mirada.

"I became much more of an open and emotional person. Before I had my daughter, I was kind of hardened and I was internalizing a lot of things. For

## IF YOU GO

**What:** "Made in California" and "Poppies and Sampaguitas"  
**Where:** Brea Gallery, 1 Civic Center Circle, Brea, and in a virtual gallery  
**When:** April 24 to June 18, Wednesday to Sunday, noon to 5 p.m.  
**Cost:** General admission, \$3; seniors, military and students, \$2; free for Brea residents and children under 12  
**Info:** (714) 990-7731 or [brea-gallery.squarespace.com](http://brea-gallery.squarespace.com)

some reason after having her, I felt a lot more open to make work about myself and my experiences."

The now 37-year-old graduated with an art degree last fall and two weeks ago opened her first solo exhibit at City of Brea Art

Gallery called "Poppies and Sampaguitas."

The gallery puts out a yearly call for its "Made in California" juried exhibit and for the last five years has also chosen an artist to

See **Artist**, page R6



Courtesy Brea Art Gallery

**AN INSTALLATION VIEW** of Jaana Baker's holographic dress from the series "Poppies and Sampaguitas" at the Brea Art Gallery on April 27. The exhibit can be viewed through June 18.

# O.C. Center for Contemporary Art features exhibit about healing

Following a closure due to the pandemic, Orange County Center for Contemporary Art has reopened with an exhibit featuring works about healing by Andrea Moni and Yuri Boyko called "Collaborate, Create and Heal."

In 2015, Moni dealt with the aftermath of a serious burn accident. Inspired by the people who helped her during her recovery, she created a collaborative way of working with other survivors of trauma.

Moni sets up a temporary studio near an ocean shore where she and a participant



Photos courtesy of OCCCA

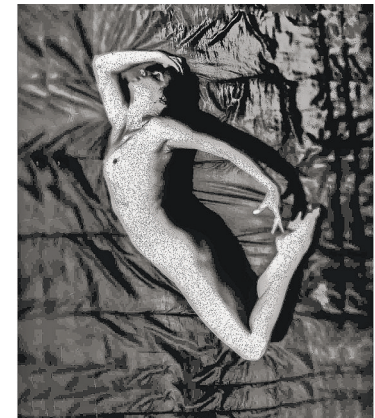
**"HAVE NO SHAME,"** by Andrea Moni is featured in OCCCA's "Collaborate, Create and Heal" exhibit.

## IF YOU GO

**What:** "Collaborate, Create and Heal"  
**Where:** Orange County Center for Contemporary Art, 117 N. Sycamore St., Santa Ana  
**When:** May 1 through 29  
**Cost:** Free  
**Info:** (714) 667-1517, [occca.org](http://occca.org)

paint on a large canvas using natural earth pigments and the motions of waves. The process is meant to be a healing ritual with a message of collaboration and letting go. The canvas created together then becomes the background for a finished piece that is hung like tapestry instead of stretched or framed.

Boyko's black-and-white photographs depict nude figures leaping and jumping. The artist, who was born and raised in Ukraine, focuses on the deconstruction of identity, exploring



states of loss and triumph, pain and pleasure. He has said his goal as an artist is to reveal subconscious and concealed qualities of identity by employing light and color intertwined with symbols and metaphors. The "Collaborate, Create and Heal" includes work

**THE EXHIBIT** includes "Transience IX," 2015, by Yuri Boyko.

## SAN JUAN

Continued from page R1

ing bird season" and donated \$600,000 to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Cerruti said in a letter to San Juan Capistrano City Hall staff.

Planning commissioners on Tuesday gave Cerruti another three years to finish the project. Cerruti said he'll again try to win approval of the equestrian center from the water board, but he wants to start building the homes first.

Commissioners on Tuesday voted to recommend the City Council impose a fee if the equestrian center isn't approved.

Commission Vice Chairwoman Tami Wilhelm, who suggested the fee, said the equestrian community "is dying a death of a thousand cuts."

"I support that community wholeheartedly and feel we need to do everything humanly possible to protect and preserve it. But we can't always extract it out of our developers," Wilhelm said.

The uncertainty comes at a sensitive time for equestrian-related projects in San Juan Capistrano. The town known for its Swallows Day parade and 245-year-old Mission has long promoted itself as a last bastion for cowboy culture in Southern California, but local equestrians fear their community is increasingly under threat.

A federal lawsuit from Orange County Coast-

keeper led to environmental restrictions and forced improvements at the Rancho Mission Viejo Riding Park, and two horse stables are on the market and at risk of being converted to other uses, including the largest, Sycamore Trails Stables, which has 450 horses, said Julie Ryan Johnson, founder of the San Juan Capistrano Equestrian Coalition.

"There are potentially over 500 horses that are going to need to find homes, if not more," Johnson told TimesOC.

The coalition currently is raising \$10,000 to give to a local project that relates to horses and equestrian heritage. Meanwhile, another volunteer group, the Open Space Foundation, is revitalizing to focus on promoting the city's equestrian history and its economic benefits while encouraging its preservation.

"It's time for us to reach out to the rest of the community and explain why horses are part of our heritage and why they're important to save," Johnson said. "Even if you don't ride a horse, the fact that you can watch horses ride over to the golf course is kind of cool."

She's hopeful for Cerruti's equestrian center plans but acknowledges, "He's been put through the ringer."

"We hope it still is a good business proposition for him," Johnson said. "But he understands there's a huge need. He gets it."

Cerruti's company

from his "Desideratum," "Transience" and "Salve" series.

OCCCA held a socially distanced reception for the show on May 1 and is open on Fridays and Saturdays or by appointment from 1 to 4 p.m.

— From staff reports

# O.C. restaurant ADYA to hold weeklong fundraiser for COVID-19 relief in India

Chefs at the Indian restaurant ADYA and partners Shachi Mehra and Sandeep Basrur are donating all sales from Monday through May 16 to the American India Foundation.

India, the second most populous nation, is facing one of the worst coronavirus outbreaks in the world. Overcrowded health facilities are turning away sickened patients, some government-run hospitals are reporting oxygen shortages and furnaces in some crematories have begun to melt due to high use.

"There's a feeling of helplessness when we receive updates from our families in India and see the devastation throughout India from news reports and social media," said Mehra in a statement.

"There's no denying that the past year was rough for ADYA, but nothing comes close to the devastation happening in India right



Courtesy of ADYA

**ADYA CHEFS** Shachi Mehra and Sandeep Basrur will donate 100% of restaurant sales from Monday to May 16 to the American India Foundation.

now." Last year, the American India Foundation reached more than 500,000 people with protective gear and nearly 900,000 individuals with prepared meals and ration kits. Now, it is focusing on sending medical oxygen to India as well as working with the government and hospitals to understand the needs of those living in cities to rural villages.

## IF YOU GO

**What:** ADYA India relief effort  
**Where:** 4213 Campus Drive, Irvine and 440 S. Anaheim Blvd. #201  
**When:** Monday through May 16  
**Cost:** Dishes vary from \$1.99 to \$14.99  
**Info:** [adyaoc.com](http://adyaoc.com)

The chefs are also encouraging members of the public who aren't able to purchase meals to spread awareness about the restaurant's fundraising efforts or the foundation's donation page.

ADYA is open for dine-in or carryout meals. The menu, which varies per locations in Anaheim and Irvine, includes Indian street foods, tandoori specialties, curries, imported alcoholic beverages and masala chai. — From staff reports

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VACCINE

Continued from page R1

port to practices of the Nazis, who murdered an estimated 6 million Jewish people during the Holocaust.

Some of the public wore yellow stars on their arms during the meetings, meant to symbolize the yellow stars of David that the Nazis forced Jewish people to wear during the Holocaust.

Many speakers have also mentioned that the county should not mandate vaccines for children or adults. O.C. Health Care Agency Director Clayton Chau has repeatedly said that children need parental consent to get a vaccine, and the county is not issuing a “vaccine passport.”

At the Board of Education meeting, several members of the public echoed the anti-passport sentiments shared at the Supervisor’s meetings.

“This idea of mandating vaccines is ridiculous to me because honestly this is medical freedom,” said a woman named Jenna — the board asks public speakers to only give a first name. “What’s happening is taking away the freedoms of parents and of all people to be able to decide whether they want to have a genetically modifying experimental drug put into their body or be cut out of society potentially. Because if we are going to be having vaccine passports, things that show whether you’re



Photo by BBP West

**A WOMAN RECEIVES** a COVID-19 vaccine shot in Anaheim.

vaccinated or not, logically let’s just think what’s going to happen ... I don’t need to become a genetically modified organism which is literally, literally, truthfully, what this will do to people, because this vaccine is an mRNA vaccine, it’s not really a vaccine like anything that’s ever happened before.”

A woman named Laurie said Chau’s presumed intent was “destructive” and “evil.”

“We should all refuse to be strong-armed into accepting the COVID passport on any experimental drug, especially this mRNA one,” she said. “This is in direct violation of Nuremberg trials and using every-one as guinea pigs.”

The Nuremberg Trials were military tribunals held after World War II to prosecute Nazis who took part in the Holocaust and committed war crimes.

Following public comments, Williams, who proposed the resolution and statement, said the board should be taking a leadership role against vaccine passports because the idea is “invasive” and “runs afoul of personal health data.”

“Once this concept gets going it’s like a wildfire, and it just continues to grow,” Williams said. “Unfortunately, right now, this digital passport is being promoted globally ... If we don’t stop and make it an issue and come out against it and

bring the public’s attention to it, they’re gonna require kids to have the digital vaccine passport.”

Gomez said schools already have the ability to look at a registry for immunizations in California.

“Schools and caregivers have the opportunity to look at whether or not a child has immunizations, it’s already in place, it’s been in place for a number of years,” Gomez said. “... I’m not sure what the point of this resolution is.”

She also said that the paper cards given to people when they are vaccinated could be difficult to keep track of.

“Those little yellow cards, I bet if we ask where those are for our children, half of us wouldn’t know,” Gomez said.

Gomez was the only board member wearing a mask during the meeting. She was also the only member with a plastic partition between herself and other members.

Four of the five members were present at the meeting. Member Lisa Sparks attended by phone.

The O.C. Board of Education doesn’t determine much of anything for Orange County schools. Board members, who are elected to four-year terms, approve charter schools and hear interdistrict transfer and expulsion appeals.

The board also approves the annual budget of the Orange County Department of Education, which is distinct from the board.

“Neither the O.C. Board of Education nor OCDE determines the curriculum of local districts,” said OCDE spokesman Ian Hanigan in an email.

“Locally elected school boards and their superintendents are responsible for implementing curriculum that aligns with state standards. Similarly, neither the O.C. Board of Ed nor OCDE would have a role in setting policy relating to vaccinations.”

The mostly right-wing board has stirred controversy, especially during the pandemic.

In July, the board sparked outrage when it voted to re-open schools in the fall without mandatory masks or increased social distancing. The vote came as COVID-19 cases surged and as a large contingent of anti-maskers emerged in Orange County.

Currently, the county is dealing with how to educate the public to combat vaccine hesitancy. For the most part, California’s recent success against the virus has been the public’s willingness to get vaccinated. Yet, some may still be hesitant for a number of reasons, some of which may be fueled by misinformation.

Andrew Noymer, a UC Irvine professor of population health and disease prevention, said the Board of Education is stirring the pot with its statement on vaccination mandates for children.

He said the board is rein-

forcing and echoing the beliefs of people who are hesitant to get a vaccine.

“What the O.C. Board of Education is doing is making a statement that they won’t allow involuntary vaccination of Orange County children, but nobody’s saying that that’s going to happen,” Noymer said.

“I agree with them that forcibly vaccinating anyone, let alone a child, would be an evil thing. They’re screaming loudly that they’re going to oppose this, but nobody’s actually proposing that it will happen.”

When it comes to the vaccine passport, Noymer said the analogies to the Nazis is over the top.

However, he is concerned that any vaccine passport needs to be handled with care because it will have sensitive medical information and can be a target for hackers.

“I think that eventually when we get around to occupational and educational requirements for vaccines for COVID, we will need a system in which vaccination status can be verified, perhaps in a way that’s better than just some paper stock card,” Noymer said.

“That being said, I think the digital vaccine passport needs to be implemented with enormous care and not kind of cobbled together overnight at the drop of a hat.”

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ARTIST

Continued from page R5

feature in a solo show to run concurrently with the exhibit.

In a 20-foot-by-12-foot room within the gallery, Baker’s body of work (chosen out of 157 applicants) is spread out into photography, painting, sculpture and textile design.

The pieces are a result of Baker’s unpacking of what it means to be a Filipino American woman that she started two years ago.

The crux of the show is one single dress glowing in

the corner of the room. It’s fashioned in the shape of a traditional Filipino dress called a terno and hand-constructed out of holographic, clear PVC material — a meshing of both tradition and modernity.

The dress was inspired by artist Wang Jin’s traditional Chinese robes made with industrial material featured in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art’s “The Allure of Matter: Material Art From China.”

In the photographs lining the wall, Baker wears the dress in front of iconic places in California speaking to her experience of be-

ing born in the Philippines and immigrating to Southern California as a child — La Habra’s In-N-Out, a taco truck and a 99 Cents Only store.

In another set of photos with Baker nearly nude, she contends with the pressures put on women’s bodies.

Wrapped in textile she made based on an indigenous tribe pattern, Baker photographs the trajectory she took to get in touch with Filipino culture.

“It felt like she was putting it all out there, quite literally, to explore a topic, and she didn’t have

an answer yet,” said Heather Bowling, Brea Art Gallery director and curator.

“We all use art as tools for exploration or to convey concepts or emotions and so she’s using this series as a way to try to find herself and continue to express her dual identities as one.”

Baker described cultural expectations and gender roles as painful.

“When I left home and got married, my relationship to my culture got better over time, especially after I had my daughter,” Baker said.

“I really wanted to have a

grounded sense of identity in my native culture. I wanted to be a catalyst or a conduit for that in case she wants to explore it.”

In the advent of the coronavirus pandemic, Asian American identity has been a household discussion.

Baker’s 7-year-old daughter saw a photo of someone holding a sign reading “Stop Asian Hate,” and she had to have a talk she thought she could put off until her child is at least age 10 — the time period Baker said she started to experience microaggressions and later (as a teen) fetishization.

Baker isn’t done with the series either. In the past year, she joined a Filipino folk dance group called Kayamanan Ng Lahi, who are performing on June 12 in lieu of an exhibit opening reception.

She’s also continuing to build other items out of the holographic material — a fan and a traditional Filipino men’s shirt.

“I was hiding myself from the beauty of my culture for a long time, and I’m just starting to find it,” Baker said.

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