



Photos by James Carbone

HIKERS ENJOY the panoramic view of the San Bernardino Mountains in the Saddleback Wilderness trail located in OC Parks' Irvine Ranch Open Space. The 3.3 miles of hiking, biking and equestrian trails, with views of the mountains, opened to the public on a limited basis on April 1.

Explore scenic trails at Saddleback Wilderness

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

Looking out over the Saddleback Wilderness, it can be hard to believe the space was once the site of America's first off-road motorsports park, known as Saddleback Park. Today, purple and yellow wildflowers dot the hillsides where lush green fields meet bright blue sky.

Located within OC Parks' Irvine Ranch Open Space near Silverado and held its grand opening to the public on April 1, the trail systems at Saddleback Wilderness are situated where Saddleback Park opened in 1967. The motorsports park closed in 1984, and the site has since been restored to its natural habitat, but some evidence of the past remains.

"This is unique opportunity to visit a historic motor-cross course," said OC Parks operations manager, John Gump. "Of course, that is not the intent of



See **Trails**, page A8 **HIKERS WALK** along the new Saddleback Wilderness trail located in OC Parks' Irvine Ranch Open Space.

Seal Beach resident shows off 'The Best of California'



Scott Smeltzer | Staff Photographer

PAT PATTISON, right, films a segment Wednesday for "The Best of California" at the Placentia home of Stanford Freese, who worked decades as a bandleader and talent booker for Disney.

BY SARA CARDINE

Having grown up in Newport Beach and Costa Mesa in the '50s and '60s, Pat Pattison fostered an early love of all things California and is bringing that love to bear in a nationally syndicated TV show.

Since January 2021, the Seal Beach resident has been producing segments for the weekly show "The Best of California with Pat Pattison," an on-air road trip through the Golden State.

Appearing in 40 markets, the 30-minute show airs Sundays at 6:30 p.m. on the NTD network, a digital tier 2 channel found on most television dials. Viewers can also see him on YouTube, Facebook and Instagram.

"What America is to the world — a place where people come to

make their dreams come true — California is to the country," he says of its focus. "It's the fifth biggest economy in the world. And it's an important story."

Pattison's hosting style might easily be compared to Huell Howser, who brought his Tennessee charm to a West Coast audience in the long-running PBS shows "California's Gold" and "Visiting with Huell Howser."

The Seal Beach resident, however, brings a different perspective, as a native Californian whose family roots in the state date back to the 1800s, when his forebears arrived seeking work and lived a rough-hewn existence.

Both his grandfathers worked

See **Resident**, page A5

Plate readers installed in C.M.

16 cameras have been installed in search of vehicles connected to suspected crimes. They run 24 hours a day.

BY ERIC LICAS

Cameras that photograph the license plates of passing cars and automatically alert law enforcement whenever one potentially tied to a crime is spotted have been going up in Costa Mesa since February and have already found several stolen vehicles.

The city signed a \$97,600 contract with the surveillance tech company Flock Safety in June. That price includes an initial fee of \$10,850 for the installation of 31 automated license plate readers, which cost about \$2,800 a year to operate.

As many as 16 had been installed and were up and running by February, Costa Mesa Police Spokeswoman Roxi Fyad said. Crews plan to have all of them set up around May. The plate readers operate 24 hours a day on solar power and can capture plate

See **Readers**, page A2

Survivor shares her COVID-19 recovery

Long road back from coronavirus battle gives Garden Grove resident Wynter Ho a "different outlook on life."

BY MATT SZABO

Two large, framed photographs of Marilyn Monroe hang in the back of Wynter Ho's beauty salon in Huntington Beach.

The images illustrate how important it is to Ho that her clients feel glamorous. She's starting to feel the same way again.

Ho was hospitalized at Fountain Valley Regional Hospital and briefly UC Irvine for more than six months, from July 2021 to January 2022, due to COVID-19.

See **Recovery**, page A2

ALSO FROM THE DAILY PILOT:



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

SECRET IDENTITIES REVEALED AS COSPLAYER COMMUNITY GATHERS AT ANAHEIM'S WONDERCON PAGE A3

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Laguna Beach school board reviews 10-year facilities master plan

BY ANDREW TURNER

The Laguna Beach Unified School District could have some big projects coming up.

The Laguna Beach board of education held a study session to review the district's 10-year facilities master plan, with the options presented including improvements to athletic facilities and district administrative offices.

Prominent in the discussion was a plan to put in an aquatics center for use by students and the community. The proposal would bring a new Olympic-sized pool (50 meters) and a 25-meter pool to Laguna Beach High.

A push for a second community pool has been heard around town, including at City Council meetings. Ahead of the study session presentation, several members of the diving, swimming and water polo communities spoke in support of the proposed aquatic center.

"Our kids deserve better," longtime Laguna Beach swim and water polo coach Ethan Damato told the board at the March 23 meeting. "The young kids shouldn't be practicing until 9 p.m. at night. Our athletes shouldn't have to travel to play home games. We should have a swim team that's going regularly. I could go on and on about the limitations that we have in our current pool, but when you look at communities that are just outside of our community and the facilities that they have, we are behind. I think our community deserves better and our athletes deserve better."

Like the Laguna Beach community pool, the district offices are on the other side of Park Avenue from the high school. A plan shown at the meeting provided for district and high school administrators to share office space on campus.

A parking structure was proposed where the district offices are located, and tennis courts would be placed at the top of the structure. To accommodate the Olympic-sized pool, the proposal indicated the tennis courts would have to be relocated. There would also be additional parking next

to the aquatics center. On-site parking would increase from 132 spaces to 254.

"It's extremely rare that a community project could check so many boxes for so many different groups of people," resident Steve Samuelian said. "We've heard from a lot of the aquatics community, but I think it's also important to note that by adding this 25-meter pool in here, it also checks boxes that the city has, and so that would be desirable."

"The parking facilities, obviously parking is always a problem in Laguna. This doubles the space of parking at the high school, so I'm hoping that neighbors will be relieved in some way for parking."

All together, improvements involving the high school, associated athletic facilities and district offices are estimated to have a base construction cost of \$88.3 million.

Board Clerk Kelly Osborne reminded the panel that renovation of the district office was not met with much enthusiasm when the plan came to the board in 2021. She embraced the idea of the pool being a "linchpin" for the facilities master plan.

"This is a facilities sub-committee that [Board] President [Jan] Vickers and I were on to identify where our facilities are not meeting the needs of our students," Osborne added. "As a board that's representing our district and our students, I think that's what we really have to prioritize first. We are trying to use every inch of available space to fit that 50-meter pool."

"The pool is coming up on its 30-year birthday. It was opened in 1994, and it's at the end of its life. I think we heard many comments about that. The pool does not meet the needs of the students anymore."

Some residents inquired about alternative locations for the district's plans. The district had expressed interest in a partnership with the city upon its acquisition of the former St. Catherine of Siena school site, which has now been recast as the Laguna Beach Community and Recreation Center.

"We also looked at the feasibility of using St. Catherine's," Jeff Dixon, Asst. Supt. of Business Services

for the district, said. "At the time, the sale had not been done with the city, and we just knew it could be a potential opportunity to explore, which we know has since changed."

The board directed district staff to conduct site-specific meetings to gather more public input, to explore options for financing the proposed projects, and to approach relevant city committees about potential joint-use interest. Additionally, the board asked staff to scale back the square footage of the proposed administrative offices.

A 790-square-foot gym expansion and a tech lab and maker space are among



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

THE LAGUNA BEACH High and community pool structure on Park Avenue.

the considerations for Thurston Middle School.

Addressing transitional kindergarten needs was among the priorities for El Morro and Top of the World elementary schools.

"This is a very preliminary start to this planning," Vickers said. "The facilities committee worked on this with the team of architects, and this is the first that the board has had this presen-

tation together — same for parents, same for students, same for community members."

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Models used for illustrative purposes.



THE LAGUNA BEACH Unified School District offices on Park Avenue in Laguna Beach.

READERS

Continued from page A1

numbers and photographs of multiple cars and trucks moving at freeway speeds simultaneously.

They are linked to databases shared by police in Huntington Beach, Irvine, Laguna Beach, Newport Beach and 45 other law enforcement departments in Orange, Los Angeles, Riverside and San Bernardino counties. The devices can immediately notify Costa Mesa police if a vehicle flagged by any of those agencies passes by.

"I am excited about using good technology to help our officers solve crimes, recover stolen vehicles and potentially rescue abducted children or save at-risk missing persons, including victims of human trafficking," Costa Mesa Police Chief Ron Lawrence said. "This important tool has already proven a huge asset to helping us solve serious crimes."

On March 6, one of the

city's recently installed plate readers spotted a stolen vehicle occupied by a suspect in a burglary that had just happened at a bicycle shop in Santa Ana, Fyad said. A pair of stolen e-bikes were also found and returned to the business.

That was just one of 10 stolen cars or trucks plate readers have helped police since they went online in February, Fyad said. Investigators suspect at least one was taken from a victim in Costa Mesa, while others were possibly related to thefts in Irvine, Hemet and various other locations in and out of Orange County.

Lawrence said the plate readers will "ultimately reduce crime over time." Proponents of the technology say it acts as a deterrent as well as an investigative tool. It can also help police keep tabs on potential suspects.

But advocates for privacy and mobility rights fear the growth of a broad, automated surveillance network running day and night could be used to track the movements of innocent

citizens. Numerous communities throughout Orange County have plate readers discreetly positioned on streetlights and signposts or mounted to vehicles patrolling the streets.

Flock and supporters of the use of license plate readers note that they do not come with facial recognition technology and cannot be used to identify the driver of a car or truck. The data they record in Costa Mesa will be retained for 30 days, per the terms of the city's arrangement with the company. Every search of the database is logged.

"The Costa Mesa Police Department is transparent about this program with information and policy on the use of ALPRs available on our website," Fyad said.

The 16 plate readers in Costa Mesa had recorded the plates of 1,179,600 vehicles over a 30-day period in March, according to data available on Flock's website.

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RECOVERY

Continued from page A1

At the time, she was not vaccinated.

It's been more than a year since her release, yet challenges have still presented themselves. She was wheelchair-bound for about four months, then she used a walker, then crutches. In January, she had surgery after suffering inflammation around her eyes, she said likely from long COVID.

But as of last week, she finished her final physical therapy session at St. Joseph Hospital rehabilitation center in Orange.

"I feel like that was a movie that I went through or something," said Ho, 28, who lives in Garden Grove. "I definitely have a different outlook on life now. I'm just so grateful now. Sometimes, I'm even stunned at how much I've improved and how much progress we've made. From little things like not eating to not talking to



Scott Smeltzer | Staff Photographer

WYNTER HO hugs Karly Kodzis, an intensive care nurse, at her shop "Wink By Wynter" in Huntington Beach.

now being able to have full conversations. Even just standing for a long time, I'm like, 'I'm really standing, and I'm talking too.'"

She's able to walk without restrictions now, and she said she's pain-free. The only physical reminder of her stay at Fountain Valley is a closed hole in her throat area, where a tracheostomy tube once sat

as Ho was hooked to a ventilator for months. She'll sometimes cover it with a bandage.

Ho's lash extension and nail salon, "Wink by Wynter," remains open for business. Her mother Katie Trinh and aunt helped keep it running while she was in the hospital.

It doubles as a sort of

See **Recovery**, page A3

Cosplayers' secret identities revealed at WonderCon



Photos by Don Leach | Staff Photographer

A GROUP of cosplayers, dressed as various characters from the Star Wars franchise, pose outside WonderCon 2023 in Anaheim on Sunday, March 26. The annual convention celebrated its 35th anniversary and 10th year in Southern California.

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

Outside the Anaheim Convention Center on March 26, Harley Quinn and Poison Ivy strolled past the water fountain, where Boba Fett and other characters from the Star Wars franchise stood chatting in a semicircle. Nearby, Doctor Octopus, complete with mechanical arms, posed for a picture while a gaggle of Disney princesses founced by. Although it was the final day of this year's WonderCon, there was no shortage of cosplayers.

WonderCon, the annual comic book, science fiction and film convention, celebrated its 35th anniversary and 10th year in Southern California as WonderCon Anaheim over the weekend of March 24 through 26. Put on by Comic-Con International, the same event organizers of Comic-Con, the convention attracts fans from around the country. More than 900 exhibitors filled the 412,000-square-foot exhibit hall with comic books, original art and collectible toys and merchandise.

The convention sponsored panels and presentations for every sort of interest and offered activities like autograph signings from comic artists and actors to game demonstrations and tournaments for popular games like Magic: the Gathering.

WonderCon is a place where those with rare inter-

ests can find others who share the same obsessions with anime or Dungeons & Dragons. It's also a place where walking around dressed like the Hulk seems perfectly ordinary.

Cosplayers, and the people who love and support them, swarmed the convention floor and the outdoor areas surrounding it.

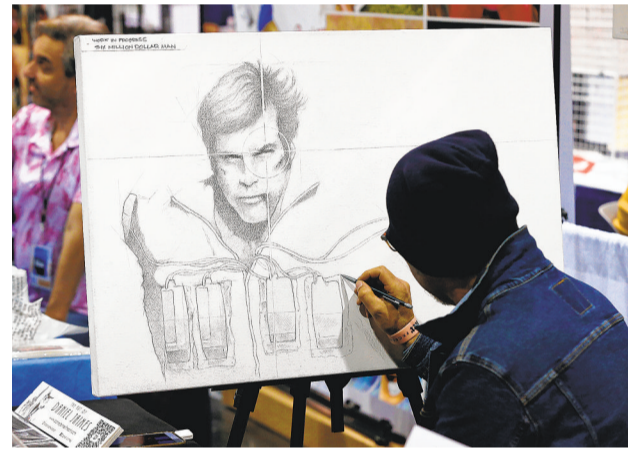
"Cosplay is broken up into two words," said Jay Holliday, founder of Kids Can Cosplay, a nonprofit he started in 2013. "You have 'cos,' which is short for costumes and 'play' which means you play or act as the character."

Cosplaying is more than just wearing a costume. Cosplayers recognize that when they put on a mask, makeup or outfit that emulate their favorite fictional character, they get a little bit of that power.

"Kids get to be Superman when they put on a cape, they can be Batman when they put on a mask, and they get to embrace those characters and be somebody they normally aren't," said Holliday.

Holliday's organization, which had a booth on the convention floor, began with his own kids enjoying cosplay. His children came up with the idea of using cosplay to help kids less fortunate, and Holliday tapped into the cosplay community to organize volunteer cosplayers to

See *Cosplay*, page A10



ARTIST DANIEL JAIMES, draws Col. Steve Austin from "The Six Million Dollar Man," a 1970s TV show.

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RECOVERY

Continued from page A2

therapy studio. Ho is not afraid to share her story. For much of her hospital stay, she had four chest tubes stuck in her 5-foot-2 frame. At one point, doctors thought she might have a heart attack because her lungs had collapsed, and a lung transplant was also considered.

"It's just nice to share my story," she said. "I'm talking to people a lot throughout the day, which is really nice. I feel like it shows a vulnerability a little bit. In the beauty industry, it's all professionalism most of the time, but I think people getting to know my story is awesome ... A lot of my clients are closer to me now, in a way."

She also remains friends with some of the people who have helped her get back up and running. Last Halloween she held a party at her salon, and staff from Fountain Valley Regional



Scott Smeltzer | Staff Photographer

WYNTER HO works with long-time client Lannee Tang at her salon "Wink By Wynter" on March 23 in Huntington Beach. Ho recently finished her final physical therapy session.

Hospital were invited.

"It's fun for me to stay in touch with her," said Karly Kodzis, one of her nurses in the intensive care unit. "I mean, there were units where we did not think she was going to even live. To now see her go to Disney-

land, go back to work, walk to all these things, that's why we're in the business we're in. A lot of times we don't get to see those outcomes ... but Wynter is special.

"She had a really special place in our heart. At that

time, when she was there, it was a really dark time for us as staff. We were just overwhelmed by the amount of death from COVID patients."

At one point, Ho was in a pod of people battling the virus. After she awoke from

her coma, she was told she was the only one from the pod who had survived.

Her family took shifts visiting her at the hospital, and she would often FaceTime with them. Ho also has an 8-year-old sister, Skyler, whose elementary school class wrote letters to Wynter in the hospital.

"The amount of control she had to calm herself after her hospital stay was longer, most adults don't have that kind of control," said Vivian Nguyen, another of Ho's ICU nurses. "I was just honest with her, because I didn't want her to think this was going to be some quick recovery process. This was going to take time. It was one holiday season in the hospital, but you have to keep going. There were times when she was like, 'Can I have more medication?' And it was just like, no, you have to feel your feelings."

Feelings can change, and Ho now feels grateful for each and every day. One of her first tasks upon being released from the

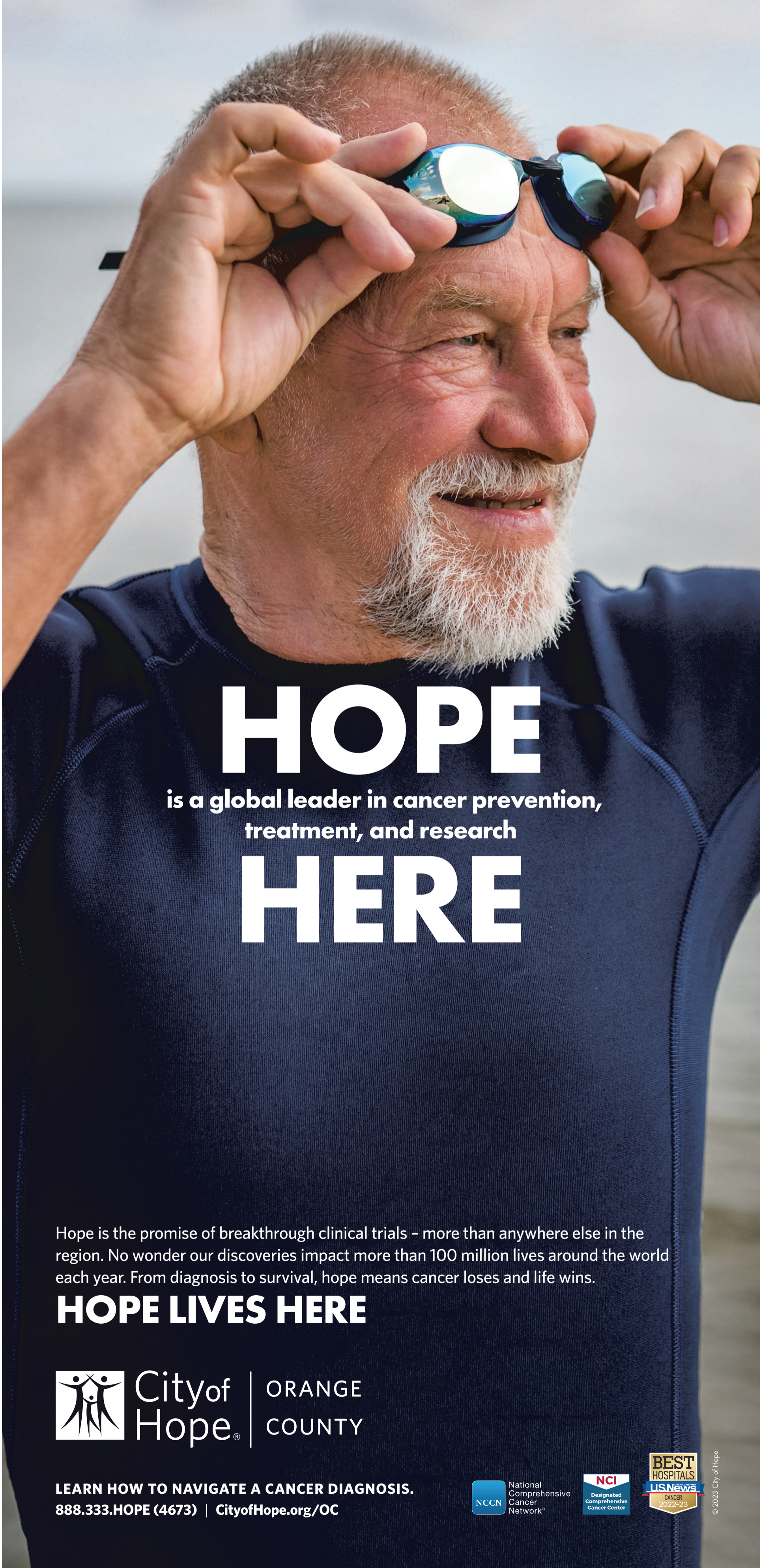
hospital was getting vaccinated. Two weeks later, she went to Disneyland with family, riding around on a little cart.

"I got a lot of stares," she said. "My knees had been so bedridden that the bone died off, and bone grew outside my kneecaps. It limited my ability to bend. I had a board to slide in and out of chairs, to go into the car."

It's been a long road, but Ho feels like she's back in a good place. Her family bond remains closer than ever, as she now lives with her grandparents and mom. She's able to hang out with friends and live her life.

"I'm just grateful looking back, like wow, we really made it," she said. "It wasn't just me, it was a whole team of us that really pushed to see me go home and do more with my life. I feel like I have a second chance. I feel more alive than ever."

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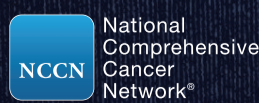
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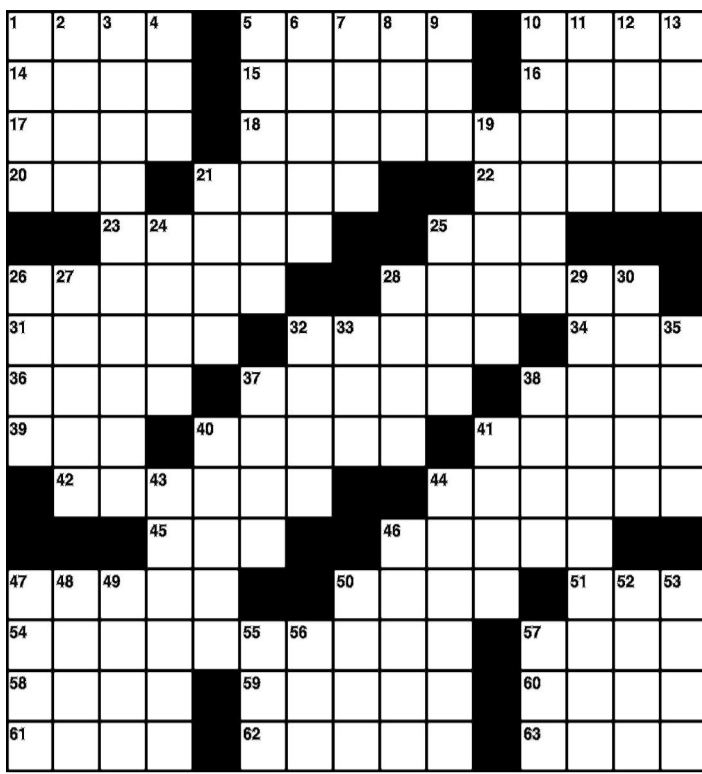
By Jacqueline E. Matthews

ACROSS

- 1 Male deliveries
- 5 Glide over ice
- 10 Close noisily
- 14 Asian language
- 15 Father-_; wife's dad
- 16 Actor _ Gooding Jr.
- 17 Goals
- 18 Irish sprite
- 20 Rip off
- 21 Pegs for Palmer
- 22 Way to go
- 23 Stories
- 25 Author Tolstoy
- 26 _ de corps; camaraderie
- 28 Kingdoms
- 31 Hertz rival
- 32 Water vapor
- 34 Sense of wonder
- 36 Male turkeys
- 37 Bundle of grain
- 38 Coffin stand
- 39 Bawl
- 40 Not as forward
- 41 Less bananas
- 42 Large snake
- 44 Seashores
- 45 Decay
- 46 Midsection
- 47 Slightly more than a quart
- 50 Broker's advice
- 51 Fish eggs
- 54 Absurd
- 57 Soft craft fabric
- 58 Ashy residue
- 59 Not savvy
- 60 Pieces of furniture
- 61 _ Griffith
- 62 Run _; chase
- 63 "The _ bitsy spider went"

DOWN

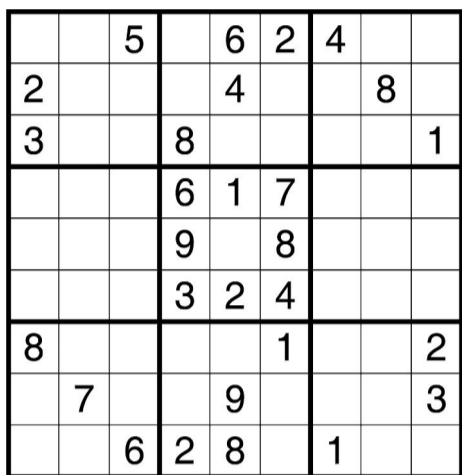
- 1 Falling _; meteor



SUDOKU

By the Mephram Group

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



For answers to the crossword and Sudoku puzzles, see page A8.

- 2 Neighbor of Indiana
- 3 Weak and indecisive
- 4 Lisa, to Bart
- 5 " _ Night"
- 6 Largest joints
- 7 Monte Rosa's range
- 8 Street paver's
- 9 goo
- 9 Lamb bearer
- 10 Pupil's place
- 11 Outdoor feast
- 12 Lie next to
- 13 Horse's hair
- 19 Dairy product
- 21 Musketeers or Stooges
- 24 Upper limbs

- 25 Piece of lettuce
- 26 Dines
- 27 One-masted sailboat
- 28 Tush
- 29 Downtown thoroughfare
- 30 Angelic
- 32 Leg part
- 33 Casual shirt
- 35 Miscalculates
- 37 Injection
- 38 Lamb's cries
- 40 Under five feet
- 41 Dirt
- 43 Part of NATO
- 44 Visitor
- 46 Interlace
- 47 _ Marie Presley
- 48 Remove wrinkles
- 49 _ on; trampled
- 50 In a _; pouty
- 52 Cutlass
- Supreme, for one
- 53 Online crafts store
- 55 _ tizzy; agitated
- 56 Clumsy one
- 57 CBS series

Tribune Media Services



Scott Smeltzer | Staff Photographer

PAT PATTISON, right, interviews Stanford Freese, underneath a pepper tree at his home in Placentia, for the weekly TV show "The Best of California with Pat Pattison."

RESIDENT

Continued from page A1

as conductors on the Pacific Electric Railway Co.'s "Red Cars," which navigated the streets of Los Angeles in the 1920s. In a similar manner, through "Best of California," Pattison takes viewers on a journey through little known pockets of the state's storied past.

"It has to mainly be things people can go see," he says of the subject matter. "We're really trying to gear it to people who already live here, who may not know about these things."

THE MUSIC MAN

Pattison's journey brought him Wednesday to the Placentia home of Stanford "Stan" Freese, a long-time tuba player and musical director who worked for 45 years as the talent casting and booking director with Disney Entertainment Productions.

The original bandleader for the Walt Disney World Band, Freese led musicians during the Florida park's 1971 grand opening. Now 78, Freese recounted his life and times in the book "Mu-

sic, Mayhem and the Mouse: My 'Tubazar' Life."

Freese was a fitting subject for an episode of Pattison's show that will feature Walt Disney's legacy in California beyond the Anaheim theme park.

Sitting inside a brightly colored kitchen packed with memorabilia, Pattison introduces his guest as his iPhone, set up on a tripod nearby, records the scene.

"I'm excited to be here with Stan Freese," Pattison says to the camera, speaking into a signature foam-topped microphone. "We're at his home in Placentia — this place is wild."

"It's nuts, it's totally nuts," Freese agrees. "But that is our lifestyle."

For the next hour, Pattison shoots scenes in various parts of the house Freese shares with wife Tera, including a music room done up in a "Pirates of the Caribbean" theme, replete with skeletons. Freese explains his musical talents were inherited from his father and grandfather, who played in bands dating back a century.

Freese passed the gift to his sons, Josh, a studio drummer who's played for Sting, Guns N' Roses and Nine Inch Nails, and Jason,

who performs with Green Day.

Next, Freese and Pattison head to the frontyard, where a pepper tree is festooned with full-sized tubas and sousaphones.

Under its canopy, Pattison records the end of what will be a five- to seven-minute segment in a Disney episode that will also highlight the original Disneyland Bandstand on display at Roger's Gardens in Corona del Mar and San Francisco's Walt Disney Family Museum.

"This is the legacy of Walt Disney in all aspects of California. Stan, thank you," Pattison says to the camera, before adding, "We're out."

His low-key production team includes a freelance editor, daughter Liza Pattison, who sometimes operates the camera or appears alongside her dad in a boomer-millennial pairing, and older daughter Jesamyn Pattison, who helps with production.

"I suppose that's child labor," he jokes, "but we won't get into that."

A SECOND ACT

The TV show is part of what Pattison calls his "sec-

See *Resident*, page A6



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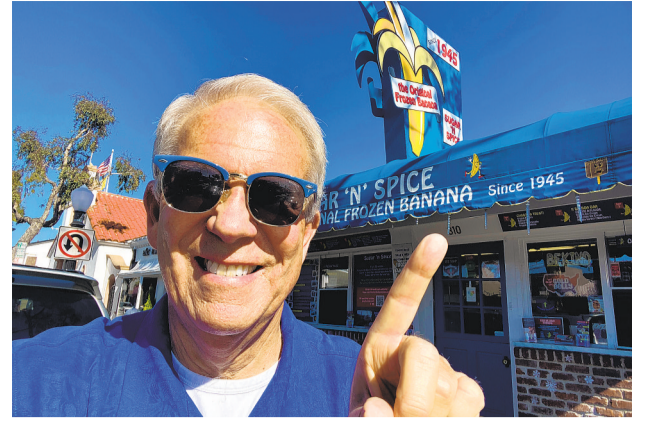
RESIDENT

Continued from page A5

ond act" career — a passion he began pursuing after 30 years in marketing and advertising in the television industry and as vice president of Creative Services at Disneyland.

Using his experience in merchandising, honed in top positions at two toy companies, Pattison was instrumental in creating antenna ball toppers used by Jack in the Box and later Disney.

"That will be in my obituary," he quipped of what he calls his 15 minutes of pop culture fame. "[And] I'll take it. When you're in marketing, you go where



Courtesy of Pat Pattison

PAT PATTISON outside Sugar n' Spice Balboa Island, where he filmed a segment on the shop's famous frozen bananas.

the market takes you."

At 55, he took up acting and snagged some television roles but now considers "The Best of California" his full-time gig. He also works as a reinvention coach, helping others re-make their own careers by rediscovering their creativity.

His methods were codified in the 2021 book — "Creative You Turn: 9 Steps to Your New Creative Life & Career" — which includes exercises and tips to help readers explore their own

interests and aspirations. "Create a lasting vision that will take you the distance. A vision that will cut through all the doubt and negative thinking," Pattison advises at the end of the book. "Once you have your vision, hold onto it with your life. Keep it close and trust that it will guide you exactly where you were always meant to be."

It's a model the Seal Beach resident has followed to find his own success.

"I'm allowing myself to get back to the passions of my childhood, and part of that comes by being willing to take risks," he says. "If not now, when?"

sara.cardine@latimes.com
Twitter: @SaraCardine



Easter Sunrise

Join us Sunday, April 9th, at 6:30 a.m. for Easter Sunrise Service. The service will be held at 14th Street Beach in Newport Beach with a continental breakfast following at our church. All are welcome.

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TRAILS

Continued from page A1

the facility, but there is still some cool infrastructure that is still present out there.”

On March 27, Gump joined Chairman of the Orange County Board of Supervisors Donald P. Wagner and OC Parks Interim Director Pam Passow and others in a ribbon-cutting ceremony to commemorate the opening of the sprawling outdoor space.

“The scenic new trails at Saddleback Wilderness are something everyone can enjoy,” said Wagner.

Saddleback Wilderness boasts five trails ranging from easy to moderate in difficulty, totaling 3.3 miles for hiking, biking and equestrian use. Picnic tables, portable toilets and parking for horse trailers are open to the public, and a scenic overlook offers panoramic views of Orange County and beyond.

“It takes you up to a really beautiful 360-degree viewpoint where you have views of the Pacific, the mountains, Santiago peak,” said Gump. “It is really a nice opportunity for families and people who want to get out and have a shorter hike but still get to really nice views and enjoy the outdoors.”

The area is home to unique and protected plant and animal species, including the endangered



ORANGE COUNTY
Supervisor Don Wagner leads hikers on the new Saddleback Wilderness trail.

James Carbone

California gnatcatcher, an insectivorous bird, Gump said.

“There is a lot of great wildlife; we had surveys done prior to developing the trail system. There is the California gnatcatcher, and there is lots of California quail which are really cute to see. The little flocks of them run and fly from the brush,” said Gump.

OC Parks manages almost 60,000 acres of parks as well as historical and coastal facilities and open space for the county of Orange as part of OC Community Resources. Gump said demand for such recreational open space is always growing.

“OC Parks maintains a pretty amazing trail system, but the population of Orange County has continued to grow, and outdoor trail-based activities have never been more popular,” said Gump. “So anytime we have an opportunity like this to deliver more trails to the public, we are absolutely going to do our best to deliver just that.”

Currently, Saddleback Wilderness is only accessible through scheduled self-guided and docent-led public programs, with advance reservation. Morning sessions from 8 to 10:30 a.m. as well as afternoon sessions from 1 to 3:30 p.m. are open April 8, 22 and 29.

Other activities include Intro to Cardio Hiking on April 12 from 5:30 to 7 p.m., Morning Mountain Bike Ride from 8 to 10 a.m. on April 14 and Night Sky Exploration from 7:30 to 9 p.m. on April 28.

And there are always the fields of wildflowers to explore.

“There are lots of wildflowers scattered throughout the facility,” said Gump. “It is nice, refreshing and good for the spirit.”

For a full list of activities and programs and to pre-register for a visit, go to letsgooutside.org.

sarah.mosqueda
@latimes.com
Twitter: @SarahNMos

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APR 2 **DEBUSSY PRELUDES: JEAN-YVES THIBAUDET, PIANO**
5PM | SOKA PERFORMING ARTS CENTER
Two-time Grammy-nominated pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet returns to Orange County in a solo recital performing Claude Debussy's complete piano Preludes. Tickets start at \$45.
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APR 16 **MIDORI PLAYS BACH**
3PM | IRVINE BARCLAY THEATRE
Violinist Midori commemorates the 40th anniversary of her legendary New York Philharmonic debut in 1982 with a program of works by J.S. Bach, Thierry Escaich, and John Zorn. Tickets start at \$45.

APR 19 **FORMOSA QUARTET**
8PM | IRVINE BARCLAY THEATRE
Winners of both the First Prize and Amadeus Prize at the Wigmore Hall International String Quartet Competition, the Formosa Quartet performs an intimate recital featuring works by Mozart, Schumann and other works. Tickets start at \$38.

APR 30 **LA PHIL WITH LEILA JOSEFOWICZ**
3PM | RENÉE AND HENRY SEGERSTROM CONCERT HALL
Former Dudamel Fellow Elim Chan conducts the LA Phil in a performance of Tchaikovsky's romantic Fifth Symphony, a new work by Clarice Assad, and Thomas Ades' modern masterpiece “Concentric Paths” featuring virtuoso violinist Leila Josefowicz. Tickets start at \$48.
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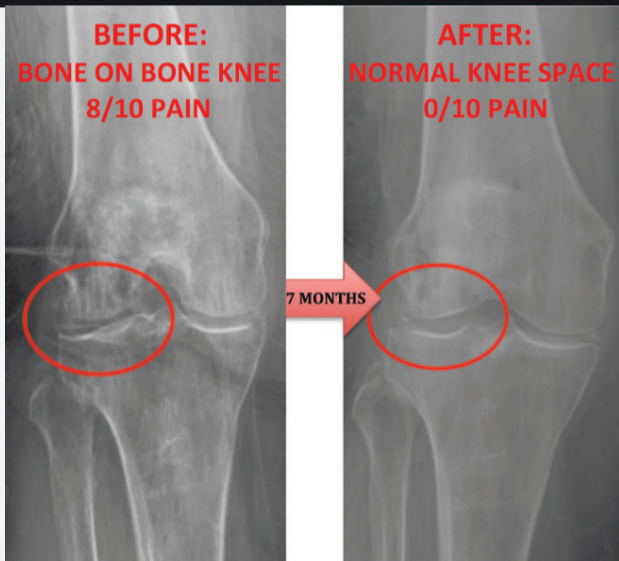
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-Linda L., R.N., Newport Beach, CA(Registered Nurse & Zumba Instructor)

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-lasted-Rosemary, Huntington Beach

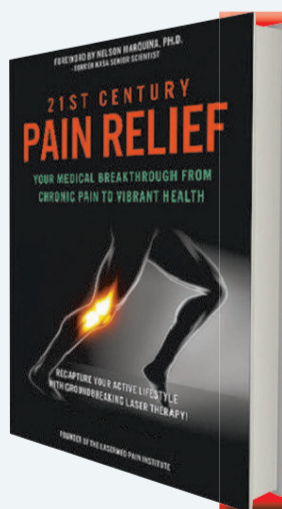


"As an orthopedic surgeon for over 35 years, I was very skeptical of this non-surgical technology, but I decided to attend the seminar anyways as I wanted to avoid knee & hip surgery as I've seen my share of post-surgical infections, blood clots, & failed surgery cases in my career. My Hip & Knee X rays & MRIs revealed that I had a torn meniscus, baker's cyst and osteoarthritis. I had discomfort walking and going up and down stairs. However, after applying what I learned from the seminar, my knee swelling is reduced, I have increased motion, and decreased pain in my knee and hip as well."

-The late Dr. William Gutch, MD., Palm Desert, California



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COSPLAY

Continued from page A3

visit hospitals and homeless shelters.

Kids Can Cosplay often hands out art supplies, toys, comics and super hero masks, and Holliday said when kids put on the mask of their favorite hero, it can change them.

"A lot of kids find, especially those that struggle with being introverts or maybe are on the spectrum, the minute they put on that mask and that cape and we teach them that you can be that hero that you want to be, they just start having so much fun being Batman or Harley Quinn," said Holliday.

Cosplaying isn't just for kids. In fact, a majority of those involved in the community are adults. Some even dress up as family, like Joanna Santillan from Santa Ana, who dressed as the Scarlet Witch and joined her son, Sergio Alvarez, dressed as Dr. Strange, and her daughter, Jocelyn Alvarez, dressed as America Chavez.

"We are united and we are a family," Santillan said. "So why not dress up together?"

Santillan said she made Sergio's costume, and her brother made Jocelyn's denim jacket, with America's signature stars and stripes along with detailed props, like a Plexiglas light-up star as a stand-in for America's star portal and a Plexiglas representation of Dr. Strange's spell-making complete with etched details.

The demand for specific costumes has spawned cosplay businesses like FirstStop Cosplay, who also had a booth at WonderCon.

"FirstStop Cosplay is a cosplay sewing pattern company," said Kit Pierce. "We try to make them as user friendly as possible."

Based in Irvine, the company features a couple licensed patterns but also basic patterns to make garments like a cropped tank top or safety shorts that can be used as a can-



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

OPERATORS FROM R2 Builders drive a parade of remote-controlled R2 droids at WonderCon Anaheim on March 26.

vas to create multiple characters. The patterns are easy to read, printed on a parchment-like paper rather than the usual delicate tissue paper and come in multiple sizes, rather than nested.

"A lot of what we work on doing is making cosplay more accessible for the majority of people," said Kelly Willie. "With cosplay, there is so much to know that you can't know straight off the bat."

Costumes are often intricate because they are handmade by fans who know the particular features of their favorite character down to the tiniest detail.

Lillian Becker of Murieta, who dressed as Draculaura, the Romanian vampire daughter of Dracula from "Monster High," said her costume was a combination of thrift store finds and handmade items.

"The majority of this was thrifted," said Becker. "I made the boots myself. It is

kind of hard to find some of this stuff, so a lot of it you just have to make yourself."

Becker said she spent about 40 hours working on the costume that included pink lace-up boots, a white pleated miniskirt, pink vest and a black lace parasol.

"A lot of it was hand sewing," she said, pointing to the white contrast stitching on her vest.

The hair and makeup are easy, as are the fake fangs. "They are just a pain to talk with," Becker said.

Andrew Butler's Mandalorian costume took considerably longer.

"I 3D-printed most of it," said the Santa Clarita resident. "It took about two years."

Butler wore his creation both Saturday and Sunday, and the armor held up well.

If any costumes do start to fall apart, cosplay repair people like Brian Mero are fully prepared to help. "I am doing cosplay



Sarah Mosqueda

SANTA ANA residents Joanna Santillan, dressed as the Scarlet Witch, joins her son, Sergio Alvarez, as Dr. Strange, and her daughter, Jocelyn Alvarez, as America Chavez.

repair, I have a full backpack of supplies for anybody who needs repair for cosplay," said Mero. "It is just a way for me to give back to the cosplay community."

Appropriately dressed as Fix-it Felix from "Wreck-it Ralph," Mero said he

carries safety pins, duct tape and super glue.

Mero has been cosplaying for 14 years and helped his own kids with costumes when they were young. When they got older, Mero was looking for a way to remain active in the cosplay community when he

read about cosplay repair people attending conventions in New York.

Although he doesn't charge for his services, he has a business card with a QR code to his Venmo for donations or tips that help offset the cost of supplies, like the superglue he ran out of on Friday.

"It feels great being able to help somebody, especially some newbie cosplayers who come in, and things are falling off before they even get in the door, a bit of superglue can go a long way," said Mero. "It is just great when people trust me."

"Cosplay is not consent" is a phrase you will hear in the community, meaning costumes are not an invitation to flirt with or touch a cosplayer, an idea Mero understands as cosplayer himself.

"As a cosplayer, you don't want people touching you because things will fall off," Mero said.

Mero said the trust and respect between cosplayers and cosplay repairers like him was evident on Saturday, when he worked as a volunteer with the Masquerade, a cosplay competition that awards WonderCon trophies, cash and other prizes to cosplayers.

A young woman needed help with an intimate portion of her costume, and she enlisted the help of Mero, whom said she saw as a father figure.

"She goes, 'You are like my Dad,'" Mero recalled. "She said, 'Except my Dad doesn't go to Cons. So I totally trust you.'"

Not all heroes wear capes, as they say.

As the convention drew to a close on Sunday afternoon, cosplayers surrounded the outdoor fountain, taking pictures of one another and getting in a bit more time in character until the next convention.

"I just love seeing all the costumes," said Butler. "I love taking pictures with people. It has been so fun."

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