

Shoemaker takes steps toward success

Laguna Beach resident's creative graduation gift for his valedictorian daughter is becoming a popular local business.

BY ANDREW TURNER

A local entrepreneur has thrown himself into relatively unknown waters, and it's proving to be a refreshing arrangement.

Laguna Beach resident Jay Williams was staring down the prospect of finding the right graduation gift to give to a daughter who certainly deserved it.

Williams' offspring, Mara, was set to graduate as the valedictorian for Laguna Beach High. Not just any gift would do. In fact, nothing that could be pulled off the shelf would do.

His imagination ran wild, and before long, he was producing custom designs that would end up on shoes. Mara eventually approved a design — it features the cardinal directions of a compass and depicts an RV, heark-

See **Steps**, page A7



JAY WILLIAMS began producing custom-designed shoes recently to come up with a graduation gift for his daughter, Mara, who graduated as valedictorian. Since then, his shoes are gaining popularity around Laguna Beach, and they're helping causes too, such as benefiting the local greeter.

Don Leach | Staff Photographer

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Fennessy named international Fire Chief of the Year

San Clemente resident has logged 45 years of service in Los Angeles, San Diego, Orange counties.

BY SARA CARDINE

Orange County Fire Authority Chief Brian Fennessy — who oversees 78 stations serving nearly 2 million residents in 23 municipalities and unincorporated areas — has been noted for several accomplishments since his arrival to the agency in 2018.

He partnered with California lawmakers in 2019 to create a statewide pilot program expanding a Fire Integrated Real-time Intelligence System (FIRIS) that uses technology to survey fires and other disasters and deliver real-time updates to crews on the ground.

Two years later, Fennessy helped broker an agreement with Southern California Edison to fund a fleet of helitankers and intelligence helicopters capable of fighting fires at night. The Quick Reaction Force program is now used in Orange, Los Angeles and Ventura counties and prevents 95% of blazes from spreading be-

yond 10 acres.

On his watch, the agency has launched an annual Girls Empowerment Camp to encourage young women to consider careers in fire service, created and filled positions designed to promote diversity and behavioral health and wellness, begun the process of purchasing two new FIREHAWK helicopters and received accreditation for its Firefighter Recruit Academy.

For him, the agency's recent successes are not solely due to his leadership, but to the team of individuals who work to bring big ideas and visions to life. "Nobody does it by themselves," the 64-year-old San Clemente father of three said Wednesday. "I've got a really good team of firefighters and others who go out and do this stuff — it's been a really good team effort."

And while Fennessy doesn't do what he does for the accolades,

See **Chief**, page A2



Courtesy of the Orange County Fire Authority

ORANGE COUNTY Fire Authority Chief Brian Fennessy speaks at a news conference in October 2022. The agency leader was recognized this week as Fire Chief of the Year by the International Assn. of Fire Chiefs.



David Tosti

FESTIVAL-GOERS ENJOY beer and food trucks at Oak Canyon Park in Silverado at an event put on by Brew Ha Ha Productions. A Sept. 9 event, Left Coast Luau, will send its proceeds to the Maui Strong Fund.

Left Coast Luau to donate event proceeds to Maui Strong Fund

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

Orange County's Brew Ha Ha Productions has been promoting its inaugural Left Coast Luau, taking place on Saturday, Sept. 9, at Oak Canyon Park in Silverado, since last month. Last week, when news of the fires on Maui broke, president of Brew Ha Ha Productions Cameron Collins announced the event would donate all of its proceeds to the Maui Strong Fund.

"I am hoping we raise a ton of money," said Collins. "It is not a huge event, but it is a cool event, and it makes a lot of sense since the whole idea was to do a luau."

Collins, who is also a founding partner of Rad Beer Co. in Anaheim and Rad Brat in Dana Point, launched Brew Ha Ha Productions in 2010 with the first-ever Brew Ha Ha festival in Orange County. The company produces the annual Brew Ha Ha in O.C. and curates many of Orange County's most popular beer and music festivals, like Punk in the Park Festival, Brew Hee Haw at the OC Fair & Event Center in



ORANGE COUNTY'S Brew Ha Ha Productions' upcoming beer and music festival at Oak Canyon Park in Silverado, Left Coast Luau, will benefit the Maui Strong Fund after devastation caused by wildfires.

Costa Mesa, and an annual Christmas beer event, Brew Ho Ho Holiday Ale Festival.

"We started out as an Orange County-based local, little beer festival that has now grown to about 135 festival we did this year," said Collins. "We now do festivals all over the United

States, and we have done festivals in Canada as well."

Left Coast Luau, billed as an end-of-summer luau-themed party, is a single-day event that will include pours of craft beer, seltzer and cider from 2 to 5 p.m.

See **Luau**, page A2

Bringing joy to child cancer patients, one jar at a time

BY MATT SZABO

Jessie Rees was 11 years old when she was diagnosed with terminal cancer in 2011.

She was an outpatient at Children's Hospital of Orange County, but she noticed that many other children weren't quite so fortunate.

"She started coloring on brown paper bags," said Jessie's father, Erik Rees. "She wanted to put her Beanie Babies in them and take them to kids that couldn't leave the hospital."

Hospital regulations were a bit more stringent than that, though. So the family created Joy Jars, using Jessie's middle name.

These are 64-ounce plastic jars stuffed all the way to the top with new games, toys and activities for children fighting cancer. The Rees family — Erik, Stacey and three children — started producing them out of the garage of their Rancho Santa Margarita home.

Jessie lost her fight with her Diffuse Intrinsic Pontine Glioma brain tumor on Jan. 5, 2012. But before she

died, she was able to stuff more than 3,000 jars with the help of family and friends.

The Jessie Rees Foundation has continued that work for more than a decade. Erik Rees said more than 450,000 jars have now been produced and sent to kids fighting cancer in all 50 states, as well as 53 countries worldwide.

Every Joy Jar produced by the Irvine-based nonprofit contains age-appropriate goodies as well as some staples — a rubber ducky, a Never Ever Give Up (NEGU) wristband, a beanie (because of the loss of hair) and socks (because hospital rooms are often cold).

The foundation partners with hospitals and oncology camps all over the world, as well as the Ronald McDonald House.

The blue wristbands have been worn by professional athletes like NFL quarterbacks Patrick Mahomes and Josh Allen. Seven times, they've been on the cover of Sports Illustrated.

Late NBA star Kobe Bryant was also involved, sup-



Spencer Grant

CHRIS WHITAKER, right, is among volunteers lined up to fill Joy Jars on Thursday in Irvine. The effort of the Rees family, inspired by Jessie Rees' fight with a brain tumor, has filled more than 450,000 jars with items for children with cancer.

porting NEGU and bringing his Mamba Academy girls basketball team into the "Joy Factory" in late 2018 to stuff 400 Joy Jars.

Rees, a former pastor at Saddleback Church, is appreciative of efforts to bring awareness to the nonprofit. The foundation also recently partnered with NASCAR driver Corey LaJoie, who will be driving a car with NEGU branding.

Rees, who got to spend just more than 10 months with Jessie after her diagnosis, smiles that LaJoie's last name has the word "joy" in

it. "Some days you want to give up just because it's easier," he said. "The pain is so hard, the grief is sometimes engulfing, but we try our best to come alongside these families. Jessie used to always say, 'Daddy, I feel lonely and limited.' And I never would want a kid, no matter what age, to feel lonely or limited. That's just not how a child should feel, so we try to bring some love to them ... These children deserve a boost of love, to feel cared for and loved and not to feel alone."

The Jessie Rees Foundation held an event Saturday at AV Irvine for 48 local families that have children dealing with cancer. Next month is National Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, and the foundation will be holding the NEGU Golf Classic on Sept. 18 at Coto de Caza Golf & Racquet Club.

The foundation has offices in its Irvine space, and a warehouse in the back. Stuffing tens of thousands of Joy Jars each year, though, isn't possible without a bevy of volunteers.

On Thursday, Irvine-based financial advisory firm Apriem Advisors visited for a team-building exercise that included the stuffing of Joy Jars.

Apriem Advisors president Rhonda Ducote still remembers the day that Jessie Rees died.

"I live right by Saddleback Church, and that's when I first heard about NEGU," she said. "There were a bunch of blue ribbons all over Lake Forest."

Ducote and the firm

See **Joy**, page A5

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Courtesy of the Orange County Fire Authority

THE INTERNATIONAL ASSN. of Fire Chief's annual Fire Chief of the Year award recognizes department leaders' innovation, integrity, public service and contributions to the fire service.

CHIEF

Continued from page A1

they've found him nevertheless.

He was on Tuesday named by the International Assn. of Fire Chiefs as 2023 Fire Chief of the Year in a special ceremony celebrating the organization's 150th anniversary.

Established in 1996, the award recognizes department leaders who've shown exemplary contributions to the fire service through innovation, integrity and public service.

The Orange County chief is just the third from California to be honored with the international distinction, selected from more than 25 finalists who were all nominated from among the association's membership of some 12,000 career and volunteer chiefs and emergency services managers.

"We truly look for someone who displays not only excellence in leadership as a fire chief but someone who's involved in their community and is a well-rounded executive that gives back just as much to the profession," said IAFC Chief Executive Rob Brown, who's known Fennessy for the last 11 years.

"It was no surprise to me he

won. For his entire career he's really worked in his community to do the best he can for fire protection," Brown said. "He also works with us on a national stage to advance fire technology."

Fennessy — who began his fire career in 1978 working as a member of a hotshot crew in the Angeles, Los Padres and Sequoia national forests and logged 25 years with San Diego Fire-Rescue Department before being promoted to chief in 2015 — said he was surprised when Brown called him up to share the news. "I was half stunned and obviously very humbled just to be nominated," he said Wednesday. "My phone has been blowing up with calls and emails. My wife said, 'This is like you getting an Emmy or Oscar or something,' I'm still kind of in shock, to be honest."

He came to O.C. in April 2018 seeking a challenge and was tested four months later when the 23,000-acre Holy fire ignited in Trabuco Canyon and ripped through the Cleveland National Forest, destroying 18 buildings.

As California's fire season continued to lengthen, making wildfires more common occurrences, Fennessy sought to bring the technological advancements he'd seen employed in San Diego to

the Orange County agency.

He's also focused on creating a mission-driven culture of service among the ranks of the department's 1,500-plus employees, working with the Orange County Professional Firefighters Assn. to address physical and mental health matters, working conditions and opportunities for advancement.

"It's no longer just running 911 calls, although we still do that and that's an important part of our job," he said. "It's now about how we take care of our members and families and encourage people in a diverse workforce. It takes a lot of effort, but it's worth it."

Mark Niemeyer, IAFC member and chief of the Boise Fire Department, said he personally nominated Fennessy as Fire Chief of the Year for his strong leadership and innovative mind. The nomination was unanimously approved by the organization's board.

"He is a leader with high character and high values. In today's world that's fairly hard to come by," Niemeyer said. "Beyond that, he is very much an innovator — he's always looking forward. He is somebody I greatly respect."

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LUAU

Continued from page A1

with Polynesian-inspired dishes for purchase and live performances by the Reverend Horton Heat, Long Beach Dub Allstars, Ozomatli and Jonny Two Bags.

The fires on Maui are the deadliest the U.S. has experienced in the last decade, with more than 100 confirmed deaths and 1,300 individuals still unaccounted for. Communities like Lahaina in West Maui have seen 2,200 homes and apartment buildings destroyed. Collins said his family has a special connection to Hawaii.

"My brother-in-law is Hawaiian, his mother is Hawaiian and my nieces are half Hawaiian," said Collins. "Over the years, I have made a lot of friends that are connected to Hawaii, live in Hawaii or



Lisa Johnson

OZOMATLI WILL BE among the bands at Left Coast Luau on Sept. 9 at Oak Canyon Park in Silverado.

are of Hawaiian decent."

Beyond his personal connection, Collins also felt a patriotic duty to help.

"I am an American, and Hawaiian are Americans. They are a bunch of fellow Americans that are in a disastrous time, and I felt obligated to do more than say 'hopes and prayers,'"

Collins said.

Collins observed the efforts of friend and beer industry colleague Garrett Marrero, a Poway native and founder of Maui Brewing Co., and felt inspired by his actions.

"When all of this was going down and still today as we are talking, he is run-

ning around all over Maui, bringing in generators, food, supplies, water," Collins said.

A social media post by Maui Brewing Co. on Aug. 11 called for donations of baby items, clothing, blankets, tents, batteries and toiletries along with information on donation centers the brewer had set up on Maui and Oahu.

"It's amazing," said Collins. "I love that this guy is diving in with whatever resources he has."

The upcoming luau event seemed like the perfect opportunity to join in the efforts.

"Any amount of merchandise that we sell, any ticketing fees, any revenue at all from this event, we are going to donate 100% of it," said Collins. "That includes our commissions from food vendors, anything from the bar, literally

See **Luau**, page A5

Daily Pilot

A Times Community News publication.

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'Prime' Newport Beach property listed at \$32M

BY LILLY NGUYEN

A luxurious Newport Beach property near the Back Bay has been posted for sale in recent days with a price tag of \$32 million.

The 2.7-acre property at 2342 Mesa Drive is listed with Douglas Elliman Real Estate. It is described as a legacy estate, as it has been owned by one family since its construction in 1966. Its architect was Philmer Ellerbroke, described by listing agent John Stanaland as someone "ahead of his time" for the modern structure.

Stanaland confirmed in an interview Tuesday the house has been placed on the market because the homeowner, philanthropist Diane Rinker, decided to downsize and relocate elsewhere in Newport Beach. She and her late husband, real estate developer Harry Rinker, donated \$15 million to Chapman University to name the Harry and Diane Rinker Health Science Campus in Irvine.

Harry Rinker died in 2021 at 100.

Stanaland said the \$32-million price tag is based not only the size of the lot, which he described as rare for its location, but for a number of other amenities that include a man-made lake and the property's suitability as an equestrian lot. The dwelling encompasses 5,872 square feet, with five bedrooms and 5½ bathrooms.

The house includes a game room, a formal sitting room and a large multipurpose space. The property boasts a pool and multiple garage spaces.

"The grounds — it's almost like a private compound," Stanaland said. "There's the private bass lake, the beautiful mid-century modern home. It is a compound in the heart of Newport Beach. This is a scarcity value item. You very rarely get a property with this much acreage,



Photos by Joel Danto

A WIDE SHOT of the 2342 Mesa Drive property that went up for listing last week. The 2.7-acre estate, with its own lake, was built in 1966.

though there was the Duck Farm house nearby [on 2612 Mesa Drive], which sold for \$15 million."

The Duck Farm was estimated to have a total of 2.5 acres.

"It's very hard to find a property like this and from a scarcity value standpoint, it is without question valuable, and I think it will sell close to the asking price," he said.

"Orange County, particularly Newport Beach, has become the 'it' destination for Southern California. Even those who lived in high-end properties in Los Angeles and San Francisco are now looking here — a world-class destination for

people who can afford to live here. We have everything from the professionals like doctors and lawyers to billionaires," Stanaland said. "There's been a handful of very good sales in Newport Coast up in this year, but not with the same acreage as this. The caveat is this is a very prime Newport Beach location that's got the lake but is also equestrian.

"You could go down and buy property in San Juan [Capistrano], but it's very rare to buy in Newport, and so this is a very special property."

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AN OVERHEAD SHOT of the 2342 Mesa Drive property.

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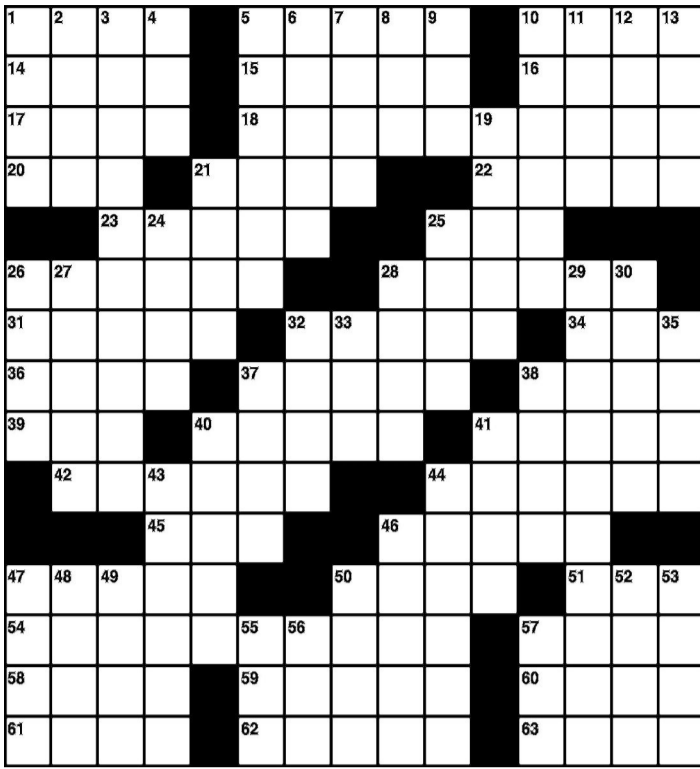
By Jacqueline E. Mathews

ACROSS

- 1 Heroic tale
- 5 Move over a bit
- 10 Insult
- 14 Follow orders
- 15 Tree-dwelling mammal
- 16 Lawn mower brand
- 17 Sand hill
- 18 Has friends over
- 20 Gobbled up
- 21 eBay offers
- 22 Washer cycle
- 23 Safari sighting
- 25 Part of MPH
- 26 Young hogs
- 28 Seashores
- 31 Walkway
- 32 _ mignon
- 34 Massage
- 36 One-act play
- 37 Fortune-teller's deck
- 38 _ away; disappear
- 39 _ up; arrange
- 40 Grate cheese
- 41 U.S. state capital
- 42 Word with solar or digestive
- 44 Many an early Christian saint
- 45 Edgar Allan _
- 46 State-run game
- 47 Shriver or Bello
- 50 Punctuation mark
- 51 Dustcloth
- 54 Precision
- 57 Asian desert
- 58 Parisian mom
- 59 Answer
- 60 No longer valid
- 61 Some of Keats' works
- 62 Largest joints
- 63 Not new

DOWN

- 1 Malt shop order
- 2 Touch on
- 3 Unselfishness
- 4 Thumbs-up vote
- 5 Coils of yarn
- 6 Attached



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.

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

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

- dwelling
- 7 Quaker product
- 8 "Grand _ Opry"
- 9 Paver's goo
- 10 Elevator alternative
- 11 Cut of pork
- 12 Cappuccino
- vessels
- 13 One of the Kennedys
- 19 Special delicacy
- 21 Dogcatcher's risk
- 24 Stop walking
- 25 Verse writer

- 26 Talk like a brat
- 27 Long walks
- 28 Lump of dirt
- 29 Disloyal
- 30 Like a bubble bath
- 32 Rural spread
- 33 Rage
- 35 Thirst quencher
- 37 What "you" used to be
- 38 _ Lauderdale, FL
- 40 Mink's cousin
- 41 Shower alternative
- 43 Cinnamon & nutmeg
- 44 Saunters
- 46 Tureen utensil
- 47 Office note
- 48 Fired from a job
- 49 Seldom seen
- 50 Hoodwink
- 52 Suffix for wash or suit
- 53 Overlay with gold
- 55 Annoy
- 56 Morning hour
- 57 "Knew" homonym

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JOY

Continued from page A2

started doing team-building events and partnering with NEGU in 2017.

"It's incredible to see it go to all of these different countries, everybody coming together for not just her memory but the care," she said. "All of the athletes and stars, it's remarkable to see. Starting it from his house, to a small office, to the last location to this, I'm always in awe of Erik and Stacey and what they've done."

The foundation also has Club NEGU, an 18-month encouragement program, as well as an app called "iNEGU" which drops daily doses of encouragement via video messages from celebrities, professional athletes, Olympians and the Jessie Rees Foundation.

Funds are also being raised to send 17,500 Winter Wonderful jars out this holiday season, to kids unable to go home for the holidays. And more than \$3 million has been dispersed through the Hope for the Holidays program, where families are given \$1,000 checks.

"What started with a jar



JESSIE REES
Foundation co-founder Erik Rees fills a Joy Jar with toys.

Spencer Grant

turns into this relationship," Erik Rees said. "We just try to use different means, no matter if it's through a package on a monthly basis or through a daily drop of video encouragement, to keep these kids going and to encourage them to never ever give up."

Rees said anyone can make a donation or get involved. Each Joy Jar, which is tailored to boys or girls in one of six different age ranges, costs about \$25 to

manufacture and ship. "I'm proud to be Jessie's dad," he said, starting to tear up. "I try to make her proud every day, and it's working. If you follow us on social media, to see a child in a hospital room holding a Joy Jar and smiling, that just brightens my day. That's another child that we were able to touch the way that Jessie originally wanted it."

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LUAU

Continued from page A2

anything we get."

The funds will go to the Maui Strong Fund, created by Hawai'i Community Foundation, which has offices on Maui, O'ahu and Kaua'i and administers a number of grant-making programs and millions of scholarship dollars. The Maui Strong Fund will be used to support evolving needs, like shelter, food, financial assistance and other services as identified by Hawai'i Community Foundation partners on Maui.

"The Maui Strong Fund will provide resources that can be deployed quickly, with a focus on relief and recovery for the devastat-

ing wildfires that are still taking place on Maui," chief executive officer and president of Hawai'i Community Foundation, Micah Kane said in a statement on Aug. 9. "A sincere mahalo to our donors who continue to support our community in the times we need it most."

Besides the event donation, Collins said many of the participating breweries and musical artists have resolved to help as well, by donating their beer to the event or their profits to Maui Strong.

"Jonny Two Bags, who is also a guitarist for Social Distortion, told us he is going to donate, after his expenses, everything he gets from the show," said Collins. "It has become a

communal mission."

Collins and his team have built their business on producing unique, successful events, and he is happy to use that success to help others in need.

"Making no money on this event feels better than any event that I ever made money on," Collins said. "It feels like this is the right thing to do."

Tickets for Left Coast Luau are priced at \$39 for general admission and \$99 for VIP and are available at leftcoastluau.com.

Direct donations to Maui Strong can be made by visiting hawaiicomunityfoundation.org/maui-strong.

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Local charities benefit from Week of Caring

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

At South County Outreach's Food Pantry in Irvine, it is important for labels on the grocery items to face out.

"When we think of clients shopping, it will take them a lot longer to turn every can than if it is already laid out and organized for them," said Xitlaly Luna, volunteer manager at South County Outreach. "We can serve more people that way."

It's a small detail that makes a big difference to families visiting the food pantry, and Luna notes it's a task that takes volunteers.

Thankfully, South County Outreach was inundated with volunteer help on Aug. 8 during Johnson & Johnson MedTech's Week of Caring.

"They are helping us restock, organize stuff and get stuff ready for the next day," said Luna.

Each year, Johnson & Johnson MedTech, based in Irvine, encourages employees to participate in a Week of Caring.

"Volunteerism at our J&J MedTech Irvine campus has always been part of our culture, but officially we started our Week of Caring in 2021," said Kimberly Sanders, manager of global employee engagement. "It is an entirely employee-led volunteer team of employees that come together and really put this entire week on once a year for our teams."

From Aug. 7 to Aug. 10, more than 500 employees participated in volunteer activities at local charities. Besides South County Outreach, employees volunteered with Second Harvest Food Bank, Girls Inc. of O.C., American Red Cross, Thomas House, Beyond Blindness, Dreams for Schools and at a beach cleanup in Laguna Beach.

"We partner with local nonprofit groups that fall into one of three pillars for



Photos by Don Leach | Staff Photographer

A TEAM FROM Johnson & Johnson MedTech organizes food packages during the Johnson & Johnson at the South County Outreach Food Pantry in Irvine. It was one of several voluntary activities during the company's Week of Caring.

VOLUNTEER RAIMUND SEVILLA helps out at South County Outreach Food Pantry.



A JOHNSON & JOHNSON MedTech volunteer stocks items at the South County Outreach Food Pantry.

us," said Sanders, "which are healthcare access, STEM education and building healthy communities. All of the groups we worked with for Week of Caring fall into one of those categories this year."

Employees are paid for their time during Week of Caring, and Sanders said it gives employees a chance to make a positive social impact by addressing various community needs and challenges while also getting a break from the daily

grind. "It is paid time during their normal business day and a chance to get away from their desk, get out and move," said Sanders.

Aug. 8 was day two for J&J's volunteers at South County Outreach, which Sanders said falls under the building healthy communities pillar.

"We are actually here four times this week," said Sanders. "It is only a five-minute drive from our campus, which is so acces-

sible for our teams."

South County Outreach is a hunger and homelessness prevention nonprofit organization that provides rapid-rehousing, food programs and educational programs to help clients develop financial literacy and professional skills.

"Our main mission is helping people help themselves," said Luna. "We are talking about self sufficiency and helping our clients progress in their journey, so hopefully they no

longer need us."

The outreach's food pantry in Irvine distributes 700,000 pounds of food to more than 6,000 residents annually.

"Our food pantry is typically the entry point for most of our clients," said Luna. "That is how they hear about us."

The pantry is a client-choice model that resembles a local grocery store where families can "shop," rather than being handed a presorted box of goods.

"Our clients get more of the fuller grocery store experience," Luna said.

Besides the help with the physical tasks of sorting and organizing food, Luna said hosting volunteer groups like those from J&J MedTech is also an opportunity to spread the word about food insecurity.

"When people come in, we share that Irvine and Lake Forest are the cities we serve the most," said Luna. "For a lot of volunteers, this is where they live, and they don't see that need, so it is actually shocking for people to learn that."

It is also a chance for the organization to let people know what they are in need of at the pantry. With school about to start, for example, Luna said the pantry is running low on peanut butter and jelly since those are popular ingredients for school lunches.

"Things that most pantries don't receive are oils and seasonings. We all have them in our kitchen, but when companies or large groups are organizing a food drive they are thinking of getting 500 pounds of tuna versus getting 10 to 20 pounds of salt and pepper," said Luna.

By the late afternoon all the grocery items were neatly stacked on shelves, with all labels facing out.

While Week of Caring began at J&J's Irvine campus, there are plans to branch out to other divisions this year. Sanders also hopes the Irvine-based teams will take their experience beyond the Week of Caring.

"Long term, the goal is that doing weeks like this will instill teams throughout the year that will say, 'We want to do a team building; let's go back to South County Outreach and do it again.'"

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Don Leach | Staff Photographer

SEVERAL ALMA LAGUNA shoes are displayed on a table in Heisler Park in Laguna Beach.

STEPS

Continued from page A1

ening back to a period where the family lived life on the go. That became the initial pair in a venture that has now become an online start-up company going by the name of Alma Laguna, where most of the styles are priced at \$56 a pair.

“I think it’s really cool he started Alma based on designing shoes as a present for me,” said Mara, who is attending the University of Virginia. “Makes it more special. He’s started several companies, but this time seems different. He’s

more excited and energized about the whole thing. It’s exciting.”

Diving head first into the shoe business wouldn’t be considered out of character for Williams. He has two tattoos of special characters on his wrists — a question mark on the left wrist and an exclamation mark on the right.

“It was one of those semi-impulsive things, but it does have meaning,” Williams said. “Question everything, and then when you’ve made up your mind, you’re all in.”

That checks out. In a matter of months, Williams has introduced dozens of

designs that spark feelings of adventure and nostalgia.

Some locals have become ambassadors of the shoes, including Michael Minutoli, the man who has provided the continuance of Laguna Beach’s beloved greeter.

Eiler Larsen was first in the role, his greetings and good cheer echoing throughout the town. Minutoli has carried on that spirit, twirling and waving to those driving and walking past him.

Both men have been featured on a greeter shoe. Williams approached Min-

See *Steps*, page A9

CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU ANSWERS

S	A	G	A	S	C	O	O	T	S	L	U	R	
O	B	E	Y	K	O	A	L	A	T	O	R	O	
D	U	N	E	E	N	T	E	R	T	A	I	N	S
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S	H	O	A	T	S	C	O	A	S	T	S		
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2	1	4	6	3	8	9	7	5
6	3	9	7	5	1	8	2	4
5	7	8	4	2	9	1	3	6
4	8	6	2	9	3	5	1	7
7	9	3	1	4	5	2	6	8
1	2	5	8	7	6	3	4	9
3	6	2	9	8	7	4	5	1
9	5	7	3	1	4	6	8	2
8	4	1	5	6	2	7	9	3

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²APY = Annual Percentage Yield. As of July 1, 2023, HY Checking earns 4.00% APY on average daily balances between \$2,000-\$15,000. Average daily balances between \$0-\$1,999.99 and over \$15,000 earn .05% APY. Minimum opening deposit is \$25. Dividends earned and ATM fees reimbursed each month you meet the following qualifications: have recurring direct deposit or conduct eDeposits of at least \$500 aggregate for the month and conduct at least eight (8) purchase transactions with your UNIFY debit card.

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Cardiac Specialists Join Forces: Comprehensive AFib Program

The comprehensive AFib Program at MemorialCare Orange Coast Medical Center brings together electrophysiologists and cardiothoracic surgeons to offer a range of AFib treatments tailored to each patient’s individual need.

At times, AFib (atrial fibrillation), a condition that causes an irregular heart rate, can be managed by medication. In other cases, more advanced treatments can provide patients permanent relief.

“We knew that we wanted to build a comprehensive AFib Program that could help anyone in our community – whether AFib is paroxysmal or persistent,” says Nikhil Warriar, M.D., medical director, Electrophysiology, Orange Coast Medical Center. “From medical therapy, minimally invasive catheter ablations, to the Convergent procedure which involves surgical intervention, we offer a host of treatment options.”

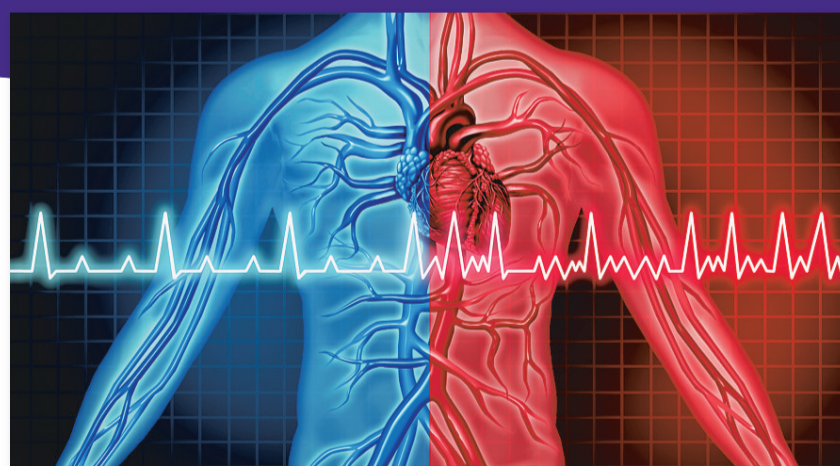
The MemorialCare Heart & Vascular Institute at Orange Coast Medical Center is one of the leading hospitals in the country with physicians specializing in cutting-edge minimally invasive heart and vascular procedures to treat AFib and other heart diseases. In addition to cardiac ablation and the Convergent procedure, Orange Coast Medical Center offers treatments such as the WATCHMAN procedure.

The WATCHMAN FLX device – about the size of a quarter and made from very light and compact materials commonly used in many other medical implants – is permanently implanted into the heart to prevent blood clots in the left atrial appendage from escaping and entering the bloodstream.

The WATCHMAN FLX device can help prevent strokes in patients with AFib without the need for long term blood thinners.

The Convergent procedure involves a collaborative effort between the electrophysiologist and cardiothoracic surgeon to treat chronic AFib. The Convergent procedure is a combination of minimally invasive surgical treatment with catheter ablation to provide the best results for patients with persistent AFib.

“The procedure is a hybrid intervention that combines minimally invasive heart surgery with electrophysiology ablation,” says Rachel Hargrove, M.D., cardiothoracic surgeon, Orange Coast Medical Center. “The surgeon makes a small incision in the chest,



inserts a catheter and uses radiofrequency ablation to block irregular electrical signals. Patients are brought back subsequently for the traditional catheter ablation at a later date to complete the Convergent ablation procedure. This allows for both epicardial and endocardial ablation of cardiac tissues that cause AFib.”

“We’re proud to offer our patients more innovative options that are less invasive and have high success rates,” says Tuan Lam, M.D., cardiothoracic surgeon, Orange Coast Medical Center. “It is an honor and privilege for our team to care for our community.”

Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in Orange County and across the country. In response to the growing need within the community for advanced heart and vascular care, Orange Coast Medical Center assembled a team of leading heart specialists to develop MemorialCare Heart & Vascular Institute, which offers the latest in advanced technologies and innovative treatments to provide you with expert care for your AFib from prevention to diagnosis and treatment.

To learn more about the comprehensive heart and vascular care, providers and services offered at Orange Coast Medical Center, visit MemorialCare.org/heart.



forum

COLUMN | PATRICE APODACA

We can all do our part to save monarch butterflies

I've grown a bit obsessed with monarch butterflies. And who could blame me? It's hard to imagine a more charming creature, with its stunning orange and black wings that enable a delicate, fluttering aerial dance, a delight to behold.



Mexico and back, and though the round trip occurs over multiple generations, monarchs have been known to fly hundreds, even thousands, of miles.

The Western monarch's migration patterns are more complicated and difficult to follow. But in Allen's youth, during the winter months they could be found up and down the coast, hanging out in trees and seeking nectar to drink before moving on or, in some cases, staying put.

He recalled that at San Clemente State Beach in the 1980s wintertime monarch numbers could reach 20,000 or more. Within about a decade, they were nearly gone.

"Some years there were none," he said. "In 2010 I counted 200. The next year there were handfuls. It's been like that ever since."

It's not too late to turn this destructive trend around. The good news is that, unlike many of today's devastating, complex environmental problems, this one has a relatively straightforward solution. And each of us can do our part.

My interest in monarchs was kick-started about six months ago, when I wrote about the new "Butterfly Garden" in Newport Beach's Eastbluff community. The homeowners association there had decided to replant a neighborhood park with native plants that attract pollinators and require minimal water.



Courtesy of Patrice Apodaca

A MONARCH BUTTERFLY raised and photographed outside Patrice Apodaca's home.

That's when I learned that monarchs depend on native milkweed plants. They lay their eggs on these plants, and the caterpillars that hatch from those eggs eat the leaves until they are ready to enter the chrysalis stage, from which the adult butterflies emerge a few weeks later.

At the time, my husband — an avid gardener — had just completed a redesign of our backyard garden, with an emphasis on drought-tolerant and pollinator-friendly nectar plants. One type of plant was missing, however — native milkweed. He soon remedied that oversight.

About a month ago, he beckoned me to the garden. There, on the native milkweed, were about a dozen monarch caterpillars munching away. I have never in my life been so excited to see a bug.

In the days that followed we monitored their progress, watching and waiting like expectant parents, even checking on them in the middle of the night. When they stripped all the leaves from one plant, I rushed out and bought two more.

We lost track of most of the caterpillars, and their fates remain unknown, but we waited vigil over two chrysalises that had

formed on a nearby plant. We didn't see them hatch, but the results were evident when we spotted a few monarchs flitting about the yard, no doubt searching for nectar. And the cycle continues — we now have a new generation of caterpillars. Funny how that works.

This wondrous circle-of-life process is not without its dangers, a fact that was driven home when I spotted a monarch stuck in a giant spider's web, dangling about 15 feet above the ground beside a neighbor's house. My husband, a man of action, set out with ladder and pole to rescue the captured butterfly.

He used the pole to pull down the web and then gently, oh so gently, removed the sticky threads from the monarch's fragile wings. The reward for his effort was to see it flap its lovely wings and fly away, seemingly unimpaired.

It's worth emphasizing again that, spiders and other predators such as birds and lizards aside, it is we humans that pose the greatest risk to the continued existence of monarchs. Yet, as evidenced by the feverish demand for native milkweed plants at local garden centers recently, word is spreading, and the motivation to save them is gaining momentum.

While we're busy rescuing the monarchs from ourselves, we must also recognize that they are far from the only victims of our abuse of the native habitats upon which countless species depend.

"The monarch becomes an indicator — an iconic and well loved indicator — of what's happening to a lot of organisms," said Mike Evans, president and founder of the Tree of Life Nursery in San Juan Capistrano.

"I really want everyone to hear the big picture message."

Let's give him reason to believe that the message has been received.

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

MAILBAG

A note to H.B. residents unhappy with their council

Not to despair, citizens of Huntington Beach. Here in Costa Mesa we also had a conservative takeover a little more than a decade ago, and while they were a bit more tame in their

attempts to upset the apple cart, so to speak (but just barely), they were nonetheless their own wrecking crew. Term limits, good centrist candidates and good old-fashioned angry voters got rid of them. What is it with conservatives that they seemingly always have to be so radical? It's glaringly obvious today's conservatives certainly are a different bunch since the political ascent of

you-know-who. Or maybe they've always been this way? I don't know. But I do know that instead of anger-inducing Daily Pilot articles, today Costa Mesa seems to mostly be humming along with occasional articles about what's happening at City Hall for the good of citizens instead of unpopular and divisive changes to things that are mostly working well. But while things are quiet here in Mesa, I do wish more citizens would vote in our elections. Turnout here is typically in the 30% of registered voters, and I'm always dismayed by that. The vote of the people is the most powerful tool a representative democracy has, and too many take it for granted and don't participate. We fail to exercise this right at our own peril.

Mike Aguilar
Costa Mesa

An ill wind is about to blow through Huntington Beach, and it will have nothing to do with hurri-

canes and tornadoes. It has everything to do with the City Charter changes being proposed by the conservative City Council majority. It will be an EF-3 or greater civic crisis. While we can't do much to stave off an actual wind event, we can and should be prepared to stave off this civic catastrophe. The citizenry must be warned.

In April 1775, British troops were ordered to arrest colonial leaders and then seize arms and provisions. When the plot was discovered, Paul Revere and William Dawes set off on their "midnight rides" to warn the principals and the citizenry that "the 'regulars' (erroneously reported by some as the 'redcoats') are coming!" Luckily, the warnings worked, leaders John Hancock and Samuel Adams escaped, and the arsenal in Concord was alerted. I will be happy to play a role that many will share in alerting the citizenry that "the 'reactionaries' are coming (erro-

neously reported by some as the 'right-wingers!')

In order for any ballot initiatives to appear on the March 2024 primary ballot, they must be finalized by Dec. 8, 2023. Many of the 11 proposed charter amendments would give more power to the council majority and less power to the community and its voices. One of the most obnoxious and dangerous proposals (by Casey McKeon) is to make it clear that the city attorney is the city's exclusive legal counsel. This would not only vest the current city attorney with more power but make it more difficult to challenge his legal opinions as previous councils have thought about doing. It would hinder future council majorities from getting independent second opinions on questionable (and potentially harmful) decisions rendered by a rogue city attorney. Other amendments would have the exact opposite effect of giving voters "greater confi-

dence" in the outcome of local elections. It would lead to "confidence fraud," a con game, where the suckers are innocent members of the Surf City electorate. These authoritarian amendments were opposed by powerless council minority members and many community leaders.

We should not sanction this power grab by enshrining its predations in our City Charter. Like Paul Revere and others, many of us must be prepared to put ourselves on the line and go to every corner of the city to cry "the reactionaries are coming!" We must pay close attention to what plots the 'reactionaries' are hatching and work to thwart them. I don't know if it will take a revolution to rid ourselves of the right-wing tyranny that is seeking to dominate us, but we can adopt one of their slogans that says it all, "Don't tread on me!"

Tim Geddes
Huntington Beach

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STEPS

Continued from page A7

utoli with a partnership in mind. He said Minutoli has been given promotional cards, and when a greeter exclusive code is used, Williams pays him a commission of \$10 per pair sold.

"When I thought through what's iconic, like, 'What can I do that's kind of iconic,' he was at the top of that list," Williams said. "It's because of what he's done, just sticking with it and doing what he does and smiling."

Minutoli could not be found during a sweep of known greeter hangouts on Thursday morning.

Joan Gladstone, an oil painter who shows at the Sawdust Art Festival, has been wearing the greeter shoes ever since she spotted Minutoli wearing them. He had been performing in front of the greeter statue outside Sapphire restaurant on the corner of Brooks Street and Coast Highway.

"I've lived in Laguna about 30 years and started noticing Michael dancing, but then I began talking with him, and I found that he's a beautiful soul," Gladstone said. "There's a dichotomy in Michael. There's the showman, who spins and yells at the cars, but there's this very deep person who is caring about everyone he meets, from the littlest children who break out into gigantic smiles to everyone."

Gladstone, who took a card from Minutoli before ordering the greeter shoes, now wears them in her booth. When people ask her about them, she distributes a card so that the current-day greeter can benefit.

Williams also created a Laguna Beach class of 2023 shoe. More designs based on experiences are in development. The production line has become a bit of a popularity contest, as he has allowed the public to choose their favorite designs before they are put on footwear.

"Success, in most companies, kills creativity, because once you're successful, businesses become an exercise in risk management," said Williams, who is enjoying the flexibility of being a small business owner. "I've got the luxury of, 'I can do whatever I want,' and get feedback from cool people. At least I have that freedom to just kind of have fun."

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Don Leach | Staff Photographer

JAY WILLIAMS sits with a pair of his Laguna Beach greeter shoes, with images of palm trees and two well-known local greeters.

A STATUE PAYS tribute to the original Laguna Beach greeter Eiler Larsen on the corner of Brooks Street and Coast Highway.



Andrew Turner



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

THE HEEL of a blue Alma Laguna shoe depicts the lifeguard tower on Laguna Beach's Main Beach.

EXPERIENCE

Sawdust Art Festival

OPEN DAILY THRU SEPTEMBER 3RD

- ART**
 Shop handcrafted art by 168 local artists in a variety of artistic media, including glass, jewelry, painting, textiles, ceramics and mixed media.
- NATURE**
 Held outdoors in a eucalyptus grove in the heart of Laguna Canyon, the festival features a handcrafted artisan village, with free art classes and exciting demonstrations.
- MUSIC**
 Sawdust offers live music and entertainment daily on three stages, featuring local musicians and bands.

FREE ART CLASSES

- ART SPOT**
 Featuring art for the little ones! Crafts, painting, mixed media and more, for ages 6 and under.
- CERAMIC CENTER**
 Guests of all ages are welcome to hop on the pottery wheel for a one-on-one instruction. Greenware is free to take home!
- STUDIO ONE**
 Classes for ages 7 to adult, in painting, mixed media, printmaking and more! Many classes are taught by professional Sawdust artists.

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