

Daily Pilot

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2020 /// Now including Coastline Pilot and Huntington Beach Independent /// dailypilot.com

For fifth year in a row, hate crimes rise in O.C.

The nonprofit Orange County Human Relations Commission's annual review cites 83 in 2019, most of them based on race, national origin or ethnicity.

BY ANH DO

From slurs to physical confrontations, hate crimes in Orange County rose in 2019 for the fifth year in a row, and by a huge leap, 24%.

The findings were released this week by the nonprofit Orange

County Human Relations Commission in its 2019 Hate Crimes Report. The review cited 83 hate crimes documented by community groups, education institutions and law enforcement.

The annual report, which detailed 67 hate crimes in 2018, covers both hate crimes and hate in-

cidents, the latter of which dropped from 165 two years earlier to 156 last year.

A majority of the crimes involved the perpetrator attacking the victim for his or her race, national origin or ethnicity.

See *Hate*, page A9

"We cannot allow fear, hatred and bigotry to divide us. We must listen to one another, communicate respectfully, build bridges of understanding and support each other through these traumatic events."

— Michael Reynolds

Chair of the Orange County Human Relations Commission



Photos by Scott Smeltzer | Staff Photographer

GUESTS REACT to a character at the "Tunnel of Terror" at Russell Fischer Xpress Car Wash in Huntington Beach on Thursday.

Huntington Beach's haunted car wash provides the scares

BY MATT SZABO

They may appear playful, even if the chainsaws they sometimes carry suggest otherwise.

Zombies and monsters are occupying Russell Fischer Xpress car wash in Huntington Beach as Halloween night creeps closer, after the Beach Boulevard business put together what it calls the "Tunnel of Terror."

Participants go through the car wash like normal, and their car gets washed like normal. They don't get out of the car — but that doesn't mean someone wearing a scary mask

See *Scares*, page A6



GUESTS TAKE pictures of a weapon-wielding character at the "Tunnel of Terror" haunted car wash.

Santa Ana officers who fatally shot armed Fountain Valley man are cleared by Orange County district attorney's office

BY ANDREW TURNER

Two Santa Ana police officers have been cleared by the Orange County district attorney's office after an investigation into an officer-involved shooting that killed an armed Fountain Valley man in January.

Investigators found that Offi-

cers Gavin Roelofs and Josh Espadas are not criminally culpable after reviewing the Jan. 20 incident, which resulted in the death of Miguel Segura Mercado, 31, during a struggle with police.

Police had arrived at an apartment on La Hacienda Avenue to apprehend Mercado as a suspect in an investigation into lewd and

lascivious acts with a minor.

The district attorney's office released a letter detailing the findings of the investigation into the officer-involved shooting. The report said that Roelofs and Espadas did not give voluntary statements concerning the incident.

The letter states that a struggle

occurred after Mercado attempted to flee.

Roelofs and Espadas arrived at the apartment and spoke with Mercado's parents, who according to the report said that both themselves and Mercado were aware of an accusation of inap-

See *Cleared*, page A8

Laguna secondary schools reopening scheduled

Board of education votes on plan to return for hybrid learning Nov. 23.

BY ANDREW TURNER

The Laguna Beach Unified School District has a date in place for the potential return of secondary school students to campus.

The district's board of education voted 4-1 on Thursday night to approve a plan for the start of hybrid learning at Thurston Middle School and Laguna Beach High School on Nov. 23.

Board Clerk Carol Normandin was the lone dissenter. Normandin has repeatedly expressed concerns about a need for COVID-19 testing in issues regarding a return of students to school sites. The district is offering optional testing.

Students would be divided into cohorts and come to class for in-person learning twice a week, with distance learning in effect for all students on Friday.

"The first week will be Thanksgiving week, which we have school on Monday and Tuesday, so it will be a Monday and Tuesday schedule," District Supt. Dr. Jason Vilorio said. "It will allow the students to come on campus ... one time that week and get used to the flow."

See *Secondary*, page A8

ALSO FROM THE DAILY PILOT:



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

GARDEN GROUNDS TURN SPOOKY FOR WEEKEND
PAGE A7

HUNTINGTON BEACH HIGH PITCHER BEN JACOBS GAINS MATURITY, COMMITS TO UC IRVINE PAGE A10

Costa Mesa exploring community choice energy partnership

BY SARA CARDINE

Costa Mesa officials expressed interest Tuesday in partnering with the city of Irvine in a Community Choice Energy program that would allow member municipalities to purchase and sell electricity, a move that could stabilize rates and fund community energy programs.

Such a move is sanctioned by California Assembly Bill 117, a 2002 law that allows local governments to offer an alternative electric power option to constituents to investor-owned utilities, such as Southern California Edison, which currently operates Costa Mesa's power grid.

Under the community choice model, Edison would continue to distribute the power, while a city-

formed joint powers authority (JPA) would have the power to establish rates, create more local microgrids, increase reliance on renewable energy sources and direct revenue toward community programs and efforts of their choosing.

The city of Irvine has agreed to lead the charge and has been soliciting potential city members throughout Orange County to join the program and help file an implementation plan with the California Public Utilities commission by a Dec. 31 deadline.

Irvine has paid \$150,000 for consultant support — a cost member cities would agree to split evenly upon joining — and will take out a loan of \$2 million to \$2.5 million in pre-launch costs and another \$10 million to

\$20 million to acquire energy resources.

Under the program, Edison would continue to distribute power to residents and businesses.

In return, the JPA would pay back the loan amount through revenues generated in the first few years of the program, and Irvine would have two representative voices on the authority board, compared to other cities' single vote.

Ryan Baron, special counsel to the city of Irvine, said council members would have to approve an agreement with Irvine soon to get the ball rolling in time for a January 2022 implementation.

Waiting would delay to another

See *Energy*, page A8

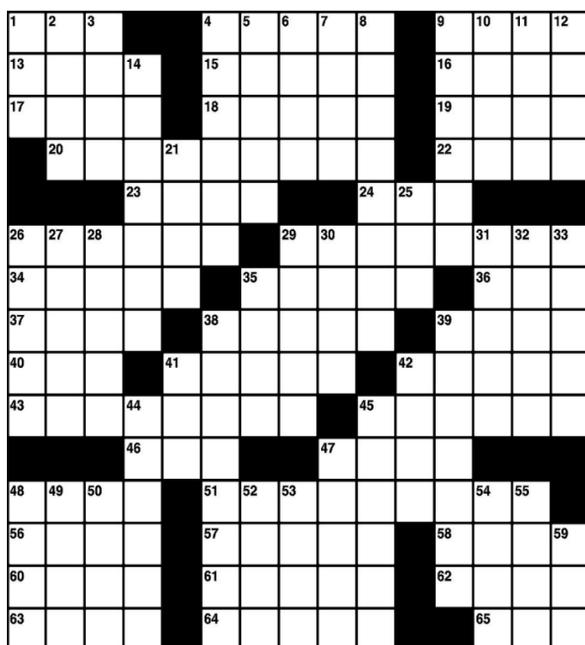


Don Kelsen | Los Angeles Times

COSTA MESA officials expressed interest Tuesday in partnering with the city of Irvine in a Community Choice Energy program that would allow member municipalities to purchase and sell electricity.

THE DAILY COMMUTER PUZZLE

By Jacqueline E. Mathews



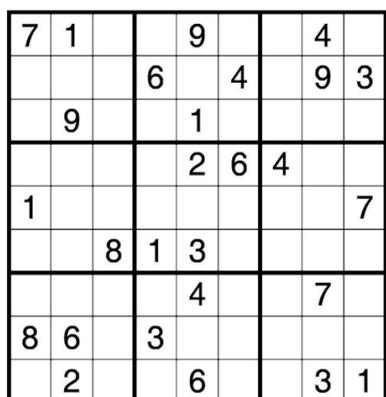
ACROSS

- 1 Response to a texter's pun
 - 4 Marsh
 - 9 Perched atop
 - 13 Do _ with; eliminate
 - 15 Blanket
 - 16 Number of regular innings
 - 17 Lucie Arnaz's brother
 - 18 Of sheep
 - 19 Lobster's extremity
 - 20 _ to the plate; took action
 - 22 Part of the eye
 - 23 Claim against property
 - 24 Commotion
 - 26 Dodges
 - 29 Trail off from others
 - 34 Cried for a bowl of milk
 - 35 Televised
 - 36 Sunbeam
 - 37 Actor Garrett
 - 38 Yearned
 - 39 Fisherman's hope
 - 40 Tee's forerunner
 - 41 Stick out; protrude
 - 42 One of Santa's reindeer
 - 43 Practice
 - 45 Waist-length jacket
 - 46 Beret or tam
 - 47 Ship's commander: abbr.
 - 48 Piece of china
 - 51 Insulting
 - 56 Nabisco snack
 - 57 Dinner course
 - 58 Christmas carol
 - 60 Region
 - 61 Uneven
 - 62 Ms. Lollobrigida
 - 63 Wraps up
 - 64 Made clothing
 - 65 Harrison or Reed
- DOWN**
- 1 Youth
 - 2 Has debts
 - 3 Final
 - 4

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 A5.

- Gastroenterology tools
- 5 Made with a loom
- 6 Needing no encouragement
- 7 List of dishes
- 8 Readied
- 9 Do a plumber's job
- 10 Heap
- 11 _ even keel
- 12 Walter Cronkite's field
- 14 Caved in
- 21 "The _ Piper of Hamelin"
- 25 Family member
- 26 Glowing bit of coal

- 27 Poem division
- 28 _ in; inundated by
- 29 Burn the edges of
- 30 "You're barking up the wrong _!"
- 31 Embedded dirt
- 32 Procrastinator's word
- 33 See _ eye; agree
- 35 Has a bug
- 38 For all practical _; in reality
- 39 Leaving suddenly
- 41 Sheepish remark
- 42 Chronic lung disease
- 44 Canyon bouncebacks
- 45 _ together; united
- 47 Stop
- 48 _ off; fall asleep
- 49 Press clothes
- 50 _ away; dismiss
- 52 Rider's charge
- 53 Move smoothly, like a stream
- 54 Pinot _; popular red wine
- 55 Kelly or Wilder
- 59 Calif.'s busiest airport

Tribune Media Services



File Photo

NEWPORT HARBOR has about 1,200 moorings over 12 mooring fields.

Newport Beach City Council on Tuesday to consider new language changes in the city's Harbor Code

On Tuesday, the Newport Beach City Council will consider additional adjustments to the city's Harbor Code on the requirements for live-aboards — essentially, houseboats — in commercial marinas. The recommendations come from the Harbor Commission, which formed an ad hoc committee in 2018 to review Title 17, also known as the city's Harbor Code, to identify potential areas for modification. As part of that discussion, council

members requested that the Harbor Commission review language surrounding live-aboards. Proposed revisions to city code would include adding language to expand live-aboards to commercial marinas under certain circumstances and ensuring that all vessels are capable of operating from their berthing place. It would also include language to clarify that offshore moorings would be subject to a 7% limitation. This limit would not apply to commercial marinas.

Current regulations state that live-aboards are prohibited at piers bayward of residentially zoned areas and that no individuals are allowed to live on any vessel with an onshore mooring and cannot live on an offshore mooring without a permit. City staff also recommends clarifying public anchorage regulations to state that anchoring a vessel is only allowed in designated anchorages and that the vessel must be attended to at all times.

— Lilly Nguyen

SIGN UP FOR TIMESOC NEWSLETTER

Twice a week, we bring you the latest on Orange County from Orange County, with the best of all the journalism from the Daily Pilot, the Los Angeles Times and TimesOC. The TimesOC newsletter keeps you up to date on the county's diverse communities and shifting political landscape, its coastlines and environment and how it's grappling with issues from immigration to education, from housing to healthcare. Every Wednesday and Friday, expect us to deliver the news that matters most to your community — from business to entertainment to science to food — and explore what it means for you. We also equip you for your weekends in Orange County, from its beaches to the future of high school sports. You can sign up at latimes.com/oc-newsletter.

fall is happening at

THE BUNGALOW

RESTAURANT WEEK

Uncorked

Continues!

RESTAURANT WEEK
Uncorked

THE BUNGALOW

RESTAURANT WEEK MENU CONTINUED FOR THE MONTH OF OCTOBER (SUNDAY THROUGH WEDNESDAY)

DINNER MENU
Fifty Dollars Per Guest – Three Courses Included
Please choose one selection from each course

FIRST COURSE SELECTIONS
Corn Chowder
Fresh corn, Applewood smoked bacon
Bungalow Salad
Greens, hearts of palm, olives, feta, red onion, bay shrimp, tarragon vinaigrette
Classic Caesar Salad
Chopped hearts of romaine, herb croutons, tomato, shaved Manchego

ENTRÉE SELECTIONS
Prime Filet Mignon
Eight ounce prime filet mignon, Yukon Gold mashed potatoes, fried shallots
New York Strip
Fourteen ounce prime New York strip, horseradish potato gratin
California Chicken Breast
Pan-seared chicken breast, oven-roasted tomatoes, avocado, Yukon Gold mashed potatoes
Double Pork Chop
Thick cut grilled all natural pork chop, creamy caramelized onion barley risotto, creamed kale, sherry sauce
Miso Marinated Chilean Sea Bass
Soy glaze, coconut rice, stir-fried vegetables, mushrooms, lemongrass ginger beurre blanc
Blackened King Salmon
Yukon Gold mashed potatoes, avocado relish, honey jalapeno beurre blanc

ENTRÉE SELECTIONS – TEN DOLLAR SUPPLEMENT
Bone-In Rib Eye
Sixteen ounce prime bone-in rib eye, Yukon Gold mashed potatoes, fried onion strings
Australian Lobster Tail
Ten ounce, drawn butter, grilled lemon, Yukon Gold mashed potatoes

DESSERT SELECTIONS
New York Style Cheesecake
Fresh whipped cream, raspberry coulis
Vanilla Crème Brulee
Vanilla custard, fresh raspberries
Berries & Ice Cream
Fresh seasonal berries, vanilla bean ice cream

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forum

COMMENTARY | JOSEPH KLUNDER

I've learned lessons in China that Newport-Mesa can apply to the COVID fight

Here in China, the novel coronavirus has run its course, and the situation is now well-contained.

Except for getting temperatures checked with an electronic scanner every time someone enters or exits a building, school or business, life routines have returned to normal.

I have seen what has worked and failed. About eight months ago, I wrote how coordination across agencies could mitigate the coronavirus spread across Newport-Mesa.

Now, I write about how our local community of Newport-Mesa can contain the virus and hopefully move back to life as normal.

The most important thing anyone can do is to stay at home as much as possible. While no one in China liked staying in their apartment complex — it was boring, we all put on a little weight — a month of total lockdown and several months of heavy restriction ensured that the highly contagious coronavirus would not spread outside families that were already infected.

China adapted. Many schools and businesses went online. I founded my own online teaching company and taught a university course.

Second, for those who have a passion for civil liberties, I would ask them to find safer and more effective ways than protesting outside without a mask.

Even in Chinese national

news, we saw the video clips of arrests at Mother's Market in Costa Mesa and people licking mall windows in Huntington Beach.

Newport-Mesa has many beautiful and exciting things, rather than this extreme behavior. Had these protesters written many letters to key civic leaders, created websites or written opinion articles in newspapers, their efforts might have seemed more persuasive and reasonable.

Third, let us all try to band together to support local relief agencies. Although our income has been meager during this time, we can set an example in helping those who have almost nothing and cannot easily get employment.

I anxiously spent my last few dollars using express mail to send masks and protective equipment to clinics in the UK and paying the medical bills for some of my mentees in Africa.

Yet I knew I had made the right choice when I saw people genuinely cry tears of joy when they see people helping them, believing it to be a godsend, whether in religious places like Nigeria or Scotland or non-religious places like China.

I support our local religious organizations and community colleges, such as Orange Coast College and Coastline College, for setting up comprehensive food pantries, medical clinics with general care, emergency and psychiatric care.

For the homeless or near-homeless, these efforts may be



Getty Images

A FAMILY wears protective plastic covers and masks as they walk after checking in to a flight in Beijing, China.

lifesaving in this time of crisis.

Fourth, instead of forcing schools open, I recommend people take this time to try to become healthier at home. Among some of my mentees are current or former prisoners.

From what I have seen, they can get impressive results from putting forth great effort, focus

and dedication with different exercise routines, using minimum space, often without equipment.

Lastly, I recommend anyone

use this time further their education, preferably with community college classes.

As both a perpetual college student and a university-level

teacher, I can say community colleges, such as Coastline, have performed even better than my Ivy League university or top-ranked public schools like UCLA during this crisis.

JOSEPH KLUNDER is a former Newport Beach resident who now teaches and lives in Beijing.

MAILBAG

We must confront the twin pandemics of police violence, racism

Kurt Andras Reinhold was shot dead by Orange County sheriff's deputies in broad daylight on Sept. 23.

Clearly the coronavirus is not the only plague we are confronted with in the United States. Racism (Reinhold was a 42-year-old homeless Black man) and deadly police violence are running rampant across the nation.

What's more, the deputies who fired the deadly shots into Reinhold's body were supposedly homeless services officers trained to deescalate high tension situations, yet these deputies ended up killing the jaywalking Reinhold. This hardly seems to be an act deescalation given the circumstances.

Social workers, mental health professionals and community educators are the sorts of people that ought to be available to provide direction and services to those suffering from mental illness and/or homelessness.

Ben Miles

Huntington Beach

Election guides are a starting point

By now most Orange County voters have received their Sample Ballot and Voter Information Guide in the mail. Let me start by giving a big shout out to the County Registrar of Voters Neil Kelley. He has done an outstanding job for many years.

Before I became involved with local civic affairs some 20 years ago, I based a significant chunk of my decision-making on the candidate statements contained in the guide. Regrettably, they are not always an accurate reflection of the candidates.

For example, much of what is in the Michelle Steel statement is not borne out by the facts or her performance.

Steel does not have a track record of common sense leadership (as does her opponent, Rep. Harley Rouda), a record of supporting middle-class constituents as opposed to partisan special interests or a record on health-care reform that protects all those served by the Affordable Care Act (which she opposes).

While her personal narrative is touching, her blind obedience to President Trump by pushing to open businesses and schools early without plans or protections flies in the face of putting people over politics.

Voters must push themselves to do more than vote their party affiliation or what partisan propaganda urges them to do. They must actually look at who best represents their interests and who can provide problem-solving leadership that is honest and fair. The guides voters received in the mail should only be a starting point to reach an informed choice.

Tim Geddes

Huntington Beach

Favoring one candidate over another

As a Costa Mesa voter, I think it is important to speak out when there is a questionable candidate running for City Council, and Don Harper is that candidate. Based on past participation in city commissions and committees, support for proven failed city governance practices and endorsements from the same politicians the city has been trying to recover from for the last few years, I do not recommend voting for him.

Instead, I support attorney John Stephens for District 1 who, as a Costa Mesa councilman since 2016 and unanimously appointed mayor pro tem since 2018, is a much stronger candidate on all counts.

According to City Council and commission and committee agendas and minutes, not only did Harper have inconsistent attendance, but he resigned before serving out his full term on the Parks and Recreation Commission. Also, he only attended two of 10 meetings of the Finance and Pension Advisory Committee before resigning with one year left on his two-year term.

Mayor Pro Tem Stephens on the other hand, has not missed a meeting in four years.

Based on Harper's campaign website, he wants to run the city like a business. However, Costa Mesa is a service organization. It provides services to its residents and it is



Richard Winton | Los Angeles Times

KURT REINHOLD at Kenneth Hahn soccer fields during an AYSO match in Ladera on Nov. 25, 2018. A Daily Pilot reader writes that Reinhold's killing during an encounter with O.C. sheriff's deputies in San Clemente suggests the nation is seeing a plague of police violence.

not a for-profit company. A few years ago, council members and mayors Jim Righeimer and Steve Mensinger tried running the city like a business. This approach resulted in a historic decline in our police force and public safety.

By comparison, Stephens has consistently supported the Police Department and improving public safety. He has also supported restoration of Fire Department staffing and established the hospital transport system.

It is unimaginable that Harper would claim the endorsements from some of the same unpopular past council members that caused the decline in public safety. Also, who can forget that these same endorsees attempted, not once but twice to grab power by pushing a flawed city charter onto the residents of Costa Mesa? Both attempts failed by significant margins.

Stephens opposed the flawed charters, and when the 2012 effort missed a filing date, he defended the rule of law by successfully arguing to uphold the filing deadlines during a lawsuit between the city, led at the time by Righeimer and Mensinger, and the Orange County Registrar of Voters.

On all counts I support Mayor Pro Tem John Stephens for District 1 over the wrongheaded Don Harper.

Charles Mooney

Costa Mesa

America will win this latest war

I read with interest Sandy Asper's commentary in the Daily Pilot on Sept. 25, "Are we using kids as human guinea pigs?"

Asper references "World War II when kids were experiencing bombs nightly during the blitz." I can attest to her comments because my twin sister and I were 6 years old in London when war broke out in 1939.

We were sent out of London to stay with strangers because of the bombing. However, the stay was short-lived because of strong family ties, so we returned to London. Our schooling was disrupted from 1940 to 1945. To make up for this loss we had to go to year-round school attendance.

Did we make up for this loss? We had no way to really measure it until 1947. My family moved to New York, and my sister and I were placed in the eighth grade at school. This lasted less than a week as both my sister and I were

See **Mailbag**, page A6

COMMENTARY | STEVE SMITH

It's time for the school board to pass the torch to the next generation

Technology has changed almost everything we do. Today's young adults shop differently, work differently, play differently and communicate differently than my generation. I am 65.

This may be good or bad, but one area in which the new technology has had its great impact is in education.

In the past six weeks, the Newport-Mesa Unified School District has reversed two major initiatives at the last minute. One was the "4x4" learning schedule and the other was the delay of school reopenings just five days before students were due to return.

It would be easy to blame these recent miscues on the pandemic, but that is not the root of the problem. The pandemic is merely a vehicle to show us that all across the education spectrum, all across

the country, it is time for new, younger leadership.

Many of the young adults running for education-related offices grew up with the technology that is increasingly dominating the school learning experience. Those a bit older, say, in their 40s, are still light years closer to the rapid changes in technology than my generation.

For both groups of younger candidates, the technology is second nature.

Today's students deserve school board members who are closer in age to their learning experience. They deserve representatives, elected and hired, who understand what technology can and cannot accomplish because they have been living with it their entire lives.

This is the main reason

See **Torch**, page A6

COMMENTARY | SON VU

Political signs don't speak to this Newport-Mesa parent

Perhaps I'm just a cynic. But I believe political campaigns are breeding grounds for exaggeration and distortions of the truth, not to mention other unsavory practices of candidates.

I'm not saying all candidates engage in such behavior, but we all know it happens. I found myself insulted enough by one local candidate for Newport-Mesa's school board whose signs urge readers to "Re-elect the Parents' Choice," that I had to share my outrage in this letter.

As a parent with elementary-aged children in the Newport-Mesa school district, I keep getting disappointed by the decisions the current board has been making during the pandemic. Whenever I see signs for the incumbent for

Zone 1, Vicki Snell, my blood boils at her bold declaration that voters should "Re-elect the parents' choice."

I am a parent who lives in the Zone 1 area, and she is not my choice. And while she is a parent, she isn't one with any children currently in the Newport-Mesa Unified School District. I wouldn't be so heated over this if she had stated something more like, "four out of five parents approve."

But her overbroad, misleading statement that she is the choice of parents offends me. I understand that candidates have to do what they can to get the votes, but misleading voters is unacceptable to me.

I can recall the last elec-

See **Signs**, page A6

AROUND TOWN

Laguna Beach Pride 365 to host 'Spooktacular Virtual Drag Bingo'

Laguna Beach Pride 365 will host a "Spooktacular Virtual Drag Bingo" fundraiser next week, just in time for Halloween.

The event will be held virtually over Zoom on Thursday at 6 p.m. A limited number of bingo cards are available in advance for free at lagunabeachpride.org/bingo.

Those participating in drag bingo will be able to play for prizes. As part of the fundraiser, Laguna Beach Pride 365 will be collecting donations to benefit the Friendship Shelter.

The Friendship Shelter is a Laguna Beach-based nonprofit organization that assists homeless adults by providing both shelter and rehabilitation services.

Craig Cooley, the president of Laguna Beach Pride 365, said the organization has a goal of raising \$5,000 for the Friendship Shelter with the free-to-play fundraiser.

Cooley added that the series of community fundraisers, which will total four through the end of the year, are endorsed by the city of Laguna Beach and the Laguna Beach Chamber of Commerce.

Laguna Beach Pride 365's first drag bingo event ben-

efited the Laguna Food Pantry. There will be similar events to benefit charity in Laguna Beach and those most adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in November and December.

National Academy of Medicine elects UCI professor

Kyriacos Athanasiou, a UC Irvine distinguished professor of biomedical engineering, has been elected to the National Academy of Medicine.

Athanasiou is one of 90 new U.S. members announced this week, in addition to 10 others internationally.

He was inducted to the academy "for inventing, developing and translating technologies, such as articular cartilage implants and methods for intraosseous infusion, that impact several biomedical fields, including orthopedics, maxillofacial surgery, tissue engineering, diabetes and emergency care," according to the NAM citation.

Athanasiou specializes in developing advanced engineered tissues. He is known for making implants that help cartilage heal and repair itself, the university said in a news release Thursday.

The scaffolds provided the first cartilage implant to

treat joint defects and have been used as bone and dental fillers.

"I am honored to have been elected a member of the National Academy of Medicine," Athanasiou said in a statement.

"The recognition, which would not have been possible without the contributions of my students and colleagues at UCI and other institutions throughout my career, highlights the importance of developing a fundamental understanding of the key engineering principles that govern the human body, inventing new ways to treat acquired and congenital defects, and translating those innovations to help improve the human condition."

Free drive-up HIV testing in Orange County

Radiant Health Centers, an Irvine-based nonprofit specializing in LGBTQ+ medical care and social services, is offering free drive-up rapid HIV testing in Santa Ana.

To make an appointment, call (949) 809-8764. The drive-up HIV testing will be between noon and 4 p.m. on Mondays at 2708 Westminster Ave. in Santa Ana.

For more information, visit radianthealthcenters.org/services/testing-services.
— From staff reports

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SCARES

Continued from page A1

might not try to get in. About 400 cars per night have been experiencing the "Tunnel of Terror," co-owner Chase Russell said. The first weekend was so popular that the company switched to prepaid ticket sales only.

"We've had nothing but phenomenal feedback," Russell said. "It's been pretty fun. The amount of support and excitement over a haunted car was, I'd say, slightly unexpected."

"This is a very unique year. You can't really plan for something like this. With our state, the state of California basically canceling Halloween, among other things, we were trying to figure out how we could bring some fun to this."

Russell said he talked with the car wash's controller, Bri Nikoletich, who had seen a couple of car washes on the East Coast with a haunted theme in years past.

At about the same time, promoter Long Vo reached out to the car wash to figure out a way to put together the assembly line of alarm.

Vo is part of a local pro-



Scott Smeltzer | Staff Photographer

A GHOUL PEEKS in the window at the "Tunnel of Terror" at Russell Fischer Xpress Car Wash in Huntington Beach.

motions company, We Simply Rule, and he had plenty of Halloween props collecting dust at his home during the coronavirus pandemic.

Vo has a cast of about a dozen monsters creeping about at the car wash.

Attendees first go through a single-file car line before entering the wash, and surprises ensue. They're encouraged to tune their radio to 100.7 FM for creepy background music to accompany the ride.

"Tunnel of Terror" runs from 5 to 10 p.m. and will be in action every night through Halloween, except for Monday.

"They did a good job," said Julie McCarty of Lakewood, who messed with her

kids, Cade and Cassie, in the backseat Thursday night by rolling their windows down when a monster approached with a chainsaw.

"I think this is going to be the next thing now. For \$20,

it's a great deal. A \$20 scare, you cannot beat that. Halloween's my favorite holiday."

Melissa Suarez of Long Beach, 38, said the haunted car wash helped fill the void left by missing out on Halloween-themed celebrations at local theme parks.

"This helps," Suarez said. "It's very creative."

Jeff Heimbuch of Costa Mesa, 36, came Thursday night with his fiancée Martina, his 17-year-old son Alex and his son's girlfriend Mariah.

"We miss spooky stuff," said Heimbuch, adding that he writes for a local horror website, *HorrorBuzz.com*. "We do all this stuff every year anyway. When we heard this stuff was going on, we had to come check it out and see what was going on here ... There was a guy that stood in front of our car at one point and scared the hell out of me, so they did a great job."

Tickets are extremely limited but are available on Eventbrite.

Russell said additional tickets could be released online each day depending on traffic.

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MAILBAG

Continued from page A4

reassigned to the 11th grade and both graduated in 1949 and we were just 16 years old at that time.

What has this to do with Sandy Asper's commentary? The similarity must be obvious.

We too are in a "war" at this time. The main difference is today we cannot see the enemy as we did in 1940.

But the enemy is there. We cannot fight it with military equipment. We fight it with the only tools we have: the scientists, doctors and medical workers who work in this dangerous environment every day. It is their work that guides us to a safer environment.

What is our responsibil-

ity? It is at the least the following: 1) the complete safety of our children, teachers and staff; 2) listening to and heeding the advice of our only defense, the scientific community, especially as it applies to our most vulnerable, our children.

My father, Joseph, taught my sister and me to always be ready to help the children.

After all, when he retired, he became the crossing guard at Mariners School for 24 years. Would we have let our children cross that very difficult crossing without Joe?

We must realize that we are in a war and there are many battles ahead before this war is won.

It is not going to be easy but with the American spirit and know-how, it will be won.

Robert Carolan
Newport Beach

Rouda takes support, guidance from the left

When Rep. Harley Rouda won the CA-48 seat in 2018 from Dana Rohrabacher, I began looking into what type of representative he would be and, at first, was mollified by his claim that he would legislate as a moderate Democrat who would represent "the vast majority of voters who tend to be between the 20-yard lines."

In following him however, I became alarmed that he would not stand by this pledge as his actions began to speak louder than his words. Over time, I saw that he stood more and more with the radical

members of the House of Representatives and, at this point, his voting record parallels Nancy Pelosi 100% of the time and the ultra-socialist Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez 92% of the time!

But lately, with many of our cities being trampled by wanton violence, looting and burning, my concerns about Rouda staying within the "20-yard lines" have grown into manifest fear.

It would seem that he is an out-and-out devotee of crippling law enforcement in our society.

The Indivisible Project is a tax-exempt organization headquartered in Washington, D.C., founded in 2016 by two left-wing activists with congressional experience and ties to the leftist economic policy advocacy group Prosperity Now.

It was a response to the

election of President Trump and established to provide liberals a practical guide about "Resisting the Trump Agenda."

The organization supports the Green New Deal and has espoused a goal to replace all elected officials who don't reflect their views with "diverse, progressive, local leaders."

According to a Washington Free Beacon article from Aug. 31, Rouda is among a group of California Democrats who have accepted support from this group and was in bed with these actors during the 2018 campaign — even while he was uttering his pledge to keep it "between the 20-yard lines."

The more I follow Rouda the more I turn from mere concern to outright fear.

Any candidate who would accept donations

HOW TO GET PUBLISHED

Send an email to erik.haugli@latimes.com and include your full name, hometown and phone number (for verification purposes) with your submission. All letters should be kept to 350 words or fewer. The Pilot reserves the right to edit for clarity and length.

from such organizations — bent on shredding the fabric of our society — and clearly violate his campaign pledge is an untrustworthy person and certainly has no business representing our interests in Congress.

William Phinzy
Fountain Valley

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TORCH

Continued from page A4

why I am vigorously supporting challenger Leah Ersoylu in school district Area 1 versus Vicki Snell, the only incumbent running. Having worked closely with Ersoylu on her campaign over the past

several months, I am both amazed and impressed with her understanding of the capabilities and limits of this new way of learning.

Whether it has been organized community Facebook chats, a political campaign app that monitors every aspect of outreach, or the multi-tasking communications efforts

throughout any given day, Ersoylu has shown the technological knowledge and leadership that will serve our students well.

It is time to pass the torch to these younger candidates.

STEVE SMITH, a former Daily Pilot columnist, lives in Costa Mesa.

SIGNS

Continued from page A4

tion cycle when the position for Zone 1 school board trustee was up for grabs.

I was new to all things school board-related, so I had the mindset that if they were in office, and had been reelected once, they must be doing an OK job, so I checked the box, making a random and uninformed decision.

With no personal knowledge of the candidates, I really only had their bios in the voting guide to use in

making my decisions. Well, that and advertising fliers and signs that are similar to Snell's current signs.

Back then, I took them at face value, with a grain of salt. I don't fault anyone for not researching a candidate when there's little or no vested interest in that particular office. I know in the past I just went with it and believed the candidate's campaigning statements.

I know better now. Having had first-hand experience with the current school board for years now, I am confident that I can make an informed decision when I cast my ballot and

not rely simply on the campaign ads, posters and banners displayed around the neighborhoods or the belief that an incumbent is the best candidate for the job simply because he or she is already holding that post.

That said, I'd also like to add that there are not enough readily available opportunities to learn about the candidates we are electing, people who will be making decisions that directly affect our children. But I guess that's a letter for another day.

SON VU lives in Costa Mesa.

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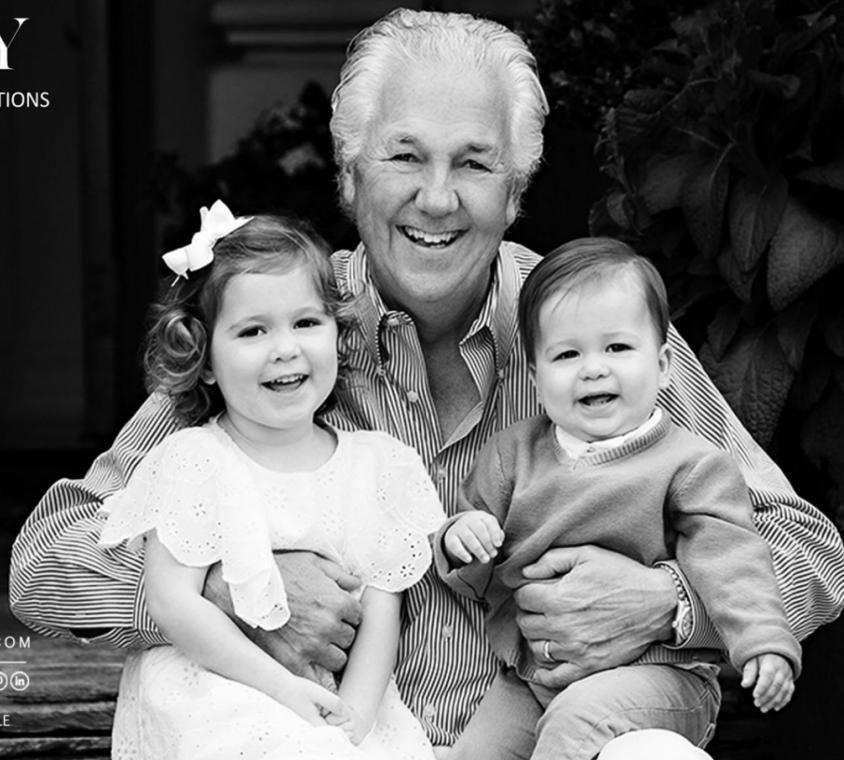
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LEOPARD EYES peek through the Forbidden Jungle.



THE CREEPY looking Buddha's Hand fruit sits in a jar at the Apothecary Specials display during the Eerie Evening event.

A YOUNGSTER looks at the Dia de los Muertos or Day of the Dead display at the Sherman Library and Gardens.

Photos by Don Leach | Staff Photographer

Garden grounds turn spooky for weekend

On Friday and Saturday, the Sherman Library & Gardens hosted the "Eerie Evening in the Garden" event on its grounds in Corona del Mar.

The staff got together and came up with the idea where guests follow a map around the garden revealing mysteries of the natural world of creepy looking plants and flowers, including insect trapping and toxic plants, and the first "man eating plant" act.

Carefully placed speakers throughout the grounds played the latest in ghostly voodoo sounds of New Orleans for the walkabout as guests made "Day of the Dead" paper flowers and other crafts.

The staff at the gardens wanted to present something for their guests since their regular "Creatures of the Night" event was not possible due to the pandemic.

— Don Leach

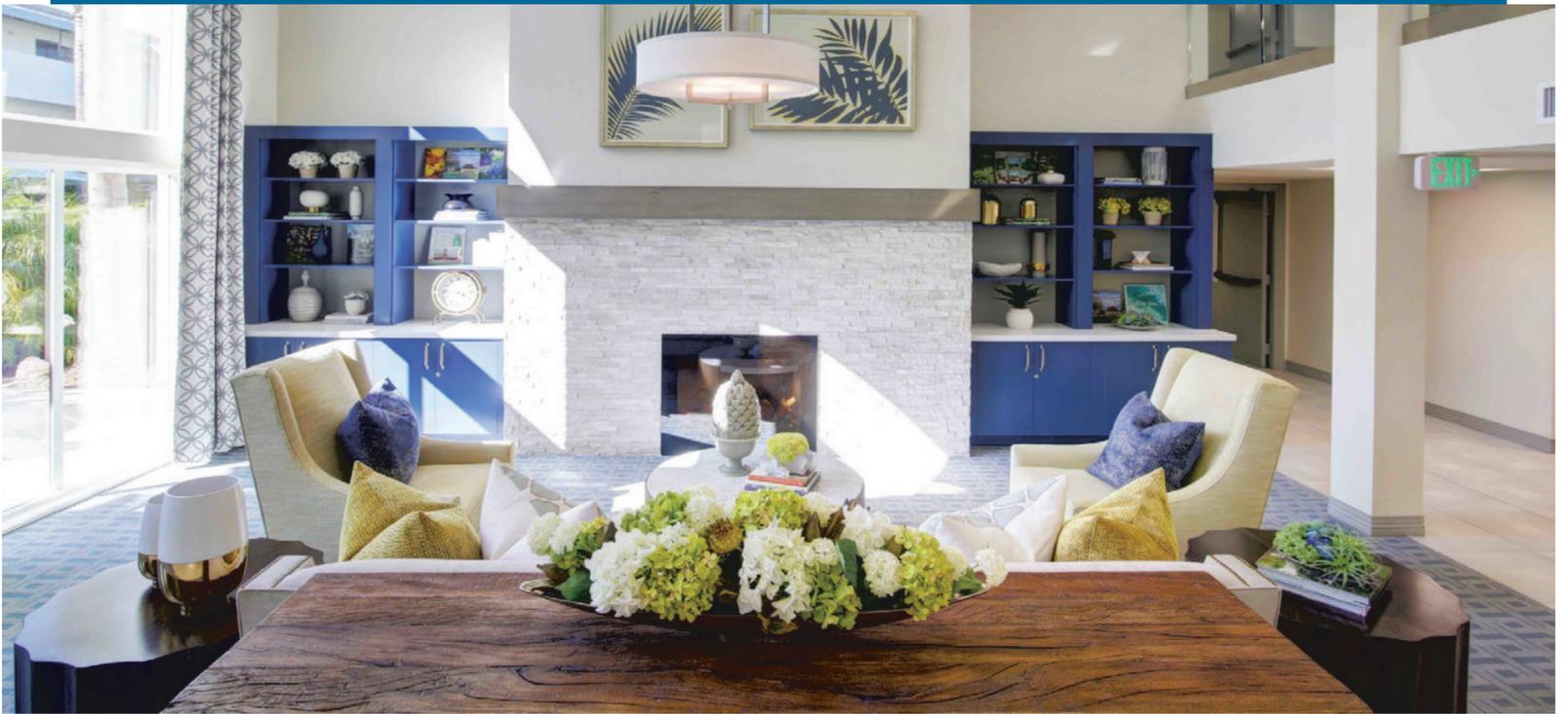


THE MAN EATING PLANT act, actually David Aguiar, chomps on a bowl of salad during the "Eerie Evening in the Garden" event this weekend.



A GUITAR-PLAYING skeleton heads-up the colorful and intricate Dia de los Muertos or Day of the Dead display.

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James Neville Hutchinson

February 6, 1957 - September 24, 2020

NEWPORT BEACH — James Hutchinson, 63, passed away peacefully on Thursday, September 24 in Newport Beach, CA, surrounded by his family. He was born February 6, 1957 in Seattle to Robert and Louellyn Hutchinson. Jim worked in many family businesses, starting with Seattle's Longacres Racetrack, and continued in managing family real estate. In 2004 he became CEO of Newport Communications Group, a family business based in Newport Beach.

He loved spending time with his family and sharing his passion for cooking with family and friends. He loved being with his two children, Britton and Isabella, and volunteered much of his time to supporting their sporting activities, as well as attending them.

A big part of Jim's life was Seattle Golf Club, and his love of golf. He was a member there for 42 years, and Club Champion in 1987. All the members and staff will miss his sense of humor and witticisms, both on and off the course.

Jim is survived by Traci Warrington, their daughter Isabella Warrington and his son Britton Hutchinson. Other survivors are his sister Mindy (John) Bloomer, brother Robert Hutchinson, sister Patty Hutchinson and brother Bart Hutchinson.

In honor of Jim, spend time with your children, take time with the ones you love, and take a genuine interest in the lives of strangers. In Jim's mind we were all friends he had yet to meet. Make a Mai Tai and toast to enduring friendships; take time to help someone in need.

In lieu of flowers, please consider making a gift to the Western Golf Association Evans Scholars Foundation. Jim believed in the life-changing power of golf and education, and the Evans Scholars Foundation provides full tuition and housing college scholarships for deserving young caddies with limited financial means. Checks can be sent to their office at 2501 Patriot Blvd., Glenview, IL 60026, or gifts can be made online to the Evans Scholars Foundation. - <https://wgaesf.org/a-life-changing-opportunity/>



Loy Freiberger Johnston II

October 16, 1930 - March 25, 2020

Loy "John" Freiberger Johnston's journey began on October 16, 1930 and ended peacefully in his home on March 25, 2020, surrounded by loved ones.

Born in Glendale, CA., he was the son of Loy and Lottie Johnston. He spent his childhood in Arcadia with his older sister Esther, tending to chickens, goats, dogs and horses across his family's land. He left high school early to join the United States Navy, but not before getting stranded in Jackson Hole Wyoming on a summer road trip with his good buddy and having to wash dishes in town after their car broke down hitting a horse. Stationed in Miramar, CA and Japan, he worked on propeller aircraft as an Aviation Machinist Mate Petty Officer, 2nd class during the Korean War and played on his division's football team.

He returned stateside to work on boats in Newport Harbor, near a stretch of dunes he often camped at in his youth during their trolly trips down south for "Bal Week" on Balboa Peninsula. He also raced cross country motorcycles. One day he spotted an extra trailer hitch on his best friend Leroy's little sister's car and met his wife, Gettie "Joni" Elwanda Johnston. He needed the hitch to tow his motorcycle to a race in the desert so he asked her to come along (then started the race with her keys still in his pocket). He attended night school to become a plumber while still working for the phone company to support his new family. A union man, he did not miss a day of work. He even worked a half day on their wedding day.

They bought their first house in Costa Mesa in 1957. In the backyard of that house he laid the groundwork for a pool and surrounded it with Palos Verdes stone that their three children would grow up in. He and Joni were avid members of the Newport Beach Tennis Club, Newport Beach Country Club, Costa Mesa Country Club and The Crossing Church, where they met many lifelong friends. His semi-retirement was spent barbecuing for his family and friends, occasionally swapping a spatula for a ping pong paddle during one of their lively pool parties. He also spent that time doing day jobs around town and raising his grandchildren. He and Joni loved traveling to Maui to visit their son and snorkel with the sea turtles. The rest of his time was spent doing projects around the house, using his very green thumb to upkeep a beautiful garden for his wife, and golfing all over the country with her. They were married for 59 years.

He is preceded in death by the love of his life, Joni, and his son, Jack "JEB" Boyd. He is survived by his daughter, Jill Gracia (Johnston) of Costa Mesa, son, Scott Johnston (Evelyn) of Maui, two grandchildren, Michael Gracia of San Diego and Meghan Springer (Chris), and three great grandsons of Maui, as well as nieces and nephews who will spend the rest of their lives chasing the legacy of the hardest-working, humblest man they have ever met. Soft-spoken and with calloused hands, he loved with his actions as much as with his words. He always had a glint in his eye and an appreciation for the little things. To him, nothing was better than a burger and diet coke in his own backyard—a man truly content and with a second to spare for anyone who needed him. He made right and wrong seem simple and treated everyone he met with kindness and respect.

A memorial to celebrate his life will be held in the near future when it is safe to gather and travel again.

SECONDARY

Continued from page A1

A presentation by Deputy Supt. Leisa Winston indicated that the district also plans to offer a full-day learning center to English language learners and students with disabilities at its secondary schools, and that could be available as soon as Nov. 2.

District staff have identified roughly 10 students at Thurston Middle School and about 15 students at Laguna Beach High School that could participate in the learning center.

In the coming weeks, the district anticipates the arrival of new technological equipment, including cameras, that will assist in allowing lessons being taught in a classroom to be brought to students in distance learning simultaneously.

Board member Jan Vickers asked if the teachers knew about the inclusion of cameras in lessons and if they were supportive of that plan. On both accounts, Winston said that was the case.

"I think everyone has a different comfort level with technology," Winston said. "This is a new experience for all of our teachers to be able to teach students who are at home and students who are in person, and it requires some kind of creative thinking [and] lesson design."

Distance learning and the reopening of secondary schools became a hot-button issue in town, especially when it became known that secondary schools would not be immediately following the district's elementary schools in reopening. The district reopened elementary school campuses for hybrid learning on Oct. 5.

The public comments carried on for more than 30 minutes. Those in favor of reopening sooner and proponents of the distance-learning model both chimed in.

Sheri Morgan, a candidate for school board, called the board and district out for not having documents attached to the agenda regarding the secondary school reopening item at the time of the meeting.



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

THE LAGUNA BEACH Unified School District board of education approved a plan to have its secondary school sites reopen for hybrid learning on Nov. 23.

"Most definitions of the word transparency, when you apply them to a social setting, include openness, but it also includes communication and accountability," Morgan said. "It seems apparent that the understanding of this word, transparent, means one thing to this board and administration and another to the community that funds it."

Colton Weeks, a senior at Laguna Beach High School, said that students are suffering from not being at school and that school spirit is nonexistent.

"Students used to talk about how great LBHS was and how it was a perfect example of what public schools could and should be and what they can be capable of," Weeks said. "We have exceptional standards of learning, or at least we used to. Now, all people talk about is leaving, and I think that's horrible."

Another student got emotional in defending the virtual academy.

"I just wanted to [give] a huge thank you to all the people who help make the virtual academy and the trimester hybrid model happen because my grades — I currently have math and science right now — my grades have never been better," the student said.

Still, others said the district has fallen short in its communication with its parents and called into question the quality of an education for students at

home.

"They're not getting an education, sitting at home, lacking motivation, being afraid to ask a question because asking a question over Zoom is really difficult," Michelle Foley said. "The whole class hears what you have to say, and you feel stupid asking that question, versus when you're in person, you can go up quietly and ask the teacher, maybe from a distance, but the whole class doesn't have to hear you."

The Orange County Health Care Agency reported four deaths due to COVID-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus, in the latest numbers released on Saturday. There have been 1,444 deaths tied to the virus in the county since the start of the pandemic.

The healthcare agency also reported 316 new infections, bringing the total number of cases county-wide to 58,326.

Hospitalizations due to the virus totaled 159 as of Saturday, with 55 of those patients being treated in intensive care units.

An additional 10,092 tests for COVID-19 were reported within the last day, taking the cumulative number of tests administered to 1,055,089. Approximately 52,088 people in the county have recovered from battling the virus.

Here are the latest cumulative coronavirus case counts and COVID-19

deaths for select cities in Orange County:

- Santa Ana: 11,262 cases; 309 deaths
- Anaheim: 9,979 cases; 313 deaths
- Huntington Beach: 2,556 cases; 85 deaths
- Costa Mesa: 1,989 cases; 44 deaths
- Irvine: 1,848 cases; 13 deaths
- Newport Beach: 1,212 cases; 26 deaths
- Fountain Valley: 555 cases; 20 deaths
- Laguna Beach: 242 cases; fewer than five deaths

Here are the case counts by age group, followed by deaths:

- 0 to 17: 4,310 cases; one death
- 18 to 24: 8,772 cases; five deaths
- 25 to 34: 12,514 cases; 19 deaths
- 35 to 44: 9,287 cases; 37 deaths
- 45 to 54: 9,409 cases; 113 deaths
- 55 to 64: 6,989 cases; 201 deaths
- 65 to 74: 3,496 cases; 286 deaths
- 75 to 84: 1,954 cases; 313 deaths
- 85 and older: 1,551 cases; 469 deaths

Updated figures are posted daily at occhealthinfo.com/coronavirus-in-oc.

For information on getting tested, visit occhealthinfo.com/covid-19-testing.

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CLEARED

Continued from page A1

appropriate acts toward children by other family members.

The officers asked Mercado to come outside and talk with them, who per the letter, initially agreed to do so before heading into a backyard patio and attempting to scale the fence.

Roelofs and Espadas then grabbed hold of Mercado, and a third officer, Sgt. Dave Lima, joined in attempting to prevent Mer-

cado from escaping.

The letter adds that Lima saw a semi-automatic pistol in Mercado's right hand that was pointed at his midsection below his ballistic vest.

Lima reportedly told investigators that he could not fire his weapon without risking shooting the other officers. A statement from Lima in the letter said, "I thought I'm dead ... this guy is gonna shoot me right where I don't have any protection."

Upon seeing the weapon, Lima reportedly said he

yelled, "Gun, gun!" and then seven shots were fired in rapid succession.

The letter states that Mercado's mother ran past Roelofs and Espadas to the side of her son after the incident and took hold of the gun, and she did not follow orders to drop the weapon and come back into the apartment.

Subsequently, the letter said that Roelofs fired his Taser at Mercado's mother, hitting her in the upper torso and leg after she continually failed to comply with orders to drop the gun.

Mercado was taken to UC Irvine Medical Center, where he was pronounced dead. The letter said that the autopsy identified the cause of death as "multiple gunshot wounds to the upper torso."

According to the letter, the district attorney's office concluded that Roelofs and Espadas were legally justified to believe that Mercado posed a threat to Lima, to themselves and to the public.

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ENERGY

Continued from page A1

year a program that supports increased local control of utility services and could generate annual net revenues of \$15 million to \$20 million for the JPA.

"The rates and terms of service are controlled by the JPA, not by the Public Utilities Commission," he

said. "Ratepayers can address their grievances directly at the local level and not have to go through the maze of state regulation."

Community members speaking in public comments roundly supported the move.

"Power comes from miles away, from a vast electrical system, so if someone far out there needed to shut the power off for fire protection, we'd probably get shut off, too," said Hoiyin Ip, Orange County resident and co-chair of the Sierra Club California's Zero Waste Committee. "That's why we need to have local power with microgrids."

Costa Mesa's Craig Preston, a member of the Citizen Climate Lobby's conservative caucus, said a Community Choice pro-

gram would encourage competition and realize important cost savings.

"We could stabilize our energy rates with cleaner, more affordable energy if we get involved, instead of Southern California Edison continuing to increase rates for their transmission lines," Preston said.

While council members largely agreed, some looked askance at Irvine's JPA agreement and the imbalance of representation it proposed.

City Manager Lori Ann Farrell Harrison acknowledged timing was an issue, since the coronavirus pan-

demic pushed back discussions and the receipt of load data and financial analysis that would have come before the Dec. 31 deadline.

"The JPA agreement as structured is not tenable as far as I'm concerned, in terms of making sure we have an equal voice at the table," she said. "It's going to take a lot more analysis — we need to understand the finances and look through that analysis to understand the risks."

Farrell Harrison stressed her small three-member team would be hard-pressed to do their due diligence on a matter of such importance in such a short period of time. Councilman Allan Mansoor said he was reluctant to overburden already busy staff.

As a compromise, Councilwoman Andrea Marr proposed seeing whether the city of Irvine would help facilitate the procurement of information that would help city staff run the numbers, so that the matter could be continued to the council's Nov. 17 meeting.

Farrell Harrison said she would try her hardest to make it happen.

"There's going to be something else that's not going to get done," she said. "[But] we'll see what we can put together."

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HATE

Continued from page A1

One incident involved an attacker hurling anti-Latino slurs while hitting the victim with a metal pipe. In another incident, the attacker threatened to “pop” the victim’s head, while threatening the person with anti-Black slurs.

Although Black people constitute less than 2% of Orange County’s nearly 3.2 million residents, they were the most targeted racial group, according to the report.

Among the hate crimes motivated by religious prejudice, members of the Jewish community were the primary targets, representing about two-thirds of 44 hate incidents, followed by Catholics, other Christians and Muslims, according to the report. Among crimes related to victims’ sexual orientation and gender identity, a majority of the cases were antigay, followed by antifemale and anti-transgender.

In one incident last fall, Stephanie Camacho-Van Dyke had been hosting a meeting for young adults who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning at the LGBTQ Center OC in Santa Ana when someone threw a glass bottle at the building. It shattered on the pavement outside the meeting room.

“I had to move them to safety right away,” Camacho-Van Dyke said in an interview. “I wasn’t sure if they were going to come back, and what I would tell people who aren’t accepting is that we’re just like everyone else. We have loving partners, we have jobs, we have families. We’re all real people — we don’t deserve to have hate and discrimination.”

Overwhelmingly, hate crimes occurred in public places, the report documented, followed by places of worship, residences, school campuses and workplaces and businesses. The most reported hate-based criminal offense was van-



Scott Smeltzer | Staff Photographer

GIDEON BERNSTEIN, left, and Jeanne Pepper Bernstein, center, speak during the Orange County Human Relations annual hate crime report event in Irvine on Sept. 26, 2019. Their son, Blaze Bernstein, was stabbed to death in January 2018.

dalism, followed by aggravated assaults, simple assaults, criminal threats and harassment.

Perhaps the most visible hate incident in 2019 happened at a private party in March, when a gathering of Orange County teens raised their arms in Nazi salutes while standing around a cluster of cups arranged in the shape of a swastika. Their photo, posted on social media, unleashed a firestorm of national attention, prompting local Jewish residents to connect with the high school students to help educate them about the Holocaust and anti-Semitism.

“We cannot allow fear, hatred and bigotry to divide us. We must listen to one another, communicate respectfully, build bridges of understanding and support each other through these traumatic events,” said Michael Reynolds, chair of the Orange County Human Relations Commission, who helped to introduce the report.

Officials worry that next year, the numbers could spiral higher, exacerbated by the global pandemic and the backlash it has triggered against some ethnic groups.

Victims and their family members agree.

This past March, Jenny Hwang was pumping gas in Fullerton when a stranger drove by, cursing at her from his car.

“F— Chinese! Coronavirus!” he yelled.

Shocked, she jumped into the driver’s seat and followed his vehicle along Harbor Boulevard, just in time to take a snapshot of his license plate. Back home, her husband later alerted the police to ask for help.

“We were so sad they could not do anything because according to them, the man was inside his car,” Simon Hwang said. “I don’t understand why police cannot track him down to give him a verbal warning. Things like this should never happen and the more people who report it, the more attention it will get so others realize this is wrong.”

In May, Lauren Johnson-Norris, an Irvine attorney specializing in child welfare, was conducting a Zoom webinar on parenting during the pandemic. Suddenly, two men using aliases interrupted the dialogue, one of them asking questions about abortion before the other started spewing profanity, then projected a red swastika on the screen. She struggled to mute them online.

“It was certainly chilling,” she recalled. “Because we were live, the important thing to do was to remain calm, to reiterate to anyone watching that we will not tolerate hate and anti-Semitism in our city. In fact, hate ... never has been welcomed in the county — ever.”

ANH DO is a staff writer with the Los Angeles Times.

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HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL



Scott Smeltzer | Staff Photographer

HUNTINGTON BEACH High junior Ben Jacobs, who committed to UC Irvine, pitched a no-hitter against JSerra on March 4 for the Oilers' junior varsity.

H.B. pitcher Jacobs commits to UCI

BY MATT SZABO

Ben Jacobs started the summer baseball game by walking the first two batters, then he looked to his dugout for help.

Was this the incoming sophomore left-handed pitcher who was supposed to contribute to the Huntington Beach High baseball team? Longtime coach Benji Medure wasn't sure.

"I yanked him out of the game," Medure said. "I'm just like, 'I'm done with you, man. You're not pitching for us.' I basically wrote him off."

Jacobs had the stuff but lacked confidence and maturity, Medure said, in the summer of 2019. Perhaps some of that was adjusting to pitching at the varsity level for Jacobs, a former star in Huntington Valley Little League. Perhaps some of that was out of his control.

Jacobs lacked male role models in his life. That can happen when you have two mothers, like he does.

His mothers, Karynne and Perri, have been together for 21 years. They got married in 2014, when it became legal to do so. Ben Jacobs has three older stepsiblings from Perri's previous marriage, including two stepbrothers. Ben himself was born through artificial insemination from an anonymous donor, Karynne said.

The family atmosphere that Medure has led the Oilers with for the last two decades means even more to someone like Ben Jacobs.

"Perri and I are very grateful for all of the incredible male role model coaches he has

had," Karynne Jacobs said.

Most importantly, Ben has put in the work. Just more than a year later, he has also made his college choice. Now a junior, he recently verbally committed to the UC Irvine baseball program.

With Medure still having reservations, Jacobs never made it to the varsity team last spring as a sophomore. But he did become a top option on junior varsity, where he pitched a no-hitter against JSerra on March 4. He was lined up to be the junior varsity starting pitcher in the Oilers' first Surf League game against Edison before the coronavirus pandemic hit.

Since it did, Jacobs never stopped working. He has trained with Josh Reidt in Costa Mesa a few times a week since May, and his fastball now sits at 85-86 miles per hour, topping out at 88.

Former professional pitcher Blake Hawksworth, who threw for the Cardinals and Dodgers from 2009 to 2011, is Jacobs' current pitching coach.

"My goal is to try to touch a nine, 89 or 90, by December," said Jacobs, who has grown into a 6-foot-tall, 180-pound frame. "If someone saw me at the beginning of my sophomore year, they would not expect me to be where I am now."

UC Irvine checks all of the boxes for Jacobs, who was recently an all-tournament team selection at the Perfect Game World Wood Bat Assn. World Championship in Florida earlier this month.

"It was already in my top three schools, before I even knew they were interested in me," he said. "The coaches [including head

coach Ben Orloff, 33, an Anteaters alumnus who helped lead the team to the 2007 College World Series and its first Big West Conference title in 2009] are young. They're some of the younger coaches in college baseball, and I can really relate to them."

Life is good nowadays for Jacobs. The family roots for the Los Angeles Dodgers, who have made it to the World Series for the third time in four years.

They also root for Ben, who has grown into the promise he showed in those Huntington Valley Little League days when he was coached by men like Keith Kaub.

Kaub, who played first base at Cal State Fullerton during the 1980s, would certainly have been proud of how far Ben Jacobs has come. Kaub died last year at age 55 after a heart attack. Jacobs helped Huntington Valley Little League beat favored Ocean View 2-1 in a District 62 Majors Division All-Stars semifinal game in 2017. He went 5½ innings as the starting pitcher.

He said he wants to possibly be a baseball announcer on television in the future. Stories like his will always remain ripe for the telling.

"It's a good story in the sense that he was buried," Medure said. "We buried him because he was immature ... and to his credit, he really did change. He changed his work ethic, he changed how he was as a leader, he changed how he was as a teammate, and now he is where he is. I'm proud of how far he's come."

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HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL

County All-Star game could be played in May

BY ANDREW TURNER

The Orange County North vs. South All-Star Classic high school football game could be played in May, Costa Mesa United Vice President Ron Amburgey said Wednesday.

Costa Mesa United, a non-profit group that champions and has contributed more than \$1.2 million for youth sports in Costa Mesa since 2005, is the organizer of the Orange County All-Star Classic. The showcase had traditionally been held in the summer before it came under Costa Mesa United's control in 2017.

Costa Mesa United President Gordon Bowley said the organization had discussion of a May or June date for the competition at a recent board meeting, but no firm plan is in place, owing to the fluidity of the coronavirus pandemic and its impact on sporting events.

The virus resulted in the cancellation of numerous high school all-star competitions for the class of 2020 during the spring and summer.

Adjustments have been made in the hopes that conditions may allow for a regular season and playoffs to occur under a modified calendar.

For football, the CIF Southern Section is scheduled to permit teams to practice beginning Dec. 14.

Section championships would take place April 9-10, and state championships would be

held April 16-17, should conditions allow for the season to go on as scheduled.

Costa Mesa United hosted the 61st annual Orange County All-Star Classic at Orange Coast College on Jan. 25, following the conclusion of the season.

"We did it quick last year because the players were still in shape," Bowley said. "We got a better response because the longer the players don't play, the less shape they're in, and then they're vulnerable for injury."

Corona del Mar football coach Dan O'Shea said he believes that having the all-star game close to the end of the season helps to make the event a successful one.

"I could not recommend it enough that they play it as close to the end of the season as possible, not only for the kids being in shape, but I think interest in the game is more a focus at that point," O'Shea said. "I think it gets lost in the summer, and by the time these kids graduate school and are in summer, most of them are now focused on going to college and having fun during the summer and practicing."

Should fans not be allowed to attend the game, Bowley said the organization is looking at other ways to make the event a productive experience for the players.

"We would make it a scouts' football game," Bowley said. "We would get all the scouts from the major university



Photo by Drew A. Kelley

LA HABRA HIGH'S Kristopher Koontz reels in a long pass for a first down during the Orange County North vs. South All-Star Classic at Orange Coast College in Costa Mesa on Jan. 25.

leagues like the Pac-12 and the others and ask the scouts to come down and watch the kids, and that would be productive for the kids, as well as the scouts. We could probably get a minimum of 50 scouts to come in from the teams and have a look at these kids."

In an all-star game, the number of snaps for an individual to showcase their talents could be limited, especially at a position group with limited spots like quarterback. O'Shea had an idea for getting the athletes exposure beyond the game itself.

"I think if they advertised it and then make the practices available for the recruiters or coaches to attend, that would be perfect," O'Shea said.

At the state level, the CIF is

taking measures to give high school athletes an opportunity to participate in all-star events despite changes in the sports calendar necessitated by the virus.

CIF executive director Ron Nocetti issued a notice on Oct. 15 stating that graduating seniors could compete in high school all-star games prior to the last section or state contest in their sport for the current school year only.

Local school districts and schools, leagues and CIF sections maintain the right to formulate more restrictive rules than the guidance provided by the CIF State office.

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CROSS-COUNTRY

With return of Mt. SAC, a tougher path to CIF finals

BY ANDREW TURNER

Tradition can be tough to part with for some.

In the cross-country community, it was noticeable when the CIF Southern Section postseason races had to move from Mt. San Antonio College to the Riverside City Cross-Country Course.

The first couple of years following the change, the Riverside venue had its detractors. Some deemed the course too flat to crown a true champion of cross-country. How would the teams that advanced to the CIF State championship meet prepare for a course with more hills like Fresno's Woodward Park?

Furthermore, there was a question of how to keep the dirt on the former golf course at bay.

With construction on the new Hilmer Lodge Stadium at Mt. SAC complete, the section's postseason meets will once again be held at its traditional home on the famed hills of the Mt. SAC course for the first time since 2015.

Sage Hill cross-country coach Nate Miller has long appreciated what the Mt. SAC course means to the sport, and he is excited about going back. He said his teams have not missed the regular-season Mt. SAC Invitational since 2001.

"There's a longstanding tradition there, and I think our training involves a lot of hills, and so I think it's well-suited for the training that we do," Miller said. "I won't miss Riverside a ton, I would guess, and I am looking forward to going back to Mt. SAC."

For teams on the fringe of qualification, it comes at a cost. The starting line at Riverside accommodated 24 teams plus boxes for individual qualifiers.

Upon CIF's return to Mt. SAC, the field for each divisional final will go back to 16 teams.

"I think a lot of us have gotten used to that idea of 24 teams," Edison cross-country coach Brian Briery said. "The opportunity to be able to run at finals, it obviously increased a lot more, and made it not as cutthroat. Obviously, going back to Mt. SAC puts a big damper on that."

Briery said he wondered if there was a number between 16 and 24 that would work at Mt. SAC that would allow for programs that were previously viewed as bubble teams to have something to shoot for.

In conjunction with the more exclusive field for the section championship races, it will now be more difficult for teams to secure an at-large berth into the CIF preliminaries.

If a team failed to secure an automatic bid through its league finals meet last season, it had to have appeared in the top 16 twice in the final four sets of rankings released by the section.

For the upcoming season, the standard will stiffen to being inside the top 13 of at least two of the last four installments of divisional rankings.

Under the revised CIF sports calendar, the section preliminaries are scheduled to take place March 12-13, the CIF finals March 20 and the state championship meet March 27.

The Riverside course did serve as the site of some remarkable performances by local teams. In 2018, the Laguna Beach boys' cross-country team won the Division 4 championship before going on to take the Division IV state title.

In 2017, the Ocean View boys' cross-country team advanced to the state meet for the first time in the program's history. Senior Parker Walpole is the last remaining member of the starting seven for that Seahawks team.

While the Seahawks saw success with back-to-back state-qualifying performances at Riverside, Walpole, who has never run on the Mt. SAC course, is looking forward to the challenge of trying to make a more exclusive field for the CIF finals.

"It makes getting there feel a lot better," Walpole said. "With only 16 teams and you make it, you really feel like you belong there and that you have a good squad."

"Definitely being on the border [makes you] a little nervous, but then, I just think it kind of makes you want to work harder and get after it more because there aren't those eight extra spots to have."

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