



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

**CENTENNIAL FARM** supervisor Allen Mesick stands Tuesday outside the Pacific Amphitheatre berm with Knitty the llama. Hired in January, Mesick helped the fairgrounds bring in a group of Angora goats to help clear invasive plants and revitalize the grounds.

## Lessons from the herd

The presence of Angora goats at OC fairgrounds has become a teachable moment at Centennial Farm.

BY SARA CARDINE

On a grassy berm overlooking the Orange County fairgrounds' Pacific Amphitheatre, a coterie of four-legged creatures serves as a de facto landscaping team, assembled to restore soil resili-

ency and keep hillside weeds at bay.

Guard llama Knitty stands poised, her neck like a periscope constantly searching the horizon, while Italian Maremma sheepdog Sonja keeps a keen eye out for predators. Miniature cow

Pongo and Herb, a mini donkey born at the site's Centennial Farm in 2021, are less watchful but faithfully tromp across the berm's 2-acres.

The unusual menagerie is there to support the real stars of the show — Angora goats who

nimbly traverse steep inclines and spend their days nibbling at alfalfa, chicory, sweet clover and bristly oxtongue.

Since their arrival at the fairgrounds in 2020, the goats have

See **Herd**, page A5

## Local campus ranked high for veterans

Vanguard University is rated the eighth best four-year college for veterans in the Military Friendly Schools Survey.

BY ERIC LICAS

After finishing his tour of duty as an aircraft technician for the Marines, Manuel Melgoza, 38, landed a decent job with a medical equipment company in Orange County. It paid all right, but after a few years it became clear that he wouldn't be able to advance his position any further without a bachelor's degree. So, he decided to take advantage of his G.I. Bill benefits.

"It was a little bit scary going back to school after being out of the military for so long," Melgoza said.

A centralized administration handles many of the requests people in the military might make. When they leave and go to school, many of them become frustrated going from department to department trying to figure out how to file for aid and other services, Vanguard University director of veterans services Christopher Carroll said.

"There are a lot of times where

See **Veterans**, page A2

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Models used for illustrative purposes.

## Lagunatics celebrates 30 years of laughing at beach city's quirks

BY ANDREW TURNER

When life gives you lemons, all you can do is laugh?

That's how Bree Burgess Rosen countered the "nightmare" process of getting an outdoor deck approved by the design review board in Laguna Beach.

Rosen's creative mind did not let the crisis go to waste. Before long, the wacky but wonderful Lagunatics had been born, a show that made fun of the issues that define discourse in the town.

"I started just thinking about all the quirky, crazy stuff in Laguna Beach, and I had lived here at that point for four years, and the weirdness was abundantly obvi-

ous to me," said Rosen, the founding artistic director of No Square Theatre. "That's how it started. The first two were benefits for Laguna Shanti, and we did it on the Monday closest to World AIDS Day because we did it on the dark nights when the show wasn't in production at the Laguna Playhouse."

The first rule of comedy is that if you're going to get offended, then you ought not come to the show. With its insider subject matter, Lagunatics can push the local audience to the edge.

Rosen, who insists the roast-of-the-coast musical has never been

See **Quirks**, page A2



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

**CAST MEMBERS** rehearse a scene from "One-Day Vacation" for the Laguna Beach community parody show Lagunatics at the Festival of Arts Forum Theater. The show is celebrating its 30th anniversary March 10.



Scott Smeltzer | Staff Photographer

**MACKENZIE ERICSON**, left, Alexandra Ulwellint and Kaya Masterson, from Pacific Grove High School, compete in the California Restaurant Foundation's 2023 ProStart Cup in Long Beach on March 7.

## OCSA makes the cut at ProStart Cup

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

LONG BEACH — Trinity Wiedeman, Ryan Okajima, Christian Lopez, Aurelia Carrie and Hannah Dromgoole excitedly arranged three dishes on an oval tray in front of the judges at the California Restaurant Foundation's 2023 ProStart Cup at the Long Beach Convention Center on March 7. Wearing white chef coats and flushed faces, the team of culinary students from the Orange County School of the Arts had just completed the three-course cooking competition por-

tion of the day.

"We worked really hard to get to today," said Wiedeman, "and it came out amazing."

The two-day competition brought together 250 California high school students to compete for \$500,000 in scholarships. Besides OCSA, participating Orange County schools included Fountain Valley, Fullerton Union, Newport Harbor, Rancho Alamitos and Valley high schools.

"All of the students are part of the ProStart program," said Alycia Harshfield, the executive director of the California Restau-

rant Foundation, "which is a national culinary art and restaurant management training curriculum and program. It is where they are learning in the classroom, in their California public high school, all about food and careers in food service and hospitality."

Collectively, the competition represents the future of California's restaurant and food service industries, and students have the opportunity to network and meet with college and university

See **Cup**, page A10

# New murals all the buzz on Ensign Seabees campus

BY MATT SZABO

Jennifer Bloomfield is happy to be back at the campus she attended nearly four decades ago.

She still has her supplies she brings to Ensign Intermediate School in Newport Beach each day. But these are now the supplies of an artist, not a student.

Bloomfield was recently contracted to paint seven murals on the Ensign campus.

Her longtime friend, Ensign Principal Samantha Payne, called her up a few months back. She saw an opportunity for the Costa Mesa-based artist.

"We're doing a lot on this campus to make it a more inclusive, welcoming space, really focusing on bringing the kids and community together," Payne said. "Over the summer, the district gave us a lot of love and attention by giving us some new flooring and new paint. They painted the entire outside, which looks beautiful and such an improvement, but it's also a blank canvas."

That's where Bloomfield, who attended Ensign in the mid-1980s before graduating from Newport Harbor High in 1990, came in. She worked with Payne, taking paintings from her "Art By Bloomy" Instagram account that seemed like they could work.

There is a three-panel beach mural by Bloomfield in the Ensign library, which was recently renovated. On the side of the lifeguard tower, instead of a number, is a picture of the Ensign mascot — the Seabee.

Bloomfield also painted two murals in Ensign's outside lunch area. One has the school's core values of kindness, respect and perseverance. The other features a quote attributed to Socrates, "Be the kind of person you want people to think you are."

She is currently working on a large wave mural on the back of a portable

building. And the final mural, in a hallway on the campus interior, will feature a transition from the beach inland, from Newport Beach to Costa Mesa.

Ensign is one of the few schools in the Newport-Mesa Unified School District that draws students from both cities.

"I'm really stoked to be here," Bloomfield said. "I was on the newspaper when I was here, and the Seabee Buzz, and I still have the old newspapers. And I did the artwork on the newspapers and stuff. What I really like is the team that [Payne] has developed here. She's just got her heart in the right place with her leadership. The custodians, the secretaries, the teachers, the kids. There's just an energy here that's so positive."

Payne, who like Bloomfield is a former teacher at Corona del Mar High, is in her second year as Ensign principal. She has worked to turn the campus into a more inviting place for everyone who steps foot on it. The school is currently launching a "Zen Den" well space for students and teachers next door to the administration building; the official grand opening is set for later this month.

Payne said parents raised \$10,000 through the Ensign Fund nonprofit foundation to create the Zen Den. Meanwhile, the Ensign PTA has helped fund not only Bloomfield's murals, but school T-shirts with the Seabee and Ensign's core values.

"You can't just rinse and repeat pre-COVID things," Payne said. "As a school, our overall focus for the last two years has been unity and connection. Everything kind of feeds into that. Jen's murals play a huge role in the campus beautification, in that sense of ownership. We're Newport Beach, we're Costa Mesa, we're both, and that's what makes this school so amazing, that richness."



Photos by Scott Smeltzer | Staff Photographer

**COSTA MESA** resident Jennifer Bloomfield works Wednesday on a wave painting on the wall of an outdoor portable building, one of seven murals that she was commissioned to create on the Ensign Intermediate School campus.

Bloomfield is happy for the opportunity. She said she has dealt with health issues related to digestion problems in recent years. They forced her to take unpaid leave from being a math teacher and swimming coach at CdM in 2018.

Three years later, she made the difficult decision to focus on her artwork full time, rather than coming back to teaching during the peak of COVID-19 and dealing with stress that could cause her health condition to worsen.

"I don't know that I'm a muralist," said Bloomfield, though she said she does feel inspired by the work of a talented muralist like Melissa Murphy of Huntington Beach. "I haven't totally figured out my direction with this. Doors are opening, and I'm walking through them as they open."

The doors to Ensign in-



**A MURAL** of a lifeguard tower, painted by Jennifer Bloomfield, is in the library at Ensign Intermediate School. It's one of seven murals Bloomfield was contracted to paint.

deed did open for Bloomfield, who is doing her part to make her alma mater more beautiful one paintbrush stroke at a time.

"I feel lucky, I'll say that,"

she said. "Something terrible happened with my health, and then it turned into something really amazing. I would have never left teaching, I loved it,

but this is another chapter that I'm pretty excited about."

matthew.szabo@latimes.com  
Twitter: @mjszabo

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## VETERANS

Continued from page A1

vets won't ask for services," he said. "You kind of have to feel it out for them, and the only way you can do that is building relationships for them to open up. I've had occasions where someone is struggling academically, and I'll make sure I get them connected with our tutoring and academic resources ... some guys are dealing with disability issues."

Like many people who enroll later in life, Melgoza was worried about fitting in and needed help navigating the process of claiming benefits. His first step was to



Eric Licas

**MARINE CORPS** veteran Manuel Melgoza, right, and reservist Brandon Lustig sit outside the Veterans Resource Center at Vanguard University on March 9.

visit the veterans resource centers at several local campuses.

Most of the time, he would be greeted by someone at a desk who was po-

lite, but "didn't really seem that interested in me," Melgoza said. They would typically refer him to information available online, and that would be the end of their interaction.

"I just didn't feel welcomed at other schools," he said.

He felt a "night and day" difference when he first came to Vanguard University in Costa Mesa. Carroll was waiting for Melgoza and gave him a tour of the campus. Many of the people they ran into were curious to learn more about his experiences in the Marine Corps.

The face-to-face support Melgoza received is a large part of why he chose to

enroll at Vanguard last semester. Now he works at the school's veterans resources center helping people who were in the same situation he'd experienced a few months earlier.

Vanguard was just ranked the eighth best four-year campus for veterans in the Military Friendly Schools Survey, university officials announced Tuesday. More than 8,800 colleges were considered in the annual, data-driven review.

Brandon Lustig, 21, is a Marine Corps reservist and also works at the veterans center. He said it was initially difficult for him to make friends when he started taking classes at Vanguard in the spring of

2020 and was missing the camaraderie he had built with the other members of his training camp.

"After COVID happened and all that, and I came back to the school, the first thing I did was find the veterans resource center," Lustig said. "And immediately, I had a place to hang out with people I could relate to."

Lustig added that everyone, not just service members, veterans or their relatives, were welcome at the veterans resources center.

They sometimes have non-veterans come in to ask about the military, he said.

eric.licas@latimes.com  
Twitter: @EricLicas

## QUIRKS

Continued from page A1

meanspirited, recalls a couple of occasions where attendees stormed out — the crowd guffawing, apparently fooled into thinking it was part of the act.

In celebrating its 30th anniversary, Lagunatics will be a blast from the past, the numbers representing a selection of the top song-and-dance parodies to hit the stage during the group's three decades. The nine scheduled shows will have 7:30 p.m. curtains, Friday through Sunday, from March 10 to 26 at the Forum Theater on the grounds of the Festival of Arts.

Topics to be tackled include a fire-preventing goat herd, undergrounding utility lines, parking and, of

course, the town's love-hate relationship with its visitors.

"We have a higher turnout for elections, well above average," Rosen said. "People here are very passionate about their opinions, and to get them in the theater laughing at the same time at the issues is good for the town. ... We had a number one year where we had the City Council, who was in deep disagreement on a few issues that year, we had them in matching pajamas and a bed together."

Council members will play a part again. Mayor Pro Tem Sue Kempf went through rehearsal on Wednesday, at times with a car costume around her waist. A frequent viewer of the show, this will be Kempf's first appearance as part of the cast.

"Most people that go to Lagunatics are aware of the issues around the topics they cover," Kempf said. "It's a little, funny twist on things that are happening within the community. It can be absurd after the fact. ... Maybe at the time, it seems like a serious thing, but it's funny after the fact."

Prepare to see some outrageous outfits. Not only will there be dancing goats, but choir robe-wearing parking meters and toilet paper headdresses. Electrifying telephone poles are also among the favorites of Brigitte Harper, the costume designer for the show. "That you can get away with stuff that normally you can't," Harper said of what makes Lagunatics stand out. "It's all in the name of fun, but there's a little punchline underneath. ... We try to

bring awareness to what's going on in town with a lot of humor and with free speech."

Ella Wyatt recently took over as artistic director of No Square Theatre in January. When she first moved to Orange County, she worked at a music management company in South Laguna. She has kept up with the talk of the town, enough to be involved in the songwriting process.

"I follow the headlines, and I help Bree write songs," said Wyatt, set to perform in her 11th Lagunatics. "There's a couple in this year's show that I wrote. When we did the COVID year, that was pretty universal for everybody."

Chris Fine, making his Lagunatics debut, said there are moments he wants to be taken seriously



**CAST MEMBERS** rehearse a scene for the Laguna Beach community parody show Lagunatics.

Don Leach

in acting, but the opportunity to make fun of himself and fellow cast members on stage also had its appeal.

"The general [answer to] why I got into [acting] and why I want to continue doing it is because it was fun when I started," Fine said. "I will never not do a show that is fun, or sounds like fun, because that's the love of it is you want to be up there having fun."

"I started doing plays, but musicals, it gives you that singing and dancing that you don't get in a straight play, where you can just let go and have a lot of fun, and you're sweating. Singing is food for the soul, and that's what we get to do on stage and share that with the audience."

andrew.turner@latimes.com  
Twitter: @AndrewTurnerTCN

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Courtesy of Mission San Juan Capistrano

MISSION SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO will ring its historic bells to honor St. Junipero Serra and mark the return of the swallows and St. Joseph's Day on March 19.

## Mission celebrates historic St. Joseph's Day, swallows

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO — On March 19, the gates of Mission San Juan Capistrano will open at 9 a.m., and the bells will ring to honor St. Junipero Serra, the mission's founder. The day marks the return of migrating cliff swallows, an indication of the advent of spring, and St. Joseph's Day, a liturgical feast day recognized in the Catholic Church.

"We are happy to serve as the city's unofficial ambassador on the world-stage promoting and celebrating the 250-year tradition and unique identity of this community," said Mission San Juan Capistrano Executive Director Mechelle Lawrence Adams.

Mission San Juan Capistrano started the tradition of celebrating the return of the swallows in the 1920s, when then-resident priest Father St. John O'Sullivan wrote the legend of the swallows on St. Joseph's Day.

O'Sullivan served as the church pastor from 1910 to 1933, and it was during that time he is said to have wit-

nessed a shopkeeper destroying the adobe-like nests cliff swallows make their home in. The story goes he scolded the shopkeeper and invited the swallows to instead build their nests under the eaves of the mission, where they would be undisturbed. The legend even inspired a chart-topping song, "When the Swallows Come Back to Capistrano," in the early 1940s.

Orange County residents love a good bird legend (look up the story of the Santa Ana parrots), but it is true that each March, cliff swallows make their annual migration from Argentina to the south Orange County mission. The 6,000-mile journey to California is one of the longest migrations of any species.

Mission San Juan Capistrano has scheduled a series of events to celebrate the longstanding tradition that include a virtual presentation by a well-known swallows expert, Dr. Charles R. Brown. The ornithologist famously helped guide birds back to the mission when their population dropped due to city devel-

opment in the early 2000s. His advice for getting the swallows back included releasing insects for the birds to eat, broadcasting recordings of their mating call and replicating nests to recreate their habitat.

The event will also feature musical performances from Mariachi Tapatio, a performance of ancient folklore dance by Duende Flamenco, Native American basket-weaving demonstrations and local food and craft vendors.

Guests can join Adams for a tour at 2 p.m. or explore the mission on their own, which features a "Legacy of Saint Serra" exhibit and a St. Joseph's Table display honoring St. Joseph to feed those less fortunate.

"Traditions that bring us together help build a community," said Adams. "San Juan Capistrano is proof that traditions like the return of the swallows is how to build a fabric of a very unique and special place."

For details and tickets visit [missionsjc.com/swallows](http://missionsjc.com/swallows).

sarah.mosqueda  
@latimes.com  
Twitter: @SarahNMos

### THE DAILY COMMUTER PUZZLE

By Jacqueline E. Mathews

#### ACROSS

- 1 Spotted
- 4 Coconut trees
- 9 Davenport
- 13 Mob scene
- 15 Run \_ of the law; commit crime
- 16 Fervent
- 17 Traffic sign
- 18 Money, slangily
- 19 Give to a borrower
- 20 Dawdlers
- 22 Boats like Noah's
- 23 Italian auto
- 24 Pork product
- 26 This answer's direction
- 29 Tending to find faults
- 34 Rock used in making bricks
- 35 Dried fruit
- 36 Late great heavyweight
- 37 Thoughtful
- 38 " \_ My Way"; film for Bing
- 39 Washing machine cycle
- 40 Say no more
- 41 Birthday desserts
- 42 Part of USAF
- 43 Vagabond
- 45 \_ on; had confidence in
- 46 "Beauty \_ the Beast"
- 47 Auctioneer's cry
- 48 Deficiency
- 51 Cabinet department
- 56 Brute
- 57 Odor detectors
- 58 Way out
- 60 Carry
- 61 In any \_; nevertheless
- 62 Coty or Russo
- 63 Uneasy
- 64 Naps
- 65 TV's " \_ and Stacey" \_ and

1	2	3		4	5	6	7	8		9	10	11	12	
13			14		15						16			
17					18						19			
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26	27	28					29	30				31	32	33
34							35						36	
37							38					39		
40							41					42		
43											45			
							46				47			
48	49	50					51	52	53			54	55	
56							57					58		59
60							61					62		
63							64						65	

#### 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](http://sudoku.org.uk).

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

For answers to the crossword and Sudoku puzzles, see page A6.

- 2 "What \_ you?"; health inquiry
- 3 Sheep's coat
- 4 Prairies of South America
- 5 Underway
- 6 1937-71 American magazine
- 7 Stubborn quadruped
- 8 Using a scythe

- 9 Spicy sausage
- 10 " \_ There"; patriotic song
- 11 Tattletale
- 12 Also says
- 14 Dual
- 21 Astute
- 25 Supped
- 26 Crooked
- 27 Most populous nation

- 28 Singer Travis
- 29 Bawler
- 30 Jogs
- 31 Resort isle near Naples
- 32 Mrs. Ralph Kramden
- 33 \_ up; formed a queue
- 35 \_ around; snoop
- 38 Landscape tender
- 39 GI
- 41 Cheap container
- 42 Stetson material
- 44 Sham
- 45 Sunday entrées, perhaps
- 47 Glade buyer's choice
- 48 Temporal \_; brain section
- 49 Elderly
- 50 Rocky peak
- 52 Bar soap brand
- 53 Finds a purpose for
- 54 Horned animals
- 55 Evening hour
- 59 Rose Kennedy's youngest

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**ITALIAN MAREMMA SHEEPDOG**

Sonja with goats Apple and Donkey Tuesday at a berm near the O.C. fairgrounds' Pacific Amphitheatre.



Don Leach Staff Photographer

**HERD**

Continued from page A1

replaced a complicated assortment of human landscapers, who noisily whacked weeds while hanging from support lines and charged thousands of dollars per visit but did nothing to improve soil quality.

By comparison, the nearly silent goat team is not only keeping the berm clear of invasive plants but revitalizing the grounds by aerating the soil with their hooves and fertilizing it with nutrient-rich droppings.

The first caprine landscaping crew was brought to the O.C. fairgrounds through a contract with Northern California goat farmer Allen Mesick, who ran Eureka Mohair Farm in unincorporated Fresno County before being hired on in January as Centennial Farm supervisor.

"During the pandemic, small farmers were struggling to find funding sources. So, for me, it was a great opportunity," Mesick said Tuesday of the original agreement. "I got to get the goats off my property, they got to graze the berm, then come back to me all fat and healthy and ready for a haircut."

Mesick, 40, has been around farm animals all his life. At age 5, growing up in Connecticut, he raised ducks and showed them in the local county fair before

moving on to rabbits, a pursuit that would take him all over the world as a judge for the American Rabbit Breeders Assn.

He began showing goats at the Orange County Fair and formed relationships with the staff there before purchasing the 10-acre Fresno farm three years later. He sees fairs as venues where animals and people intersect and where valuable lessons about agriculture, stewardship and sustainability may be imparted to city dwellers.

"We offer free education every day to students," Mesick said Tuesday. "Those kids are like sponges — if they hear good stories, see the humane treatment of animals and watch vegetables being produced, they leave with that story, and they remember that."

Having already earned a degree in animal science from Fresno State, Mesick is working toward a master's degree in sustainable apparel and textiles from Cal Poly Pomona. The fashion industry is one more realm Angora goats and their soft and colorful mohair coats may one day revolutionize.

"I think this could be a test kitchen, or sort of a laboratory, for that farm-to-fashion movement," he said. "My vision here is to help make the O.C. fairgrounds an institute of urban agriculture."

So far, the goats-as-landscapers plan seems to

be working well — a little too well, given the first 20 animals dedicated to the project cleared the entire berm, down to the nubbins, in a two-month period.

Now, staff members are working to refine the number of goats and rotate the grazing between different segments of the 2-acre berm, so that the hillside is aesthetically pleasing and still grown left to prevent soil erosion during rainy periods.

Evy Young, the fairgrounds' director of agricultural programs, said the initial phase of the berm project could take from four to six years, as the goats eliminate invasive plants and new native species are planted into replenished soil.

"We're just going to let it all happen organically," she said, adding visitors are already asking questions about the goats. "When people see the animals on the berm, it just piques their interest. That's where the education starts."

Mesick has high hopes for reaching a wider audience with new messages about regenerative farming and its many applications.

"Maybe this is the next chapter," he said Tuesday. "If we're going to positively influence agriculture in the state and in the country, we've got to start showing it in a better light."

sara.cardine@latimes.com  
Twitter: @SaraCardine

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# What helps people flourish? A study has the answers to 'the good life'

**W**hen I was a little girl, I would often accompany my mother when she picked up my older sister from Girl Scouts. I recall being fascinated by a song the troop sang at the conclusion of every meeting. Many of you probably know the lyrics: "Make new friends, but keep the old. One is silver and the other is gold." Even as a kid I was known for pestering people with an endless loop of annoying questions — possibly an early indication of my future career as a journalist. "Why?" I always wanted to know. "Why is one silver and the other gold? Are they saying one is better than the other? Why are they different?" At some point in my continual demands for explanations from the adults around me, my



exasperated parents usually gave up trying to provide answers that satisfied my curious mind, ending the conversation with the admonishment that I was too analytical. It's a refrain that followed me well into adulthood. I flashed back to those childhood memories when I read recently about Harvard's decades-long, multi-generational study on human happiness. The Harvard Study of Adult Development began in 1938 with 724 subjects and the intention of discovering what makes people flourish. They tracked the participants' health, work satisfaction, family situations and many other measures that we generally consider important to determining the level of contentment in life. The study later incorporated the spouses of the original subjects, and

eventually more than 1,300 descendants of the original group also participated. A book was recently published on the study: "The Good Life: Lessons From the World's Longest Scientific Study on Happiness," written by the project's current director, Robert Waldinger, and its associate director, Marc Schulz. What did all that effort and years of research reveal? The main conclusion was that the key ingredient in a happy, fulfilling life is — drumroll please — warm relationships. This means that the biggest factor leading to a happy life isn't money or status, a high-profile career, the perfect leg-to-body ratio or the really cute sweater I saw at Fashion Island (although I still want that sweater, darn it). It's the people in our lives that we have deep connec-



James Carbone

**GRADUATE** Spencer Brown smiles with his diploma during the Newport-Mesa Unified's STEP high school graduation ceremony in Costa Mesa on June 2, 2022.

tions with, who we care for and care for us back; those who we can count on to support us through chal-

lenging times. Tellingly, the study participants who could not name one person they

could call in the middle of the night if they were sick

See **Apodaca**, page A10

**CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU ANSWERS**

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**COMMENTARY | JOE STAPLETON**

## Public safety should remain the number one priority

**F**or decades, Newport Beach has stood out in California as one of the safest cities to raise a family and run a business. We have top-notch schools, wholesome, trusting communities and incredible law enforcement to ensure the safety of our city. I ran for City Council to ensure the city I've lived in for the last 17 years remains that way. Thankfully, it remains one of the best places to live in the country. But Sacramento's soft-on-crime policies make it harder for our local law enforcement to maintain order and safety in our communities. Newport isn't alone. My colleagues in neighboring cities are facing the same problems, as Sacramento's policies continue to tie the hands of local law enforcement, making it more difficult for them to safeguard our communities. The rampant and uncontrolled criminal activity in some of our state's most well-known cities is unacceptable. Robberies are happening in broad daylight, smash-and-grabs, flash mobs, and criminals filling garbage bags with stolen goods are now common sites throughout the state. Eventually, businesses will be forced to shut down in certain communities because they won't be able to ensure the safety of their employees or customers. There is no doubt that California's soft-on-crime approach has coincided with the goal set by our state's political leaders to empty prisons. It seems the



Susan Hoffman

**THE NEWPORT BEACH** Police Department conducts active-shooter-response training in June 2022.

only thing that Sacramento wants to deregulate these days is crime itself. Last year, Californians saw a slew of new laws come into effect, making it even more difficult for law enforcement to protect communities across the state. Laws like these are contributing to the already deteriorating conditions of our neighborhoods and a rise in violent crime.

- SB2 strips officers of qualified immunity;
- SB16 forces departments to release classified information to the public, allowing anti-police interest groups to target officers;
- AB 48 restricts officers' use of nonlethal weapons during unruly or violent demonstrations;
- SB 98 eases the ability of anyone claiming to represent the media to cross

police lines during protests and demonstrations unhindered;

- SB 960 allows noncitizens to become police officers in the state.

These laws and more are only weakening our local police and sheriff's departments' ability to enforce the law and ensure safety in our cities. California is a large state with multifaceted crime issues facing each region, county and city. A one-size-fits-all approach set by the state is counterproductive and disallows for the local control needed to ensure the safety of each respective community. Unfortunately, cities like Newport Beach face external threats to our peace due mainly to the current border crisis, Sacramento's crime deregulation and progressive prosecutors like George Gascon. Across Southern California, burglaries have increased with criminal crews traveling from as far away as South America. Despite these challenges, the Newport Beach Police Department has done a fantastic job providing the safety and security that our city needs. Our residents have been integral in working with our officers to report suspicious or criminal activities. The California Department of Justice releases yearly data on crime and clearance rates for law enforcement agencies. Between 2017 and 2021, NBPD has a clearance rate nearly double that of all Southern California agencies for burglaries and robberies and nearly triple for vehicle thefts. While clearance rates are impressive, they focus on actions after the crime has already taken place. NBPD also has effective programs

See **Safety**, page A10

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CONTACT US

**Carol Cormaci**  
Executive Editor  
carol.cormaci@latimes.com

**Beth Raff**  
Advertising Manager  
(424) 225-9928  
beth.raff@latimes.com

10540 Talbert Ave.,  
Suite 300 West,  
Fountain Valley, CA 92708

Reporters:  
**Sara Cardine**, Costa Mesa  
sara.cardine@latimes.com  
**Lilly Nguyen**, Newport Beach  
lilly.nguyen@latimes.com  
**Matt Szabo**, Huntington Beach and Sports  
matthew.szabo@latimes.com

**Andrew Turner**, Laguna Beach and Sports  
andrew.turner@latimes.com

**Eric Licas**, Public Safety  
eric.licas@latimes.com

**Sarah Mosqueda**, TimesOC  
sarah.mosqueda@latimes.com

Send Letters to the Editor to erik.haugli@latimes.com. See Mailbag for guidelines.

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## 2023 Sweetheart Screening

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Join MemorialCare Orange Coast Medical Center's Sweetheart Screening event where you and your loved ones can learn how to be heart smart and get a complimentary cardiovascular screening. Meet with MemorialCare Heart & Vascular Institute experts and attend physician-led discussions on the latest treatments for common heart and vascular conditions.

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# Favorite bites at Disney's food festival

Disney California Adventure Food & Wine Festival features a variety of sips and snacks.

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

Foodies are expected to flock to the Disney California Adventure Food & Wine Festival this year, with familiar favorites and brand-new food and beverages to taste. The annual event, which began March 3 and runs through April 25, features sips and snacks from 12 festival marketplaces as well as culinary entertainment, demonstrations and unique bookable experiences for the home gourmet or the cocktail enthusiast.

Tastes and treats are priced at \$14.99 and under, with popular items from last year's event, like Mickey Mouse-shaped macarons, made with Snickers candy bar pieces, and house-made strawberry horchata returning to the menu. New dishes like plant-based bulgogi fried rice with kimchi and an elote paleta, made with sweet corn and parm crema, are also on the menu.

Sip and Savor passes, with eight tabs that can be redeemed for food and nonalcoholic drinks at participating marketplaces and dining locations within the park, are available for purchase and good through the duration of the festival.

With more than 50 food and drinks to choose from, it can be overwhelming to decide what to order. Here are five bites worth using a Sip and Savor tab on.

## SMOKED HONEY-HABANERO CHICKEN WINGS

Marketplace kiosks are where foodies will find most offerings, with each booth serving different items. Order from one line, then take your receipt to the pick-up line to collect your food. Pro tip: order and pay for your food before you get hungry and come back to collect your snacks when you are ready



**GRILLED PEACH TOAST** with ricotta-mascarpone spread and arugula salad on toasted sourdough bread.

to eat. Popular items are known to run out, like the smoked honey-habanero chicken wings (\$8.50) from Cluck-a-Doodle-Moo. These wings are crispy on the outside and juicy on the inside. The heat of the habanero is balanced by the sweetness of the honey flavor. These are not the saucy, wet wings you find at most sports bars but more of a crispy, crunchy fried-chicken flavor bomb, making them a hot item this year.

## GRILLED PEACH TOAST

Marketplace kiosks aren't the only place to get Food & Wine Festival bites. Many of the full service and quick service restaurants offer special bites too. (Some locations even offer tasting-size portions, redeemable with a Sip and Savor pass.) Pacific Wharf Cafe is where parkgoers line up for soup served in Boudin's hollowed-out sourdough bread bowls. It is also where you will find grilled peach toast (\$9.99) This dish starts with a slice of toasted Boudin sourdough,

topped with a savory ricotta-mascarpone spread and arugula salad. Juicy grilled peaches and folds of duck-cured prosciutto give this toast a gourmet charcuterie vibe.

## BLACKBERRY-LAVENDER LEMONADE

Sip and Savor pass tabs are also redeemable for nonalcoholic beverages, like blackberry-lavender lemonade (\$6.50) from Avocado Time. Lavender lemonade has become a staple at hipster coffee shops but often runs the risk of being too floral. In this version, blackberry purée brings a fresh fruity flavor to the lavender syrup, and pineapple juice helps mellow out the tart lemon juice. Disney Parks always offers a glow cube to light up drinks, and for this year's Food & Wine Festival, glow grapes in purple and green can be added to beverages for \$6.25.

## CUBANO SLIDER

There are already plenty of places to get a Cubano



**A SIGN** welcomes visitors on opening day, March 3, to the Disney California Adventure Food & Wine Festival in Anaheim.



**BLACKBERRY-lavender** lemonade.

sandwich at Disney Parks. The recently reopened Earl of Sandwich at Downtown Disney offers a version with carnitas, ham and Swiss cheese, and Award Wieners at California Adventure offers a Cubano dog with a hot dog added to the mix of pork, ham, Swiss cheese and mustard. The Cubano slider (\$8.75) from D\*Lish is a bit more manageable, however, leaving guests with more room for other treats. The pork is slow roasted and mustard-crusting, giving the whole sandwich a bold, smoked flavor. It is served on a Hawaiian roll, which has become the only acceptable bun for sliders. Melted Swiss and a thick pickle chip finish this traditional and bite-sized take on a classic.

## BLUEBERRY BUTTERMILK PIE

The Berry Patch kiosk has two desserts on the



**SMOKED** honey-habanero chicken wings.

menu, and both are berry delicious: Kenny's family cheesecake and blueberry buttermilk pie. If you only have room for one, go with the blueberry buttermilk pie (\$6.50.) The delicious dessert is almost always associated with the South and is otherwise known as "desperation pie" because it can be made with staple ingredients when fresh fruit is out of season or too expensive. In this version, a light, flaky pastry crust holds a sweet and tart buttermilk custard, and fresh blueberries are baked in and topped with dollop of whipped cream. This tart-sized pie is a perfect serving size and a sweet ending to a day of snacking.

Of course wine is the other half of the festival, and although Sip and Savor tabs are not redeemable for alcohol, there are many craft beer and wine vari-



**BLUEBERRY** buttermilk pie.

etals to choose from. The Uncorked booth has mimosa flights and wine flights, which start at \$18, and vinos from California vineyards like a red blend from McBride Sisters Wine Co. in Oakland and a sauvignon blanc from Duckhorn Vineyards in St. Helena, Napa Valley.

Beer enthusiasts can find beverages at the California Craft Brews beer garden. Orange County breweries are among those represented, with brews from Anaheim's Unsung Brewing Co. and Orange's Chapman Crafted Beer on the list. Sonoma Terrace also offers draft and bottled beers, hard ciders, seltzers and wine along with commemorative wine glasses from Corkcicle. A full list of offerings can be found on the Disney Parks Blog.

sarah.mosqueda  
@latimes.com  
Twitter: @SarahNMos

# It's round three on 'Top Chef' for Amar Santana

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

Amar Santana thought his chef competition days were behind him. The executive chef and partner at restaurants Broadway in Laguna Beach and Vaca in Costa Mesa appeared in season 13 of "Top Chef."

"After competing in season 13 and doing what I did and getting to the finale, I said to myself there is no point of me competing again, if I made it this far the first time around," Santana said.

He returned to the show in season 18 for "Top Chef Portland," where he served as a judge.

"It was during the pandemic, and I had nothing going on so I decided to give it a try. I thought it should be fun," said Santana. "But I didn't realize it was going to be that fun."

Santana said he enjoyed being on the other side of the table.

"Absolutely, I would be a judge again any time,"



Photos by Scott Smeltzer | Staff Photographer

**CHEF AMAR SANTANA**, of Costa Mesa's Vaca restaurant and Broadway in Laguna Beach, cuts a 55-day dry-aged ribeye on March 7. Santana is returning to the "Top Chef" series.

said Santana.

So how did Santana end up on "Top Chef" season 20 as a contestant?

"When I found out I would be competing with chefs from all over the world, I couldn't say no," said Santana. "It gave me that fire again."

Santana returns to "Top

Chef" as one of the 16 chefs culled from the international franchises to compete in "Top Chef: Season 20 World All-Stars in London," which premiered on March 9 on NBC.

Padmia Lakshmi, Tom Colicchio and Gail Simmons return as hosts, and the format is familiar, with contestants competing in a quick-fire challenge and then an elimination challenge. Producers pulled chefs from 11 global editions of "Top Chef," including four from U.S. seasons. There are currently 29 global editions of "Top Chef," a total that surprised Santana.

"I have never seen all the versions of 'Top Chef,'" he said. "So, when I got to London and saw who the contestants were, I didn't know there was a 'Top Chef Middle East,' I didn't know 'Top Chef Brazil' ... I didn't realize

there were so many outlets."

Santana is joined by other contestants from U.S. seasons of "Top Chef," including Buddha Lo, Dawn Burrell and Sara Bradley.

Santana's experience with cooking competitions began early in his career. He moved to Queens from the Dominican Republic at age 13 and, while in high school, enrolled in a program called Culinary Arts. His instructor told him about a nonprofit organization, Careers through Culinary Arts Program (C-CAP), which could help him get a scholarship to go to culinary school.

"I said, 'You're telling me if I do this competition and become part of this program, I could actually go to school here for free? I am in!'" Santana told TimesOC in May 2022.

Santana earned a schol-



**SANTANA** is one of the 16 chefs to compete on "Top Chef: Season 20 World All-Stars in London."

arship from C-CAP to study at Le Cordon Bleu London for one week and, later, a scholarship to the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, N.Y. His success made him a confident cook, and while he was in New York, he dreamed of making it to "Top Chef."

"I always wanted to do it when I was in New York," said Santana, "but at that point in time I didn't speak English very well."

Then Santana learned about one of his friends and former classmates getting on the show and doing well.

"Ian Hall, we used to work together and went to school together," Santana said, "and when he won 'Top Chef' [season 2] I remember being, like, I am better than this guy, he is my friend."

His competitive nature drove him to make his way on to season 13.

Santana isn't just motivated by friendly competition, however. In the past, his appearance on the show brought in more customers to his restaurants.

"As a business owner like me, it is great for business," said Santana. "When people connect with you on the show, they

want to come to your restaurant and meet you and have your food."

Vaca, his Spanish tapas restaurant in Costa Mesa, opened seven years ago during the same week of his season 13 appearance airing.

"We were basically sold out for the whole year," said Santana. "We were a new restaurant, but the fact that I was on TV around the same time we opened ... it was crazy."

Although "Top Chef" is now in its 20th season and Santana on his third round, he said there are always new lessons to be learned.

"I learned so much from the other chefs," said Santana. "They are bringing flavors from all over the world that were new to me."

Santana also learned he isn't done competing quite yet.

"You are never too old to compete," laughs Santana, who first appeared on "Top Chef" at 33 and is now 40. "I kept saying that I am too old ... I learned that even at my age I can still run around with the young kids."

sarah.mosqueda  
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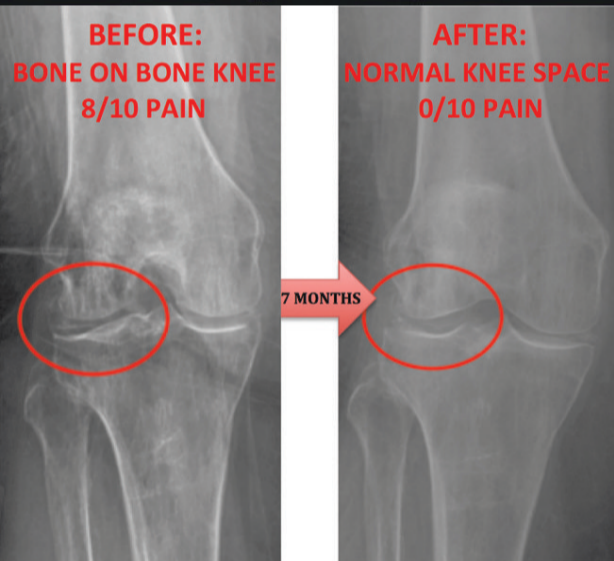
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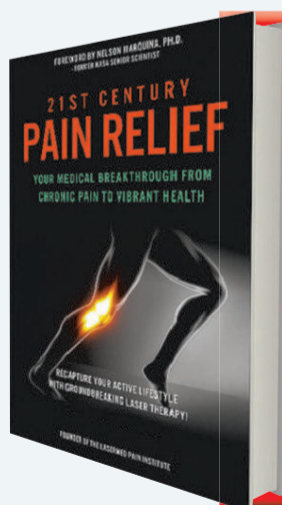


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-The late Dr. William Gutch, MD., Palm Desert, California



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**CUP**

*Continued from page A1*

representatives during the Career & College Expo also taking place at the competition.

The competition itself is broken down into two categories.

“It is a cooking and restaurant entrepreneurship competition that has really multiple events within an event,” said Harshfield.

There is a culinary team competition, where two to five students have one hour to create an appetizer, entree and dessert. But before they even begin cooking, the judging begins.

“They are judged on how they have properly and safely packed their food, so it gets temped by a set of judges,” said Harshfield.

They are also required to demonstrate knife skills and cost out all their recipes.

“It is really wonderful to see what the students create,” said Harshfield. “I would say the majority of the plates you would see at a high-end restaurant.”

The OCSA culinary team worked together to prepare a seared scallop appetizer with a lemon tarragon pea



Scott Smeltzer | Staff Photographer

**ORANGE COUNTY SCHOOL OF THE ARTS** students Trinity Wiideman, left, Ryan Okajima, Christian Lopez, Aurelia Carrie and Hannah Dromgoole listen to judge Juan Lopez during the California Restaurant Foundation’s 2023 ProStart Cup.

foam, seared bistro filet with celery root puree entree and a “fallen” apple dessert with caramel mousse.

Okajima said he most enjoyed preparing the appetizer and creating the pea foam for the dish.

“You take a milk solution or a just solution overall, reduce it, add xanthan gum and charge it in one of

those iSi chargers with CO2, which creates a light and airy foam,” said Okajima.

Carrie said the most challenging part was setting the mousse for the dessert on time.

“Since there was no freezer, we had to do a makeshift compartment of ice and salt,” Carrie said, which made making sure the des-

sert held its shape a little more stressful.

“We had to adjust our recipe completely ... there was lots and lots of trial and error,” said Carrie.

The second category of the competition is restaurant entrepreneurship.

“It is a team event as well,” said Harshfield, “and they develop and present a business plan for a new

restaurant concept, and they pitch it to a panel of judges.”

Students create a business plan that is printed and presented to the judges as well as a PowerPoint presentation.

While the pressure for the cooking round happens during the competition, Newport Harbor student Kylie Papa said the pressure in the entrepreneurship competition happens beforehand, during preparation.

“Management is a totally different facet,” said Papa, who competed in the culinary competition last year, taking first place with her team, “because it is less about what we are cooking in front of the judges and more about how we take the food and surround it with all the different dimensions it takes to get that food to customers.”

Papa, along with teammates Duke Caperon, Trixie Kulik and Jeffrey Dangel, presented a Polynesia restaurant concept called Archipelago for the entrepreneurship competition.

“I personally think it is a type of cuisine that isn’t being tackled by anyone,” said Caperon. “I think it is important that it gets a light shone on it.”

Event sponsors also put

on two just-for-fun contests: Wienerschnitzel’s Dress Your Dog competition and Idaho Potatoes Loaded Potato competition.

“They are basically creating a topping for a hot dog and a potato,” said Harshfield.

OCSA took home first place in the culinary competition and also won first place in the Dress Your Dog competition and Loaded Potato competition. OCSA placed second in entrepreneurship competition, and Fullerton Union placed third. The top teams in the Management and Culinary Cups will now go on to represent California at the National ProStart Student Invitational in Washington, D.C. in May.

“What I love about this ProStart competition is it is a chance for students to showcase their skills, their talents, their creativity and their passion,” Harshfield said. “Like those that are in band, or choir, or drama or football, they have their platform for showcasing their talents. This ProStart competition gives that to the students that are interested in food.”

sarah.mosqueda  
@latimes.com  
Twitter: @SarahNMOs

**SAFETY**

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in place to help residents prevent crime, like free home security visits, vacation checks and more. Visit [nbpd.org](http://nbpd.org) to learn more about these programs.

Despite the weak on crime policies coming from Sacramento, Newport Beach continues to remain one of the state’s safest communities, which will remain so only through vigilance and ensuring that public safety remains our city’s top priority.

**JOE STAPLETON** is a member of the Newport Beach City Council. First elected in 2022, he represents the 1st District.

**APODACA**

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or scared were thought to be more susceptible to suffering from stress and anxiety and the negative impact on health that would follow.

Many press reports have presented the study’s findings as surprising news, as if to say, “Who knew that money can’t buy happiness?”

To which many of us would reply that, duh, we actually knew this all along.

But, to be fair, studies are often conducted that end up confirming — or at least providing evidence for — what one might instinctively believe

to be true. That doesn’t make the research any less valuable. Many times we are able to glean further insights and interesting details when a rigorous academic process is applied to answering fundamental questions.

Indeed, my childhood queries about the relative value of friendships tells me I wanted a deeper understanding of their worth. It’s also telling that, although the Harvard study might be the best known, it’s far from the only research that delves into the question of what makes us happy. The topic is undeniably intriguing.

One point that I picked up on from the Harvard study, which, again, might seem obvious but is worth

underscoring, is that quality matters far more than quantity. People don’t have to become social whirlwinds to be happy, and they also don’t necessarily need to have a spouse; just one close, trusted friend can make all the difference.

It’s understandable that the authors thought it important to highlight these findings, given that our society is fixated on monetary rewards and professional acclaim to the point where many of us feel pressure to sacrifice relationships on the altar of material success.

We’re also constantly bombarded by media messages and ads that suggest we’ll feel more fulfilled if we just buy a

certain candy bar or a cool new car, take an unpronounceable prescription pill or choose the right insurance company. The manipulation is readily apparent, yet we fall for it again and again.

The book’s release is also timely, as it coincides with a period in which we are increasingly recognizing that isolation can be toxic. Feelings of detachment have been exacerbated by our reliance on technology, fixation with social media — despite the word “social,” these platforms have been shown to feed alienation — and by the pandemic. This has led to a distressing increase in mental health problems.

I’ll share another mem-

ory from my youth. When I was in my late teens a friend gave me a book by one of those self-styled spiritual-guru types who counseled readers to rely only on themselves, not others, for happiness.

My friend considered this unshakable wisdom, but I thought it was bunk. Decades later, I feel vindicated. We do need each other, and that’s a good thing. Be they silver or gold, relationships are the precious elements of a happy, fulfilling life.

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

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