

THE NEW GUARD

Councilman Ahmad Zahra was a doctor and film producer. Now, his desire to serve South Fullerton is personal.

BY ADA TSENG



"I'm a gay, Syrian immigrant. I know what discrimination is. I've experienced it firsthand. I know what racism is ... To me, this is very personal. You run for public office to be able to make this type of change, to let people know that they are represented in every way. So people feel like they are welcome in society and their community is not marginalized."

— Ahmad Zahra
Fullerton council member

Scott Smeltzer | Staff Photographer

REP. AHMAD ZAHRA, who represents the majority Latino and lower-income community in southeast Fullerton, poses with a mask outside of City Hall.

On June 2, during a Fullerton council meeting in the midst of Black Lives Matter protests across the nation, Councilman Ahmad Zahra found himself enacting a scene often relegated to movies or award shows.

He said he had prepared some remarks but then became overwhelmed. He put his notes away and spoke from his heart.

"No one should die because of who they are," he said. "No one should be afraid because of who they are."

Zahra said that this has been a very emotional time for him.

"I'm a gay, Syrian immigrant," he said. "I know what discrimination is. I've experienced it firsthand. I know what racism is ... To me, this is very personal. You run for public office to be

able to make this type of change, to let people know that they are represented in every way. So people feel like they are welcome in society and their community is not marginalized."

Zahra grew up in both Syria and England, and he initially worked as a pathologist before he decided to pivot to a film career in his mid-20s and move to the U.S.

He produced films including "On Common Grounds," a documentary about Christian, Muslim and Jewish volunteers building a house together for a poor family in Mexico, and "Three Veils," a feature about three young Middle Eastern American women, one of whom is a lesbian struggling with her sexuality.

Working in entertainment, Zahra often watched his actor

and director colleagues lead public lives. But he had mostly been behind the scenes — until several years ago when he decided to run for office in Fullerton, where he's lived for two decades.

"Film was an early passion, and it can reach a wider audience and change people's minds and hearts," he said.

"But when you look at society at large, you start realizing, it's more than minds and hearts. There's a system that needs to be continuously changed for the better ... a whole array of things that can only be achieved by changing laws and making sure everyone has an opportunity."

Zahra lives in south Fullerton, a predominantly Latino and low-income community.

Fifty percent of elementary

school students in his district are under the poverty line, he explained. When Zahra realized that, he created his own school supply drive and started doing charity work.

"But it just wasn't enough," he said. "I really wanted to step up and help my neighbors and the families that I see every day."

He decided to run for office in District 5, after serving on the Orange County Water District, and he was elected in November 2018.

Egleth Nuncci, the community liaison for Cal State Fullerton's Center for Healthy Neighborhoods at the Richmond Neighborhood Center, appreciates that Zahra makes it a priority to educate and inform the community.

See **Zahra**, page R6

Irvine repeals initiative denying LGBTQ protection

City Council members vote unanimously to overturn 1989 rule that denied protection based on sexual orientation.

BY BEN BRAZIL

The Irvine City Council on Tuesday voted unanimously to repeal a city initiative that denied the LGBTQ community anti-discrimination protection based on their sexual orientation.

That initiative, Measure N, was approved in 1989 when voters decided to remove lesbians and gays from Irvine's Human Rights Ordinance. It also forbade the city from adopting a policy that defines sexual orientation as a fundamental human right.

"This ordinance is a stain on our city, which we must now remove," said Councilwoman Melissa Fox, who introduced the item with Councilwoman Farrah

"It's a big win. There's a lot of LGBTQ folks in Irvine. It's a product of a larger landscape of where we are as a nation right now, having a really hard look at all equity across the board. It's part of a larger movement. But I am really glad to see Irvine is landing on the right side of that."

— Peg Corley
executive director of the LGBTQ Center of OC

Khan. "It's bad for business and bad for residents. It's cruel and hateful."

The item's repeal was met positively by the LGBTQ community.

"I was really pleased to see that it was a unanimous vote to repeal it," said Peg Corley, executive director of the LGBTQ Center of OC. "It's a big win. There's a lot of LGBTQ folks in Irvine."

"It's a product of a larger landscape of where we are as a nation right now, having a really hard look at all equity across the board. It's part of a larger movement. But I am really glad to see Irvine is landing on the right side of that."

During the meeting, City Attorney Jeffrey Melching said the municipal code had for many years been unenforceable and "illegal" due to changes to the federal and state constitutions.

However, Melching expressed his concern that the council may not be legally able to remove the measure since it was approved by the public.

"The legal question for the city

See **LGBTQ**, page R2

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O.C. group trains hair stylists to help victims of domestic violence

BY BEN BRAZIL

An Orange County nonprofit will train hair stylists to recognize the signs of domestic violence in their clients and provide them with the resources to report the abuse.

The Irvine-based Human Options is looking to partner with local salons and beauty schools to provide the classes. With victims being forced to quarantine with their abusers due to the pandemic, the help of cosmetologists is all the more crucial for victims.

"A lot of clients will not feel comfortable disclosing to police, but they will feel comfortable disclosing to those doing their hair, or facial or nails," said Marissa Presley, Prevention Educator for Human Options. "A lot of times, the person doing the styling, when they do the massaging and shampooing, they can feel some of the bumps in the head. They can see the bruises and some of the missing patches of hair."

The nonprofit has so far given a handful of classes at Hair Concepts salon in Huntington Beach, one of Human Options' partners. Human Options also partners with schools in Orange County, including Ad-

vanced Beauty College in Laguna Hills and Garden Grove. Presley said Human Options is working on partnering with Hoag Hospital to host virtual classes.

Presley has taught all of the classes. The 90-minute sessions walk stylists through how to spot signs of elder, sexual and other physical abuse, as well as human trafficking.

She said they had to temporarily discontinue the classes due to the pandemic but are now looking to network with more salons since they were able to recently reopen.

Hair stylists have been required to take a course on domestic abuse prevention awareness before attaining or renewing a license since California Assembly Bill 326 was signed into law in 2017.

Presley recommends placing posters with helpline information in bathrooms and other discreet areas in salons, so victims are provided helpful information even if the hair stylist can't engage the victim in a discussion due to the presence of the abuser.

"Part of the reason we are educating our clients is there is a short window of opportunity where the vic-

tim is alone with their stylist," Presley said. "A lot of times, the abuser doesn't even let the victim survivor alone in the salon. They are with them every step of the way."

Inez Ramirez, owner of Hair Concepts, knows firsthand what it's like to be a victim of domestic violence. Over the course of two relationships, Ramirez said she was sent to the hospital for being beaten and had one of her abusers arrested for beating her and locking her in a closet with her daughter in the next room.

Ramirez will continue working with Human Options because she hopes to save women who face the same abuse.

"I am not afraid of him," Ramirez said of the abuser who locked her in a closet. "I just live my life trying to help other women who suffer the same thing. If we can save one person, I will do anything."

The Human Options helpline is (877) 854-3594. Salons and stylists can get in touch with Human Options at (949) 737-5242 and by email at mpresley@humanoptions.org.

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File Photo

A PRIDE FLAG representing the LGBTQ community flies next to the OC Fair flag. The Irvine City Council voted Tuesday to overturn a city initiative approved in 1989 that denied anti-discrimination protection based on sexual orientation.

LGBTQ

Continued from page R1

attorney is what is the proper process for removing those provisions from the Irvine municipal code," Melching said.

"What's before us tonight is a motion, it's not an ordinance, which is the required device to remove anything from the municipal code. Because these provisions were put into the municipal code by a vote of the people, they can only be removed by a vote of the people."

Mayor Christina Shea agreed with Melching's analysis. Shea originally supported and campaigned for the measure but has since said that she doesn't support it anymore.

"Going out to the voters would be like digging up a dead dog, shooting it in the head again and burying it one more time because it's already dead," Shea said.

Fox and Councilman Mike Carroll, both attorneys, disagreed.

Melching said the initiative would be removed from the municipal code and would remain off the books, though that could change if somebody sues the city and challenges the council's authority to repeal the provisions.

"Most importantly, Jeff, this is something you have

"The legal question for the city attorney is what is the proper process for removing those provisions from the Irvine municipal code. What's before us tonight is a motion, it's not an ordinance..."

— Jeffrey Melching
Irvine city attorney

said to me on many occasions, who in their right mind is going to sue us to put this racist, [expletive] language back in our code?" Fox said to Melching.

"So I am calling upon my colleagues to do the easiest and best thing today, which is remove this stain from our code and do what thousands of businesses and residents have asked us to do and clean this up and move on."

The vote comes on the heels of a major shift in the city's support of the LGBTQ community.

Last month, the council voted to fly the pride flag annually and proclaim the month of June as LGBTQ+ Pride Month, both firsts in Irvine.

The council voted against flying the pride flag last year.

The repeal of the measure gathered widespread support from residents. "Although this part of

the code is no longer enforceable, choosing to leave this on the books is a slap in the face of LGBTQ residents of this city," resident Chad Kulsel said in a public comment. "It's a reminder of a dark, bigoted time that has no business in the city of Irvine."

Some residents took aim at Shea's past support of the measure.

"As a resident of Irvine, I am disgusted at the existence of measure N," said resident Alondra Maldonado.

"This measure has existed for longer than I have been alive. To see the person who has been at the forefront of the movement be not only in a position of power but be the mayor of the city is a slap in the face ... My right to marry became legal only five years ago. Measure N is overdue for repeal and should have never been passed."

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MARISSA PRESLEY, of Human Options, is teaching hair stylists how to recognize the signs of domestic abuse in their clients.



Courtesy of Human Options

MY NEW HOME IS A VILLAGE.

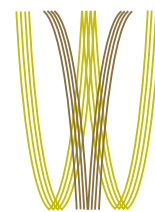
Kim
Walnut Villager
world traveler
artist

I spent a lot of time creating my own ideal world. But I never wanted to be an island unto myself. One of the things I love most about moving to Walnut Village is that it really is a village. I have my own place, but there's a fun community just outside my door. A morning class at Clay's art studio, a beauty treatment at the Strand salon, Happy Hour at the Red Chair Lounge with friends. For me, it's the best of all my worlds.



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Irvine school board votes to require masks

Trustees vote for face coverings for onsite learning and to develop various traditional, hybrid and distance models to allow families a choice for fall reopening.

BY ADA TSENG

On Tuesday evening, Irvine's Board of Education, after reviewing the Irvine Unified School District's proposed academic models until past midnight, voted to approve the recommendations for the 2020-21 school year.

Instruction at all IUSD schools will return on Aug. 20. Elementary school students will have the option of having in-person school, distance learning or a hybrid of the two. Middle school and high school students can choose between doing classwork 100% on-line or opting for a blend of in-person and distance learning.

"We're fearful," said board member Sharon Wallin. "Everyone is fearful right now. We don't have a crystal ball. We have no idea what's coming. We do know that we have a responsibility to take care of our students and staff."

"It's like a 3-D chessboard with all relatively bad moves," said board member Ira Glasky. "We're figuring out the least bad move to keep this game going along."

Earlier this week, the Los Angeles, San Diego and San Bernardino school districts announced that schools would not reopen campuses. In Orange County, the Anaheim Union High School District and Santa Ana Unified School District also announced plans to do distance learning for the fall.

In June and July, the Irvine Unified School District administered surveys, for both families and staff, to get an idea of how communities were feeling about continuing school in the fall.

FYI

On Friday shortly before press time, Gov. Gavin Newsom announced that schools in counties on the state's watchlist, including Orange County, would be closed in favor of distance learning until counties were off the watchlist for two weeks. The stories on this page describe plans made by school districts ahead of the governor's decision

Ninety percent of elementary school parents voted in favor of giving families choices.

Approximately 40% of their elementary, middle and high school families preferred the traditional in-person model, with about a third preferring a hybrid model and the rest wanting distance learning.

The staff results were more varied, with 50% of elementary school staff preferring traditional, middle school staff evenly divided with a slight preference for distance learning, and 43% of high school staff preferring a blended model.

But Wallin emphasized that the comfort level with going back to traditional schooling was qualified. Families wanted to know that all safety precautions would be taken on campus.

Before the meeting, the IUSD received over 200 public comments from teachers and parents.

Teri Sorey, president of the Irvine Teachers Assn., expressed teachers' concerns over their safety. "We need to be assured that



Scott Smeltzer | Staff Photographer

FACE COVERINGS will be a requirement for Irvine school campuses to reopen in the fall.

everything possible will be done to supply and train and equip [teachers, as] necessary, for in-person instruction to be safe and manageable, realistic and successful," she wrote, adding the result of their own survey showed that teachers preferred everyone onsite wear facial protection.

Dr. Bobby Sasson wrote: "I am writing to express a significant concern that I and most of my physician parent colleagues share for the current IUSD reopening plans and are advocating for a scientific approach to ensure our children's safety learning in the upcoming school year ... Given the alarming rise in infections and hospitalizations, we urge IUSD to commence the 2020-21 school year with 100% distance learning taught by our own teachers."

As of Thursday, Irvine has a to-

tal of 907 cases of the coronavirus, with seven deaths from COVID-19, the disease caused by the virus.

Dr. Dmitri Portnoy wrote: "The most recent public school's closure for a relatively short period of time has already demonstrated measurable detrimental effects to the well-being of children and families, unsurprisingly affecting more low-income and minority communities. The benefits of the closure remain unknown and are mostly hypothetical. The facts accumulated by this time tells us that transmission in this age group is low and morbidity and mortality is insignificant to almost nonexistent."

"... For those parents, however, who despite the cumulative medical evidence, feel anxious and uncomfortable sending their chil-

dren back to school, the option of distance learning should be evaluated."

Andrew R. Highsmith wrote: "As a father of three children in the Irvine Unified School District and a scholar of public health history in United States, I'm writing to urge you to cancel in-person instruction in all IUSD schools this far ... You have the power to help control the spread of COVID-19 ... given the current situation, I believe you have a moral imperative to do so."

Early in the meeting, board member Paul Bokota asked to move up the discussion about masks.

They understood that many may have been confused by Monday's O.C. Board of Education rec-

See *Irvine*, page R6



File Photo

STUDENTS READ books together at Creer, an after-school program in San Juan Capistrano. The district's board of trustees approved a reopening plan on Wednesday.

Capistrano Unified School District gives initial approval to reopen schools, with online options

BY BEN BRAZIL

The Capistrano Unified School District board of trustees, representing the largest school district in Orange County, approved a reopening plan on Wednesday night that gives students the flexibility to learn 100% online, 100% on campus or to evenly split their time learning virtually and in-person.

Parents have until July 31 to submit their preference to the district.

The board voted 5-2, with members Krista Castellanos and Amy Hanacek dissenting, after an hours-long discussion that eventually went past midnight.

While board President Jim Reardon praised the plan as "monumental and amazingly executed," Hanacek felt the board should have fully committed to a 100% online curriculum for at least the fall semester.

"We are kicking the can down the road," Hanacek said. "It's not going to get better. The nature of this virus, we can try different options, different social gatherings, but at the end of the day, somebody is going to have to carry the responsibility for a death or a sickness when we are asking for in-person versus virtual learning."

"I feel like to serve students, we make a decision now. ... We do virtual learning ... we keep as many students, adults and community members safe as possible."

The board will meet again on Aug. 5, and decide whether in-class schooling is feasible based on the new infection rates and other health condi-

tions in the county. School is set to resume on Aug. 18.

Orange County is currently seeing record spikes in COVID-19 infection rates and hospitalizations.

Reardon said the board can finalize whether it will hold in-person classes at the next meeting. But, he's in favor of approving the plan now because of the flexibility it provides the district.

"The question is, do we approve of the plan, and are we going to be responsive to the condition in early August so we can make a final determination about whether the in-classroom offering is realistic?" Reardon said. "If we don't approve this plan, we have no plan."

"I think we need to look at this plan as the framework for what we will be doing to maneuver the community conditions that we cannot yet foresee. Those conditions are not just between now and when school starts. They will continue to evolve throughout the year and beyond that perhaps."

According to the plan, K-5 students have the choice to be on campus 100% of the time, learn 100% online, or evenly split time between the two options. Secondary grade students have the option to evenly split time between online and in-person learning or do 100% virtual learning.

In order to transfer learning to help with other extended learning opportunities, the board also voted to reduce elective requirements and to not include health as a requirement for one year for the 2021 and 2024 senior classes.

For the proposed in-per-

son learning plan, face masks will be required for students. The schools will have extra face masks on-site for every student in case a child forgets it at home. Social distancing will also be observed and students will eat their meals in designated areas.

Students will have their temperatures taken before school at bus stops or on campus, and additional hand-washing stations will be added.

Registration data taken by the district so far shows that 64% of parents support 100% on-campus learning for elementary schools, while 21% of families support the 50% on-campus choice and 15% prefer the 100% online scenario.

The data also shows that 85% of parents of secondary school students chose the 50% on-campus scenario and 15% of parents chose the 100% online program.

About 50 residents signed up to speak at the meeting, though many were not on the phone when their time came to speak.

"To say we can resume ... is a scary thought," said Rachel Sadler, who teaches special education at Castille Elementary School. "We work in closer proximity than any general education classroom. In special ed, there is no social distancing."

The Capistrano board vote came on the heels of the Orange County Board of Education's controversial recommendation to send students back to campus without requiring masks or social distancing. The board's vote was

See *Reopen*, page R6

Newport-Mesa says TK-6 students might return to full-day classes in the fall but readies online plans

BY SARA CARDINE

Newport-Mesa Unified School District officials are closing in on a comprehensive plan for how the 2020-21 school year might function, whatever the coronavirus pandemic may bring, approving on Tuesday a strategy for students in grades TK-6.

Families will have the option of placing children in a 100% virtual K-12 school, to which they will commit for at least one trimester or semester and which will operate as an independent entity with its own teaching staff and principal. Former Ensign Intermediate Principal Mike Sciacca has been picked to helm the online-only school.

All other elementary students will participate in a full-day "Max 16" model that will shift in response to state and county orders issued during the pandemic.

As such, instruction could be totally in person (Level 1), totally online (Level 3) or a hybrid that has kids arriving on campuses in small cohorts that will attend morning or afternoon teaching periods with an extended learning period featuring enrichment and activities the rest of the day (Level 2).

Wednesdays will condense lessons and extended learning into a half-day morning session for all students, with teachers receiving professional development in the afternoon. At all times, there will be no more than 16 pupils in one classroom, officials stated.

Plans for a similar flexible model at middle and high schools are still being worked out and will come up for review by board members in a special meeting tentatively scheduled

for Tuesday at 6 p.m. Officials and board members promised Tuesday they would try to keep siblings at different schools on the same schedule, to the extent possible.

Interim Supt. Russell Lee-Sung said because it is still unknown whether Orange County will be open or on lockdown when the school year starts on Aug. 24, officials will announce which level the sliding-model students will be starting at two weeks prior.

"We're building a structure right now to be prepared for any contingency," he said. "I am very concerned with the numbers — if those numbers continue to go up, it is truly jeopardizing our ability to open up the physical environment."

Orange County health officials on Friday reported 873 new coronavirus cases and 11 deaths from COVID-19, the disease caused by the virus. Among all county cases, about 1,500 are children 17 and under.

District staff members plan to send out intent forms to families, so they can declare whether they'd prefer to have children attend the 100% virtual school or participate in the sliding model.

"We need to find out from parents whether they are interested in this [virtual] option," Lee-Sung told board members. "If they do not choose that, then they're in the three-level adaptable plan."

The superintendent acknowledged while students will be distanced and areas disinfected, many more details pertaining to cleaning, bus transportation and secondary-level course offerings have yet to be worked out. Lee-Sung said he plans to return to the board in the

coming weeks as those details are refined.

He did clarify that Newport-Mesa still hasn't determined whether students will be required to wear masks if and when they do return to campuses. The Orange County Board of Education on Monday released school reopening recommendations advising against social distancing and face masks for children, claiming the measures ineffective and potentially harmful. The decision, however, rests entirely with school districts.

"This will be something we'll bring to the board, in terms of what our requirement is going to be for masks," Lee-Sung said Tuesday. "Right now, the guidance is saying that they should wear masks. But we have not made the final decision in terms of exactly what that means for our district."

Board President Martha Fluor said she hopes the district will consider extending the 100% virtual school beyond the pandemic, calling it an "unbelievable opportunity" for families.

"I hope as we move forward this is a long-term proposal," she said. "I'd hate for parents to really love this ... then all of a sudden COVID-19 is over and they have to return to a school that may not be meeting the needs of their children."

Lee-Sung said keeping the model was a distinct possibility.

"This is far too much work to do just for a temporary thing," he responded. "It really lays a foundation for us to build upon for future years."

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Irvine opens drive-up COVID-19 testing as virus spreads

BY MATT SZABO

Irvine became the first city in Orange County to open a drive-up testing site Monday, as COVID-19 numbers continued to steadily increase.

Gov. Gavin Newsom announced during his daily press conference that all of California's counties would be closing indoor dining and bars, family entertainment, zoos and museums, effective immediately. Most counties, including Orange and Los Angeles, also will be reclosing gyms, churches, hair salons, malls and other businesses.

There were 405 more positive cases of the coronavirus reported Friday by the Orange County Health Care Agency, and 3 deaths. That brings the cu-

mulative case count to 28,309, including 1,432 skilled nursing facility residents, 434 Orange County jail inmates and 120 people experiencing homelessness.

The cumulative death toll from COVID-19 in the county since the pandemic began in March is now 469. There are 682 cases currently hospitalized, including 235 patients in intensive care units.

Testing has continued to increase, as there have now been 341,097 total tests administered in the county. Roughly 100,000 of those have taken place since June 19.

The testing facility in Irvine, located at Orange County Great Park parking lot No. 6, is offered to people who either live or work

in Irvine, whether symptomatic or asymptomatic. It is open from Monday through Thursday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and is by appointment only, with up to 260 PCR tests being administered per day via nasal or oral swab before being handed to a medical professional. Irvine spokeswoman Melissa Haley said that it took just two days for appointments to be totally booked for the entirety of the monthlong testing program.

The Irvine City Council met Tuesday night and members mentioned that they hoped to grow the program.

Irvine resident Tiffany Im drove through late Monday to be tested for COVID-19. She said she has been having respiratory issues lately.

"I'm really proud to be an Irvine resident, that they're doing this to make sure our community is safe," Im said. "I know that there's also a lot of concern about the schools reopening here shortly, and I feel like this will let us know if we're on track to do that or not."

Im said the spiking COVID-19 numbers are a cause for concern, particularly with a young child at home. Her daughter, Tiyan, is 5 years old and will be starting kindergarten. Im said she and her daughter make sure to wear masks while out and about.

"I don't like [the masks issue becoming political]," she said. "I feel like I've snoozed a lot of people on my Facebook feeds recently for making everything political. I just want those



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

HEALTH SPECIALIST Mari Cruz grabs a completed test from a motorist at a drive-up COVID-19 testing site at Irvine's Orange County Great Park on Monday.

who are educated to make the decisions for us, and just work together to try to protect our families."

Since the drive-up testing is appointment-based, lines rarely got longer than two or three cars. After Im got to the testing station, she asked the medical professional if the test was going to hurt. The response was that she might cry.

"Oh, that's fine," Im said. "I've been crying since March."

The city of Irvine partnered with multiple laboratories, including Pangea Laboratory in Costa Mesa, to provide the coronavirus testing.

Alex Hafers, a spokesman for Pangea, said the company's ownership decided to pivot when the pandemic hit.

"We had some capacity, we had some good turnaround times, so we offered our services," Hafers said. "Our ownership just wanted to help the community, and what better place to start than our local community? We were able to reach out so quickly because we're just down the street."

The medical professionals on-site at the Great Park are from Curogram, which was founded in Irvine and provides communications options for the medical profession.

"The City Council has put in place appropriate

and forward-thinking safety measures every step of the way since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic," Irvine Mayor Christina Shea said in a statement. "I am very proud that Irvine will be the first city in Orange County to provide testing to those that live and work in Irvine, regardless of whether they have symptoms. Testing continues to be a critical component for reopening under State guidance, while ensuring the health of our community."

Irvine originally tried to institute a drive-up testing program in May, Haley said, but the chosen vendor "was not able to provide the type of service-level detail we needed." That was when Curogram stepped in.

Curogram Chief Operating Officer Michael Hsu, an Irvine resident whose company has helped develop testing sites in Houston, Atlanta and New York City, said it takes time to develop a drive-up testing program.

"The bottom line is that nobody has ever faced this problem before," Hsu said. "Nobody really knows who's supposed to solve it, how do they solve it ... Everybody across the country is learning on the fly."

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Anaheim begins free coronavirus testing

After Irvine became the first Orange County city to offer a drive-through COVID-19 testing site on Monday, Anaheim opened another at the Anaheim Convention Center on Wednesday, in partnership with Garden Grove-based Clinic 360.

For patients with insurance, insurers will be billed with no out-of-pocket cost, and for those without insurance, federal funding will cover the cost of testing.

Testing will be offered Wednesdays through Sundays from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. by appointment only.

There will be a limited amount of tests available at first, as the clinic is starting with a smaller number of appointments this week, explained Mike Lyster, Anaheim city spokesperson.

But the site will soon offer 600 to 800 tests a day with a goal of expanding to 1,200 a day within two weeks.

Testing will be contact-



Carolyn Cole | Los Angeles Times

CLINICIANS FROM Garden Grove-based Clinic 360 are administering the test kits at the Anaheim Convention Center, but citizens will do their own sample taking.

free and self-administered, and those being tested will remain in their vehicles with their windows up unless they are receiving or returning materials. The samples will be processed off-site.

The testing services are available for those with symptoms; health-care workers, first responders and other es-

essential workers; residents and employees of skilled nursing and other group living facilities; and those who have had close contact (15 minutes or more, less than 6 feet) with someone known or suspected to have COVID-19.

The testing site is on the west side of Anaheim Convention Center, in a

surface parking lot and parking structure off West Street south of Kattella Avenue.

"As Orange County's largest city, Anaheim is meeting the challenge of coronavirus," Mayor Harry Sidhu said in a news release.

"No other Orange County city has the spaces and skills to make this happen on this scale. Anaheim is proud to do our part to address rising cases in our city and across the county."

As of Wednesday, Anaheim has had a total of 4,654 cases of coronavirus and 102 deaths from COVID-19, according to the Orange County Health Care Agency.

Anaheim and Santa Ana are Orange County's hardest-hit cities when it comes to the virus.

To make an appointment, visit OCcovid19.ocalhealthinfo.com/super site.

For questions, call (800) 446-8888.

— From staff reports

REOPEN

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merely a recommendation and has been met with staunch opposition from many school districts.

"Local school districts are not bound to any recommendations that were approved by the county Board of Education," Capistrano Superintendent Kirsten Vital said at the meeting, clarifying confusion among residents. "The county Board of Education has no direct oversight authority of this board's decisions on reopening."

School districts around the county are in the process of deciding how they want to reopen in fall.

The Irvine Board of Education recently chose to allow elementary students the option of in-person schooling, distance learning or a combination of the two, similar to the Capistrano board's decision. Middle and high school students can do 100% online or a combination of in-person and virtual learning.

The Newport-Mesa Unified School District this week decided on a plan for reopening schools, which includes an option for K-12 students to be placed in a virtual school, among other parts of the reopening plan.

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ZAHRA

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"There are things that we never knew existed," she said, laughing. "But every Monday, he talks to us about how to get involved. He will answer complaints and take the time to explain things. He's become so familiar, that whenever we have issues, we'll say, 'Let's call Ahmad.'"

She said that their district is the most at-risk when it comes to the pandemic, because they have many families living in one-bedroom apartments and other dense spaces.

"If you tell Ahmad we need to clean the streets, he will clean it," she said. "For food drives, he'll deliver the food himself."

Since Zahra assumed office, he's proud that the council is moving forward with a plan for a navigational center that will provide shelter and services for the homeless.

In early April, as the pandemic took hold in Orange County, Zahra sponsored a motion to go beyond county guidelines that require retail business employees to wear masks and also mandate that patrons in the stores wear them. It passed.

In late May, when Black Lives Matter protests began, Zahra said he was in constant contact with the

Fullerton city manager and police chief.

"I was apprehensive about the whole thing," Zahra said. "I wanted to make sure we were protecting the community from one or two people who might go a little bit further with their passion but also that we were facilitating this. Allowing it because people need to vent and go out and protest. Where do you strike that balance?"

Faith Forcucci-Morris is an engineer and longtime Fullerton resident, and her family has run CF Dance Academy in Fullerton for 20 years.

She was at the May 30 protest in Fullerton where she said about 150 people marched peacefully, and she said the police came in riot gear, intimidating them with guns with rubber bullets and a SWAT vehicle.

When she heard there wasn't another protest planned for the next weekend, she and her husband organized one themselves.

Zahra had worked with Forcucci-Morris' mother, Leanna Forcucci, the chair of Fullerton Collaborative nonprofit, and not wanting a repeat of the weekend before, he reached out to offer his support.

"There was good communication and an understanding about why people were protesting, and the



Scott Smeltzer | Staff Photographer

AHMAD ZAHRA has been representing Fullerton's District 5 as a councilman since 2018.

community helped shift our police strategy in a very positive way," he said.

Approximately 1,500 people showed up, and police did not have a visible presence. Zahra spoke, alongside other government officials.

"[Most of them] spoke in platitudes, they were very general and didn't really address our platform, which was defunding the police," Forcucci-Morris said.

"Ahmad was the only one to speak to that a little bit and confront it, and even though he didn't say exactly what I wanted to hear, I really appreciate that."

Forcucci-Morris said Zahra has been providing guidance for her and her

husband, who started Fullerton for Change, and the woman behind another new organization, Defund Police Fullerton.

"He is definitely taking a lot of time to listen to us and to hear our thoughts," she said. "And even if he doesn't exactly agree on everything, he really wants us to have a voice."

Forcucci-Morris also appreciated that Zahra was the one that got the city to fly the Pride flag at City Hall.

Zahra said that his short time in office has been a personal and challenging journey.

"I'm not a career politician," he said. "The reason I want to contribute and the relationships I have in the city are very personal

to me. These are my neighbors."

He was disappointed in the O.C. Board of Education's recent recommendation that students go back to school without masks or social distancing.

He's especially concerned about the lower-income students in his district, whose families may not have the resources to transfer to private schools or to manage home-schooling if schools open in a way that's unsafe.

"I think it's essential that we get back to education. The question is, can we come up with a model and a system that does not disadvantage lower-income students and at the same time maintain health for everybody as much as possible?" he said.

At print time, Gov. Newsom had just ordered California schools in counties on the COVID-19 watchlist, including O.C., to stay closed.

All of this is uncharted territory, Zahra said, and he thinks it's important to err on the side of caution.

"People are very tense these days," he said. "I hope everybody just takes a breath, with or without a mask, and takes a step back and see how we can get through this all together."

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IRVINE

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ommendation to reopen schools without masks or social distancing.

The IUSD released a statement Tuesday morning: "IUSD is not governed by the O.C. Board of Education and our District will not follow their nonbinding recommendations for the 2020-21 school year."

The statement noted that the members were guided by Orange County Department of Education (OCDE), County Supt. Dr. Al Mijares and the department's "Orange County Together: A guide to safely reopening schools in the COVID-19 era."

The guide stresses the

importance of social distancing and face coverings and adheres to the guidelines of the California Department of Public Health and the Orange County Health Care Agency.

All five IUSD board members voted to not only recommend face coverings for students and staff at school but to make wearing them a requirement, with certain exceptions, including kids with medical and mental exemptions, as well as during lunch or recess while students are at least 6 feet apart from each other.

Bokota added that students should only remove face coverings at the direction of a teacher or staff member.

"I am actually generally in favor of some degree of

flexibility, but I am concerned that there's an inherent vagueness and slippery-slope component to that, so I'd like to limit the slipperiness and the slope of the hill," he said.

Wallin added that in a previous survey, 85% of the IUSD teachers felt safer with a mask requirement in place.

John Fogarty, the district's assistant superintendent of business services, explained that "it is important for us to be aggressive with the PPE [personal protective equipment]," adding that they have over 98,000 disposable and cloth masks and over 18,000 face shields with plans to order 49,000 more cloth masks.

They've also ordered 11,000 study carrels, plastic

barriers to separate students, and they have approximately 19,000 bottles of sanitizers and wipes.

Board member Betty Carroll explained that there was a possibility that Gov. Gavin Newsom would call for all schools in California to close, but so far there has been no action either way.

She pointed out that when schools shut down in March, it wasn't because of a government mandate but because districts individually made decisions to shut down for safety reasons.

IUSD Supt. Terry Walker and others gave thorough presentations outlining the state and local agency guidelines, the task force and recommendation process, as well as the different models for all ages as well

as plans for special education students and mental health resources.

The COVID-19 industry guidance plan for schools, released by the California Department of Public Health on June 5, includes disinfecting, training, monitoring for symptoms and an attestation checklist from the O.C. Health Care Agency.

The district will work with the administration at each school to design plans that work best for their campuses.

"I just want people to know that the details and the minutia are things that we look at," Botoka said.

"What type of hand sanitizer, how we train people, what we tell people, what symptoms you look for ...

As people are looking to make decisions for what they may be comfortable with, I want people to know all those small issues are things that the district is addressing."

Walker anticipates that, with these customized distance and hybrid options, the number of students on campus will be reduced to about half.

"What this is requiring, in general, is an ongoing adaptive mentality," he said.

"We need to be consistently thinking about contingency plans ... We're constantly looking at that and synthesizing that new information."

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