

Daily Pilot

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2024 /// dailypilot.com



Photos by Don Leach | Staff Photographer

A STOL PLANE is pushed into take-off position during a Pacific Airshow press conference on the beach in Huntington Beach earlier this year.

California state auditor sues Huntington Beach

Lawsuit filed in Orange County Superior Court challenges city officials' refusal to hand over documents in audit of Pacific Airshow settlement.

BY MATT SZABO

California state auditor Grant Parks has sued the city of Huntington Beach for refusing to comply with an audit into the controversial Pacific Airshow settlement.

Parks filed suit on Orange County Superior Court on Oct. 22. The city and city treasurer Alisa Backstrom are named as defendants.

Parks said in the suit that Huntington Beach has a "mandatory duty" to comply with his requests for access to city staff and records, as well as a subpoena issued to the city requiring the attendance and testimony of

Backstrom. He is seeking the production of records, permits and contracts between the city and Pacific Airshow LLC.

In May, the California Joint Legislative Audit Committee voted 10-2 to seek review of the city's multimillion-dollar settlement of a lawsuit that had been filed by Pacific Airshow LLC over the cancellation of one day of the 2021 airshow due to an oil spill off the coast of Huntington Beach.

State Sen. Dave Min (D-Irvine), who is currently locked in a too-close-to-call battle with Scott Baugh for a seat in California's

See *Auditor*, page A5



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

GINA CLAYTON-TARVIN, pictured with fellow candidate John Briscoe at a school board candidates forum last month, sued Huntington Beach to force the release of the full Pacific Airshow settlement.

Sister cities make mutual admiration official



Courtesy of Lexie Aguayo | LBSCA

THE LAGUNA BEACH City Council and a delegation from the Fuji Five Lakes region of Japan at a signing ceremony designating the communities as sister cities.

Fuji Five Lakes region in Japan joins Laguna Beach officials in ceremony formalizing friendship.

BY ANDREW TURNER

Laguna Beach has entered into a new international friendship, as the coastal community welcomed a delegation from Japan to formalize the relationship.

The traveling party from the Fuji Five Lakes region of Japan met with Laguna Beach city officials on Monday evening for a signing reception at Laguna Art Museum.

Those in attendance took a tour of the museum — currently holding its 12th annual Art and Nature festival — before the ceremony, which featured remarks from Mayor Sue Kempf and Gov. Kotaro Nagasaki of the Yamanashi Prefecture, among others.

"We've had a nice chat about our cities," Kempf said. "We're welcoming, and we've been welcomed. It's a beautiful thing to have you here today, and we would like to have you

See *Cities*, page A5

Property would expand open space

Costa Mesa planning commissioners plan to review purchasing a fourplex beside a pocket park on city's west side.

BY SARA CARDINE

The Costa Mesa Planning Commission Tuesday will give initial consideration to a plan by the city to acquire a residential property near Shalimar Park in order to expand a rare recreational space in the highly developed west-side area.

Panelists will review whether the purchase of the property, at 778 Shalimar Drive, conforms to the city's general plan in a meeting rescheduled from its typical second-Monday format, which would have fallen on Veterans Day.

Such a transaction would require the city to demolish a 3,390-square-foot fourplex on the .16-acre parcel, then draw up plans for expansion of Shalimar Park. Those actions would require separate Planning Commission approval.

"Acquiring this land would nearly double Shalimar Park's footprint, creating a valuable opportunity for enhancement to a local community that is recognized as being one of the most densely populated and highly developed areas in the city," reads a staff report for Tuesday's meeting.

The pocket park, located at 782 Shalimar Drive, is currently undergoing about \$2.3 million in improvements thanks, in part, to a budget allocation from state Sen. Dave Min (D-Irvine) in 2022. The renovation was approved this summer with input from the public.

Dedicated in 1999, Shalimar was made possible by city officials who, two years prior, purchased the property for a reported \$191,000 and demolished an old, boarded-up residence that had been there, the Los Angeles Times reported.

City leadership in 1997 expressed hope the park might help transform a neighborhood known as an "epicenter of gang troubles,

See *Property*, page A2

ALSO FROM THE DAILY PILOT:



Doug Gifford

THE CROWD: ORANGE COUNTY SCHOOL OF THE ARTS STUDENTS DAZZLE AT ANNUAL FUNDRAISER PAGE A3

Coast Film & Music Festival invites community to connect with nature

BY ERIC LICAS

A nine-day program of events and entertainment beginning Saturday in Laguna Beach invites people to connect with nature and one another.

The sixth annual Coast Film and Music Festival runs through Nov. 17. The 15 feature films, 53 shorts, musical performances, workshops, Q&A sessions and outdoor activities scheduled across four venues during the course of the celebration focus on art and the beauty of the world around us. Many aim to promote

a sense of stewardship and community among attendees.

"We're creating an immersive experience that celebrates our connection to nature, inspires action to protect our planet, and showcases the incredible talent in adventure filmmaking and music," co-founder Enich Harris said in a news release.

The festival kicks off Saturday evening with a screening at the Rivian South Coast Theater of "Porcelain War," which documents the story of two Ukrainian artists who become soldiers in the wake of the Russian invasion.

That's followed up by a performance by Ukrainian pianist Leyena Antonyicq.

Opening weekend films at the South Coast Theater continue with shorts "26,000 Days" and "Explorations of Light and Sound," along with a musical performance by the latter's director, singer and guitarist Matt Costa, accompanied by drummer Adam Topol and multi-instrumentalist Money Mark.

On Tuesday, Hobie Surf Shop hosts its annual local's night, fea-

See *Festival*, page A2



Steve Sherman, courtesy of the South Coast Film & Music Festival

ATTENDEES OF the 2022 Coast Film & Music Festival pack the Rivian South Coast Theater.

PROPERTY

Continued from page A1

drug sales and illicit activities.”

“It would give the street a place for the kids to go, so there would be a better sense of community there,” then-Councilman Joe Erickson said of the effort at the time.

Zoned R-3 for multifamily residential use, and with a land use designation sanctioning high-density living accommodations, the parcel is listed for sale on the real estate website Redfin for \$1.75 million.

Costa Mesa’s land use matrix permits parks and playgrounds in R-3 zones, according to city staff. While the general plan establishes a goal of approximately 4.26 acres of park space per 1,000 residents, the planning area in which Shalimar Park sits offers much less open space — just 2.34 acres per 1,000



File Photo

SHALIMAR PARK on Costa Mesa’s west side could double in size if the city buys and demolishes an adjacent building, seen here in 2022.

people.

“Therefore, the location of the acquisition of the subject property for park purposes will assist in achieving the city’s goal of 4.26 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents within the most densely populated and highly developed area in the city, the staff report

concludes.

The Costa Mesa Planning Commission will meet Tuesday at 6 p.m. in City Council Chambers, 77 Fair Drive.

For the meeting agenda, visit costamesaca.gov.

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FESTIVAL

Continued from page A1

turing a set by folksy R&B outfit Iris and the Shade as well as a screening of shorts “Return to the Bering” and “The Fisherman’s Son.” The documentaries highlight big-wave surfers’ link to the ocean and desire to preserve it.

Films on Forest Avenue is a new special event on this year’s festival schedule that’s free to attend. It includes short films showcasing the talent and inspiring accomplishments of BMX trail riders, skateboarders and others. It also includes a guest speaker panel and live music from Eli Crane.

Other free events include either a hike or a yoga class on Saturday morning and a trail run with the Laguna Beach Run Club on Sunday.

More collections of shorts have been grouped into thematic showcases. The festival’s “Our Oceans”



Jan Schrieber, courtesy of the Coast Film & Music Festival

THE FESTIVAL of Arts and Pageant of the Masters is one of the venues of the South Coast Film & Music Festival.

block screens on Friday and Sunday. It explores the transformative power of the sea as well as pollution, the growing frequency of toxic red tides and other issues impacting aquatic ecosystems.

The “Our Lands” block focuses on the diversity of Earth’s landscapes. “Every Day Wonders” encourages attendees to find beauty and meaning in the mundane. “Healed by Nature”

explores the restorative properties of the environment. Those three short film showcases take place on Saturday.

Tickets for most feature-length screenings or short film showcases cost between \$21 and \$39.

Passes are also available via the festival’s website, coastfilmfestival.com.

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THE DAILY COMMUTER PUZZLE

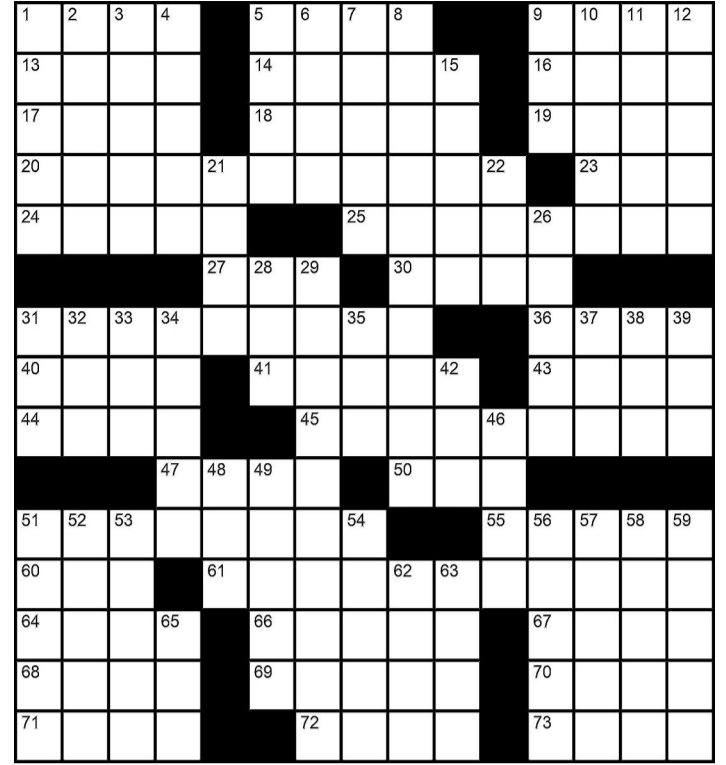
By Stella Zawistowski

ACROSS

- 1 Price locations
- 5 Puts in
- 9 Make preparations
- 13 Body of a ship
- 14 Toad features
- 16 Golf course target
- 17 Prefix with “logical”
- 18 Early video game company
- 19 Connect the
- 20 Music industry honor: 2 wds.
- 23 Complete collection
- 24 Vietnam’s capital
- 25 Pittsburgh’s NFL team
- 27 “_ Misérables”
- 30 Be jealous of
- 31 Egregiously bad
- 36 RuPaul’s specialty
- 40 Table expander
- 41 Thrash wildly
- 43 Tiny amount
- 44 12-ounce Starbucks size
- 45 Pauses before acting
- 47 Choral voice part
- 50 New Deal agency: Abbr.
- 51 Roomy
- 55 Cowboy’s rope
- 60 Damage
- 61 Leader in fashion
- 64 Molecule part
- 66 Pilfer
- 67 British nobleman
- 68 Mojito ingredient
- 69 New Mexico county
- 70 Poker payment
- 71 Put cargo in
- 72 Famed Art Deco designer
- 73 Cook on a grill

DOWN

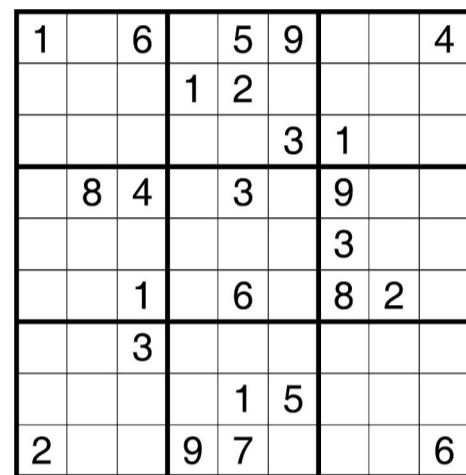
- 1 Fried chicken



SUDOKU

By the Mephram Group

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



For answers to the crossword and Sudoku puzzles, see page A5.

- piece
- 2 Actress McDonald
- 3 Gather bit by bit
- 4 Replay feature, for short
- 5 Not at home
- 6 Facts and figures

- 7 Attracts
- 8 Tactical expert
- 9 Advanced degree: Abbr.
- 10 Not taut
- 11 Tailor for fit
- 12 Birds’ structures
- 15 Ambulance noisemaker

- 21 Paper factory
- 22 “Lion” actor Patel
- 26 Golfer Ko
- 28 One of Santa’s helpers
- 29 Outline of a figure
- 31 Ctrl-_-Del
- 32 Pod veggie
- 33 Chum
- 34 Insurer with a duck mascot
- 35 Scottish “no”
- 37 Go bad
- 38 Consumed
- 39 Car fuel
- 42 Actress Tyler
- 46 Narrative
- 48 Started, as a fire
- 49 Trunk of the body
- 51 Little
- 52 Barbecue spot
- 53 Pleasant scent
- 54 Snide look
- 56 Book of maps
- 57 Pebble or boulder
- 58 Mattress brand
- 59 Restaurant request
- 62 Move rapidly
- 63 _gin fizz
- 65 Club _ (resort brand)

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THE CROWD | B.W. COOK

Orange County School of the Arts students dazzle at annual fundraiser

As Thanksgiving approaches, the community in support of the Orange County School of the Arts (OCSA) has much to be grateful for. Talented OCSA students presented their annual Season Premiere 2024 show before some 400 guests attending the performance and dinner celebration held at Balboa Bay Resort, Newport Beach.

The troupe of artist-scholars, known as the OCSA Montage performers, delivered a rousing country-music-themed, Broadway-style review featuring impressive dance and vocal talent.

One of two major fundraising events during the year, Season Premiere delivers significant assistance to OCSA in its ongoing need to raise some \$10 million in private donations to augment student funding provided to the public charter school. OCSA, which focuses on academic excellence and artistic immersion, has a student body of 2,300 pupils enrolled through a competitive application and audition process. The program is open to all who qualify, and there is no tuition, so community and family support is essential.

Making OCSA thrive and underwriting Season Premiere were principal donors and honorary producers **Carole Pickup**, attending with daughter **Devon Martin**, representing event angels Balboa Bay Resort and Pendry, Newport Beach. Additional principal sponsors were F&M Bank, Chapman University, Boot Barn and MIP (Modern Illumination Productions). The list of family sponsors is more evidence of the passionate support for OCSA in the community. Among them, **Anna Schlotzhauer** and **Jim Bergman**, **Tim and Michelle Donaher**, **Cheryl and Michael Laven**, and the **Malis family**. Also front and center, **Susan Samuelli**, **Bert and Kim Tavares**, **Jim and Gretchen Conroy** and **Sal and Jennie Lynn Johanson-Maya**.

Applause not only goes to the student performers but also must be shared with the OCSA staff led by **Teren Shaffer**, president and CEO of the school. Serving as event host and emcee, Shaffer was a star in his own right, weaving together the complex elements of performance, fundraising, public relations and family connections, with the overall objective of delivering an exceptional evening to be remembered. Joining Shaffer deserving that applause were **Cindy Peca**, creative director and producer; **Melissa Wackerman**, music director; **Jacob Piattoni**, choreographer; **Mark Wein**, band director and **Michael Von Hoffman**, director of special events productions. Many others not mentioned must also take a bow.

The crowd flowed seamlessly from cocktail reception to the auction and speeches, and then a first-class chef-curated four-course dinner, right into the show starring a cast of some 80 kids singing and dancing their hearts out. By



Doug Gifford

EVENT HONORARY producer Carole Pickup and daughter Devon Martin join Aaron Trent, left, and Federico Monge-Romero at the Season Premiere 2024 show for OCSA.

the end of the Saturday night party, more than \$150,000 was raised for OCSA.

To learn more about the programs at OCSA visit ocsarts.net.

ABOUT 200 TURN OUT FOR COWBOY CARNIVAL

Last month's annual "fun" raiser, themed Cowboy Carnival, which benefits Balboa Island Museum's yearlong free-to-the-public exhibits, events and community outreach, was created with style and energy by museum executive director **Tiffany Pepys Hoey** working with the creative staff of Elite OC Productions led by **Linda Young**.

The Friday night crowd arrived on the Peninsula at sunset, many traveling across the harbor on the Balboa Island ferry, leaving the mainland behind and entering the Fun Zone, which had been transformed for the night into a Texas Ranch dance party. The James Kelly cowboy band rocked the outdoor dance floor as guests entered the party greeted by line dance instructors. Within minutes the rhythm of the night was set.

Some 200 guests explored the pop-up ranch, wandering through rooms adjacent to the central dance arena. Cowboy carnival games entertained guests, awarding stuffed pink pigs and brown horses to those with superior skills at the hatchet toss, just one booth among others in the gaming arcades.

The night was made possible with generous backing from Texas Tycoon sponsors **Julia and George Argyros**, whose support over decades has sustained Balboa Island Museum for the entire community to enjoy. Additional tycoon **Shirley Pepys**, museum founder and CEO, welcomed **O.C. Supervisor Katrina Foley**, **Cathie Cook**, **Cynthia Shafer** of Royal Hen on the island, **Steve Grosslight**, **John Scudder**, **Sue and Scott Sibley**, **Jim and Marleen Quandt**, **Paula Castanon** and **Clint and Kristen Burns** among the carnival underwriters.

As the party was taking off, a flash mob of about 20 teenagers from the Orange County High School of the Arts (OCSA) charged in ready to dance and took the party by storm. Add to that the infectious positive energy of host and emcee **Bob Miller** rallying the crowd to participate in everything happening all around them, the event was taken over the top.

What every cowboy party



John Watkins

VICTORIA AND Natalie Fless, Nick Anas, Supervisor Katrina Foley, Mary Fleiss and Dennis Bress at the "fun" raiser.

must have is the best barbecue food on the planet. Naples Rib Co. outdid themselves. The crowd raved over the sirloin steak martinis, grilled giant shrimp kabobs, barbecued sausages, chicken and tangy Western salad selections.

Spotted in the ranch mess hall was local film star **Seymour Beek**, whose bio pic, "Newport and Me: Seymour Beek," about the early days of Newport was featured in sold-out showings at the recent Newport Beach Film Festival.

Also in the crowd was Balboa Island artist **Barbara Abbott**, creator of the Balboa Island mural recently installed on the wall of the island's Irvine Ranch Market. Others were museum president of the board **John Connors** joined by his wife, **Diana, Pam Selber, Jo Ellen Heck, Georgie Fenton, Keith Curry, Dennis Bress, Renée and Stan Lowe, Catherine Lowe**, editor and designer of the Scout Guide, Newport Beach **Councilwoman Robin Grant** and **Wendy and Mark Hales**.

To learn more about



John Watkins

MATT LEONETTI joins Shirley Pepys, founder and CEO of Balboa Island Museum at Cowboy Carnival.

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ORANGE COUNTY School of the Arts students Lexie Shehad and Piper Rovsek perform at Season Premiere 2024.

Daily Pilot

A Times Community News publication.

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The Daily Pilot, established in 1907, is published Thursday through Sunday by Times Community News, a division of the Los Angeles Times. Subscriptions are available only by subscribing to The Times, Orange County.

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From the Ukrainian frontline, with thanks

Ukrainian Military Musicians' Concert

Sunday, Nov. 10th at 11 a.m.



ST. JAMES EPISCOPAL CHURCH



CULTURAL FORCES

2nd MUSIC TOUR OF GRATITUDE TO AMERICA

The members of the Ukrainian Cultural Forces, who will be at St. James Episcopal Church in Newport Beach for a concert on Sunday, Nov. 10th at 11 a.m. (after our regular 10 a.m. service), were all professional artists before the war, but are now active duty soldiers and frontline volunteers. After recovering from their injuries, they got back to playing music. They will present a wide variety of music, from Ukrainian and world classics to covers of popular hits.

St. James is honored to welcome the Cultural Forces to Orange County on their Tour of Gratitude.

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Regular services are at 10 a.m. every Sunday



Doug Gifford

JIM AND Dr. Gretchen Conroy attend OCSA's season premiere event.

LAGUNA BEACH Mayor Sue Kempf, left, and Gov. Kotaro Nagasaki of the Yamanashi Prefecture of Japan, right, sign a proclamation of friendship between their communities on Monday at Laguna Art Museum.



Courtesy of Lexie Aguayo | LBSCA

AUDITOR

Continued from page A1

47th Congressional District, initiated the audit request in January.

"It's time for Huntington Beach city leaders to take the high road and comply with the state auditor," Min said in a statement Friday. "Taxpayers deserve a fair and transparent process. They deserve answers. The purpose of this audit is to restore public trust, and hiding the ball from investigators only serves to further undermine any good faith on behalf of the city."

Huntington Beach City Atty. Michael Gates said the conservative City Council majority advised him to fight the audit, though Gates himself also believes it is faulty.

"It's just another example of state overreach," Gates said in an interview Friday. "There's literally no authority for the state to audit the city's books, or any transaction which involves a local matter, which is the settlement of a lawsuit. No state money was used. It was not a state affair. It was purely local."

Huntington Beach has again asserted its authority as a charter city, an argument Gates has also made in fighting state housing mandates.

In the lawsuit, however, Parks said that over the last 30 years, the state auditor's office has audited 27 different charter cities in 35

separate audit reports without issue.

The auditor issued a subpoena on Oct. 1, according to the lawsuit, asking the city to produce Backstrom for an interview and records related to the air show. On Oct. 16, Gates responded to Stephanie Ramirez-Ridgeway, the chief legal council for the auditor, confirming the city's position of noncompliance.

Also at issue is Section 8546.7 of the California government code, which provides that a "contract involving the expenditure of public funds in excess of \$10,000 dollars ... shall be subject to the examination and audit of the California State Auditor ... as part of any audit of the public entity, for a period of three years after final payment under the contract."

Parks contends that the text specifies the latest date the settlement may be audited — any time before three years have elapsed after the final payment. Gates contends the text states that the settlement can't be audited until three years have passed since the final payment.

The last payment of the \$4.99 million due to Pacific Airshow LLC won't be made until 2029.

"They're not on firm foundation to even begin this audit, so we're going to challenge them in court," Gates said. "You don't audit anything midstream. Audits are supposed to be retrospective."

The full settlement with Pacific Airshow LLC was released in July, after Ocean View School District trustee Gina Clayton-Tarvin won her lawsuit against the city for its refusal to do so.

Gates said prior to the settlement's release that he was withholding it due to possible litigation against Amplify Energy related to the oil spill. He announced last month that the city would receive \$5.25 million from Amplify, in a settlement reached without litigation.

Gates endorsed David Clifford and Keith Jorgensen in this year's OVSD board race and actively campaigned against Clayton-Tarvin, who won reelection. With two spots available, she had 15,430 votes as of Thursday evening, with Keri Gorsage in second place (12,638), narrowly ahead of Clifford (12,367).

"It doesn't surprise me at all that [Gates] has been brought to task by the state of California in having to prove why that settlement was even made and that our tax dollars weren't used as a gift of public funds," Clayton-Tarvin said. "They're going to be doing an audit, whether he likes it or not. He's only prolonging the pain to come. The good people of the state of California will not be duped, that's the bottom line."

matthew.szabo@latimes.com Twitter: @mjszabo

CITIES

Continued from page A1

anytime you can come and visit us. It's a wonderful city, and you have a lot of wonderful people who live here."

The dignitaries signed a proclamation underscoring their commitment to having cultural, environmental and educational exchanges between the communities.

A presentation of gifts followed. The Japanese delegation received a book covering the history of Laguna Art Museum and artists who were instrumental in founding Laguna Beach as an art colony. Gifts furnished by local artists included vintage posters by Bill Atkins

and an aquamarine blue starfish by glassblower John Barber.

Laguna Beach representatives also accepted various artistic gifts.

"For us, the city of Laguna Beach is the place that we're aspiring, and it's like a dream place," Nagasaki said through an interpreter. "Of course, the city of Laguna Beach has a beautiful view, and also, we consider this city as an art capital."

"Our prefecture, our region has Japan's iconic place, which is Mt. Fuji. ... We have five lakes around Mt. Fuji, and not only that, we have a lot of cultural and historical facilities. This is our honor to have a friendship agreement with the city

of Laguna Beach."

Other Laguna Beach sister cities include Menton, France, San Jose del Cabo, Mexico, and St. Ives, England.

"This evening marks a milestone in our ongoing commitment to global unity through cultural exchange," Karyn Philippsen, founding president of the Laguna Beach Sister Cities Assn., said in a statement. "We are honored to welcome Gov. Nagasaki and his esteemed delegation and look forward to many years of meaningful partnership and friendship between our two communities."

andrew.turner@latimes.com Twitter: @AndrewTurnerTCN

CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU ANSWERS

Crossword puzzle grid with filled-in letters. Words include: TAGS, ADDS, PLAN, HULL, WARTS, HOLE, IDEO, ATARI, DOTS, GRAMMY AWARD, SET, HANOI, STEELERS, LES, ENVY, APPAL, LLING, DRAG, LEAF, FLAIL, IOTA, TALL, HESITATES, ALTO, TVA, SPACIOUS, LASSO, MAR, TRENDS, ETTER, ATOM, STEAL, LORD, LIME, OTERO, ANTE, LOAD, ERTE, SEAR.

Sudoku puzzle grid with numbers. Solution: Row 1: 1 3 6 7 5 9 2 8 4; Row 2: 8 5 9 1 2 4 6 7 3; Row 3: 4 2 7 6 8 3 1 5 9; Row 4: 7 8 4 5 3 2 9 6 1; Row 5: 5 6 2 8 9 1 3 4 7; Row 6: 3 9 1 4 6 7 8 2 5; Row 7: 9 7 3 2 4 6 5 1 8; Row 8: 6 4 8 3 1 5 7 9 2; Row 9: 2 1 5 9 7 8 4 3 6.

Animal Assistance League of Orange County Holiday Bazaar and Champagne Brunch. Sunday, November 24, 2024, 10:00am - 2:00pm. Photos of cats KitKat and dog Sonny. The Hacienda Restaurant, 1725 College Avenue, Santa Ana, CA. Only \$40.00 per person. QR code for tickets.

MARKETPLACE To place an ad, go to http://timescommunityadvertising.com/

Legal Notices section containing three public hearing notices from the City of Laguna Beach, City of Newport Beach, and another City of Laguna Beach notice regarding development impact fees and CEQA agreements.



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Group



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2511 Bayshore Drive, Bayshores
Sold Price: \$13,000,000 / Rep. Buyer



235 Via Lido Soud, Lido Isle
Sold Price: \$12,500,000 / Rep. Buyer & Seller



908 Zurich Circle, Lido Isle
Sold Price: \$5,668,515 / Rep. Seller



621 West Bay Avenue, Newport Beach
Sold Price: \$5,250,000 / Rep. Seller



231 Via Firenze, Lido Isle
Sold Price: \$4,200,000 / Rep. Seller



223 Via Orvieto, Lido Isle
Sold Price: \$3,850,000 / Rep. Buyer & Seller



817 Via Lido Nord, Lido Isle
Sold Price: \$3,350,000 / Rep. Seller



218 Via Ithaca, Lido Isle
Sold Price: \$3,350,000 / Rep. Buyer & Seller



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