



Photos by Don Leach | Staff Photographer

HUNTINGTON BEACH'S Melissa Murphy shows one of her murals at the Sunset Lounge in Sunset Beach. From electrical boxes, to the Pacific Coast Highway and Bud & Gene's restaurant at the end of the pier, Murphy's work can be seen all around Surf City.

'Melissa Murals' uses her hometown as the canvas

BY MATT SZABO

Sometimes Melissa Murphy can only laugh at the details of her job as a muralist.

A few months ago she was hired for one of her largest projects — the exterior of the Sunset Lounge in Sunset Beach.

"I first started off with a 40-foot boom [lift]," Murphy said with a smile. "The rental company just straight up handed me the keys. They're like, 'Oh, you know how to drive it.' I was like, 'Yeah, OK, I guess I'll YouTube it.'"

Murphy used that to paint the front of the property. On the south end, where she painted two more murals, an even larger 60-foot boom was required.

See **Canvas**, page A2



HUNTINGTON BEACH native and artist Melissa Murphy, better known as "Melissa Murals," paints surfaces all over Surf City including one of her biggest projects, the Sunset Lounge bar and grill building in Sunset Beach.

Laguna Beach utility project gets OK

A majority of property owners within the district voted in favor of the project billed as a public safety upgrade.

BY ANDREW TURNER

Laguna Beach will be moving forward with an underground utility district in the Diamond Crestview neighborhood after the project received a stamp of approval from the assessed property owners.

The Laguna Beach City Council had postponed a vote on the underground utility assessment district in October after residents within the proposed district asked the city to increase its contribution to the project.

Subsequently, a revised engineer's report was prepared in November that reduced the total assessment amount by \$212,930. That resulted in a decrease of about 10% for the individual assessments for the 20 properties that lie within the district.

At the City Council meeting on Tuesday, city staff reported the results of the vote. Eighteen of the 20 possible ballots were cast, with 11 of the submitted ballots voting in favor of the project, a 60.3% weighted majority based on the assessment values, as reported by Pierre Sawaya, the project manager.

"That's great news, I think, for the property owners that have been working on this for so long," Mayor Bob Whalen said.

Had the vote not yielded a weighted majority for the project, it would have been abandoned for lack of majority support.

The city will enter into a \$1.32-million contract with Hot

See **Utility**, page A2

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O.C. bars and beverage shops say cheers to Dry January

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

If you are among the many Americans giving up alcohol during the monthlong sobriety challenge known as Dry January, you should have a solid two weeks without alcohol under your belt by now. And you might be looking for an alternative to that soda water.

"I feel like people need balance in their lives and self-regulation after the really gluttonous time that is December," said Gabrielle Dion, a longtime bartender and owner of Mixing Glass and Market in Costa Mesa.

Dion is an authority on cocktail culture, but she isn't opposed to people taking a break from booze. "I think it could be good any time of year, taking a week off or a couple weeks off to reset yourself," she said. "I do know people that have made a lifestyle change for it completely, and we are all for that if that is what is healthy for you."

Mixing Glass recently moved from its original home at the OC Mix into a larger space on Harbor Boulevard with an expanded inventory split between two areas.

One side is a bougie bodega and deli, with everything shoppers need to create a chef-forward cheese plate or snack board with carefully curated grocery items like Gjusta pastries, Mejorado tortillas and produce fresh from the Santa Monica Farmers Market. Dion refers to one of the coolers as the "stoner closet," stocked with frozen pizza, frozen burritos from Burritos La Palma and Sad Girl Creamery ice cream. Customers will also find wines and natural wines from small producers and craft beers.

The other side of the space is the spirit room, with bottles artfully arranged and back-lit, just like patrons would see at a bar.

"We've been doing this for nine years, and we source everything with a mindset of small and independent, but it also has to taste good and be good quality," Dion said.

Mixing Glass and Market also has ingredients for making the perfect zero-proof cocktail at home.

"I know that a lot of people have been using nonalcoholic spirits — that is a very big, up-



Scott Smeltzer | Staff Photographer

See **Dry**, page A6

GABRIELLE DION, the owner of the Mixing Glass and Market, stands inside the Costa Mesa business on Jan. 5.

Butterfly Book Project grants new life to unwanted children's books in H.B.

BY SARA CARDINE

The words and ideas inside a book can last forever in the minds of readers, but the fate of books themselves is much less certain.

They might sit on a shelf and collect dust or be packed up into boxes and trucked off to the dump. Discontinued or deemed undesirable, they could lapse into silence for decades, unless someone intercedes.

For teacher Amber Cambria and library volunteer Sheila Plotkin, the idea of a discarded book is unthinkable. But it wasn't until the two met this summer, by happenstance, that the fellow book lovers devised a plan to put unwanted titles into the hands of people who needed them.

A teacher for the online public school California Connections Academy, Cambria makes regular trips to Huntington Beach's Central Library with 4-year-old son Davide.

In addition to checking out books, the pair often visit the site's Friends of the Library used bookstore, where donated books are sold, and the proceeds go back to the library. There, they might find any number of titles for \$1 or less.

When books pile up at her Huntington Beach home, Cambria, 42, puts them in the trunk of her car and drives around filling up Little Free Libraries, where people offer books free for the taking or hands them out at in-person school events.

Plotkin, 86, began volunteering for Friends of the Library in 2004 and quickly segued from the gift shop to the bookstore, where there was more action.

"I work Monday, Wednesday and Friday, from 8 a.m. to whenever," she said during a recent visit. "This is my area — I do the teens and the children's sections."

Plotkin replenishes the stock with new donations when holes start to appear in the rows. Once a month, she pulls books that have sat on the shelves for two months to make room for new inventory.

Cambria and Davide



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

SHEILA PLOTKIN, right, works in the Friends of the Library store at Huntington Beach's Central Library, while Amber Cambria helps sort them. The pair have devised a plan to redistribute discontinued children's books.

happened to visit the store on a pulling day and were looking through books slated for discontinuation. Plotkin encouraged them to take the whole pile and they got to talking about books, Little Free Libraries and literacy.

The two quickly struck up a friendship and agreed on the next pulling day, Cambria would take the unwanted books and distribute them however she could.

"I love books, and I love what books do," the teacher said of her mission. "But I also want to see the love I have for books and literacy in others. Kids having books in their homes, it does something to the mind."

"It beats sitting and watching television," Plotkin concurred.

After picking up the first boxes from Plotkin, Cambria had a feeling this endeavor might grow. She was going to need a name.

"I've always loved butterflies — my son and I plant milkweed in the spring so the butterflies can come and eat," she said.

The idea of a life cycle,

of an endless energy passing from one stage to the next, appealed to her. So, she named the endeavor the Butterfly Book Project, creating a Facebook page for people seeking children's books.

When she went to tell Plotkin about the name, the library volunteer told her she had something for her. She'd found a note card inside a donated book — of a monarch butterfly — and decided to keep it.

"She said, 'This is just meant to be,'" Cambria recalled. "And now that monarch butterfly card sits on my desk."

Not long after Cambria set up the Facebook group, requests began coming in.

Jamie Hunter heads a ministry at Refuge Calvary Chapel in Huntington Beach, where volunteers become "book grandparents" to early readers at Westminster's DeMille Elementary School, providing students in three grades with books throughout the school year.

"We put a message in each book; it's a message of encouragement, like 'I'm thinking of you today,'" the Fountain Valley resident said Thursday. "Our main focus is to get

the kids into reading, so we want fun books."

Giving children books at their reading level encourages literacy wherever they are, Hunter reasons. But finding 120 books for early readers several times a year is a tall order.

So, when she came across the Butterfly Book Project, Hunter got in touch and soon found herself loaded with titles ready to gift DeMille students returning from winter break.

"It's amazing, absolutely amazing, especially given the amount of kids who don't have access to books," she said of the project.

Fountain Valley High School sophomore Myra Chen heard about Cambria's project from her mother.

As president of the campus club DBC Around the Corner Books, Chen and fellow members install Little Free Libraries throughout the community, stocking them with items collected in drives or from members' own households.

The group is currently working on a Little Free Library at the Boys & Girls Club of Huntington Valley

"I love books, and I love what books do. But I also want to see the love I have for books and literacy in others."

— Amber Cambria

and needs books for children and preteens. Cambria's project was a perfect fit.

"I met her at her house. She had this brown bin of books in the front," Chen said of her first pickup, adding she hopes more will follow.

Cambria said she loves seeing the smiles on the faces of people who get books that otherwise would have faced an uncertain future.

"They've been on a shelf, and no one took the time to grab them," she said. "That's where the Butterfly Book Project comes in — every book gets a new life."

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UTILITY

Continued from page A1

Line Construction to carry out the project.

The project will see eight utility poles and over 1,000 linear feet of overhead wires removed, Sawaya said. The assessments on the properties, along with a city contribution of \$204,001 from the street lighting and utility fund, will pay for it.

Additionally, the council authorized the city manager to approve project-related expenses and construction change orders for unforeseen circumstances up to \$133,000.

Matt Lawson, a member of the city's emergency disaster preparedness committee, said that Diamond Crestview, along with Bluebird Canyon and Canyon Acres, are among the most access-impaired neighborhoods in the city.

"They're extremely dangerous, tip of the spear from the standpoint of fire risk," Lawson said. "This is extremely important from the standpoint of public safety, not only for the local neighborhood but for the entire city, because the fire that starts in Woods Cove or down in Crestview doesn't necessarily stay there."

The average assessment among the 20 properties in the Diamond Street district is \$96,858. Among those properties, 11 were assigned an assessment in excess of \$100,000.

One resident who stated they reside within a proposed underground utility assessment district at Woods Cove urged those within the assessment districts to vote against the projects.

"It's appalling that 50% of the property owners in Diamond Crestview can put a \$100,000 tax burden on their neighbors," J.T. Price, the concerned resident, said. "... If we have a public safety issue citywide, we need to address it citywide, and stop putting this huge burden on individual property owners."

To ease the annual financial burden on the property owners, Kevin Johnson, a resident who helped lead the effort in support of the district, asked that the council direct staff to explore options for long-term bonds of 25 to 30 years. The council obliged.

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CANVAS

Continued from page A1

Now the exterior of the building, which was a nondescript gray before, explodes with reds and oranges and blues and purples. The adventure paid off.

"I'm like a construction worker," Murphy said. "You know, I'm on a boom, I'm sealing walls, I'm plastering stuff. It's not just being an artist, if you want to do it right."

Everyone in Huntington Beach agrees that Murphy, 38, does it right. Better known as "Melissa Murals," she's one of her hometown's most well-known artists.

Her work is all around the city. Some of her biggest projects recently include a mural inside Bud & Gene's restaurant at the end of the pier, one at Huntington Beach Propane and another offering at Pacific City, which is visible off Pacific Coast Highway.

Many of her pieces feature the beach and sea life, perhaps not surprisingly for an artist who has an affinity for the water. Murphy, who was an ocean lifeguard for a decade, played water polo and was a competitive surfer at Edison High before graduating with an art degree from Long Beach State in 2008.

Surfing remains a big part of



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

ARTIST Melissa Murphy points to a detail she added depicting the history of Huntington Beach, herself painting on the beach. Murphy graduated with an art degree from Long Beach State in 2008.

her life, made easier by the fact that her apartment downtown on Orange Avenue is within easy walking distance of the beach. In 2021, she was commissioned to paint a USA Surfing mural in San Clemente, in honor of that sport being in the Olympics for the first time.

The mural at Pacific City spills out onto the ground, and benches nearby are also adorned with the theme.

"She's a very integral part of the

art community in Huntington Beach," Pacific City marketing director Jennifer Williams said. "We're lucky to have her. We give her a very basic idea, and within days she comes back and she's like, 'What do you think of this?' And it just blows our mind away. I can't even say that there was one time where I said, 'No, I don't like that, do this.' And then next thing you know, she's painting it and it just morphs into even better."

Several electrical boxes around town have been spruced up by "Melissa Murals." She said she was commissioned to paint one of them, outside City Hall at the corner of Main Street and Yorktown Avenue, by the daughter of a man who died in a car crash there about five years ago. His Porsche is on the front of the box. On the side she painted a horse-mounted police officer, and she said the folks at Huntington Beach Police Department, headquartered just steps away, appreciated that work.

Across the street is one of her most famous murals, in the theater at Huntington Beach High. It's a large one, dedicated in 2018, that details the history of the city.

"She documented the history there, but she's kind of painting herself into the history all around town," City Councilwoman Natalie Moser said.

Murphy said it took her about a year, working just on weekends, to finish that piece at HBHS. Only recently has she been able to quit her full-time job in the probation department for Orange County, where she handled social media, graphic design and photography, to focus completely on her art.

"It's a very alternative career, you know," she said. "It's not like being a nurse or a doctor or an

engineer. It took me 20 years to be able to make a living off of my art. It's very difficult. I've always had full-time jobs and always had projects going on the side. It was a dream to have a career doing my art, and I really never thought it was possible."

During the coronavirus pandemic, she was able to work from home, and she said that's when her business "really started to blow up." She also adapted herself, designing face masks for the Orange County Health Care Agency as part of its "Spread Positive Vibes" campaign.

She said she got serious and hired a business manager — well, kind of. Don Willis, a retired business executive and former client of Murphy's, actually works for free to help with her career.

"In some ways, I'm kind of like the bad guy," he said with a laugh. "It's like, 'No way, you can't do that' ... You need to charge a fair amount for your services. You can't give away everything, which is basically what she was doing."

But Willis knows that just speaks to Murphy's giving nature. She said when she was painting one mural of the dog beach on a liquor store downtown, people would walk by and ask her to paint their dog into the mural.

See *Canvas*, page A6

UCI Health

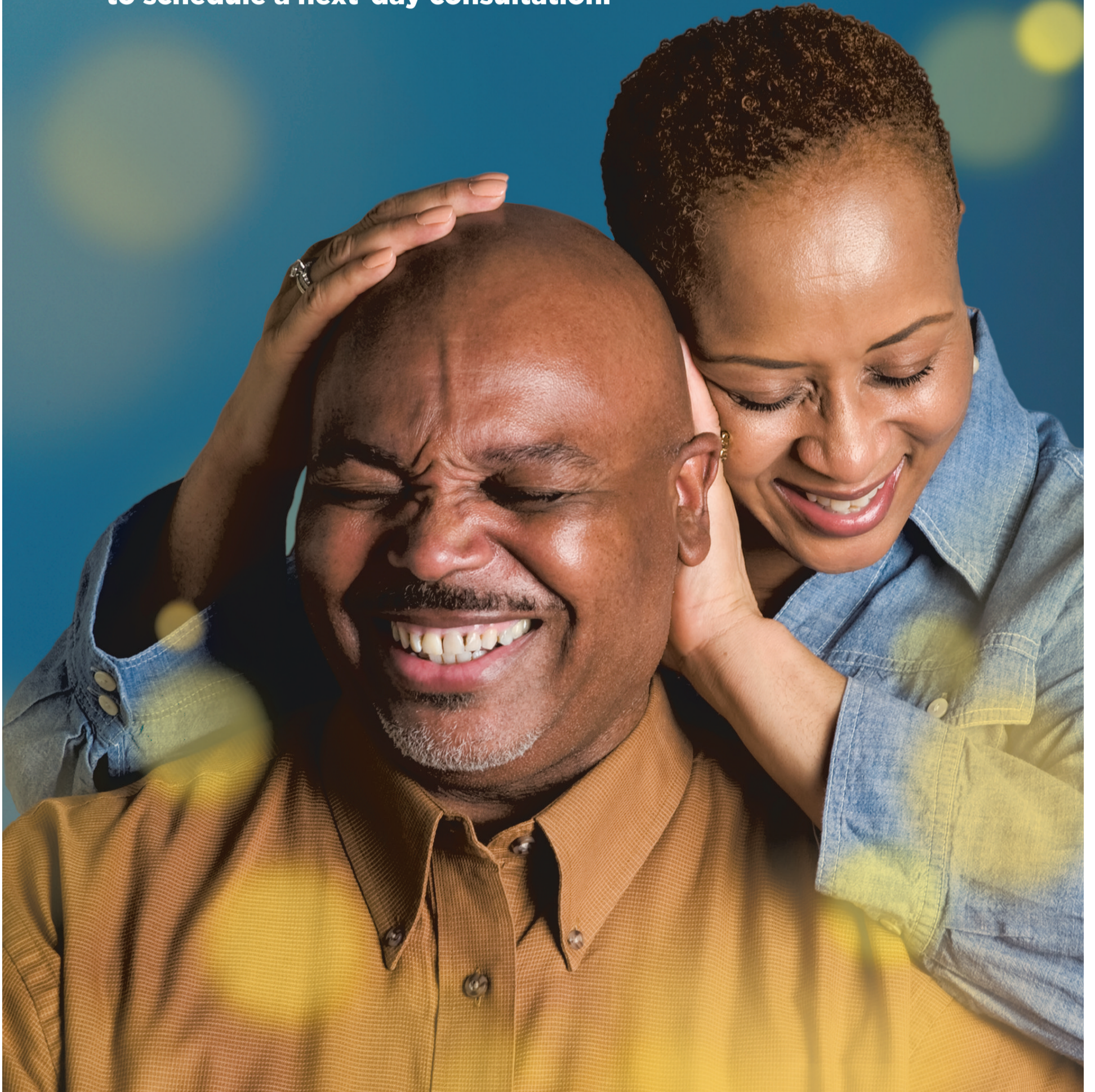
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forum

COLUMN | **PATRICE APODACA**

Admissions scandal brought college inequities to light

The start to 2023 brought news that the infamous orchestrator of the Operation Varsity Blues college admissions scheme has been sentenced to 3½ years in prison.

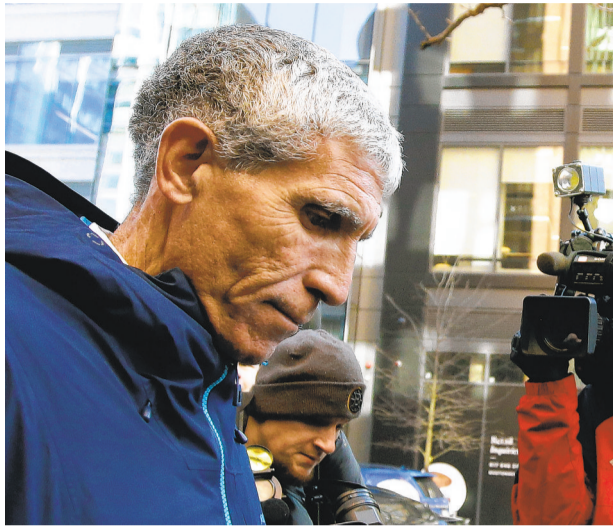
In what prosecutors called the largest college admissions fraud ever uncovered, William “Rick” Singer used his position as a private college consultant to bribe and cheat his clients’ offspring into spots at elite universities. He had previously pleaded guilty to the scam and helped the government obtain evidence that led to charges against a total of 53 defendants.

The former Newport Beach resident — wouldn’t it be great if, for once, Newport Beach didn’t receive nationwide attention for its links to scandal? — was also ordered to pay \$10 million in restitution to the federal government.

So that’s it, right? Justice has been served, wrongs have been righted, and we can now rest assured that going forward the college admissions process will be fair and completely above board.

Uh, no. Not even close.

One of the saddest aspects of this case, which has invariably been labeled as “shocking” since the scheme was revealed nearly four years ago, is that it actually wasn’t shocking at all. Extreme, yes. But unsurprising to anyone familiar with college admissions and the



Steven Senne | AP

IN THIS March 12, 2019 file photo, William “Rick” Singer departs federal court in Boston after he pleaded guilty to charges in a nationwide college admissions bribery scandal. He has since been sentenced to 3½ years in prison.

lengths some parents will go to get their already-privileged kids into brand-name universities.

And certainly not surprising to anyone who long ago realized that the colleges themselves are willing and eager participants in a skewed system that trades on their aggressively cultivated, prestigious reputations for one reason only: money. The children of big-ticket donors, celebrities, politicians and other well-connected individuals have always had a big, fat leg up when it comes to admissions.

It’s a tawdry arrangement, greedy though not illegal. Yet I doubt it astonished exactly no one to learn that someone with

inside knowledge of the college admissions game — that would be Singer — saw a squishy ethical line and a too-easily manipulated structure and decided to run headlong into criminality.

Also not startling: that some rich, overzealous parents giddily schemed and rationalized right along with him as he bribed coaches and admissions personnel, paid off test proctors and even arranged for fake photos of kids pretending to train for sports positions they probably couldn’t spell. Seriously, does actor Lori Loughlin’s daughter even know how to pronounce “coxswain”?

See *Admissions*, page A5

COMMENTARY | **KENT MOORE**



SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER Cornelius Ashton directs students outside of Top of the World Elementary School in Laguna Beach in October 2020.

Roger Wilson

Orange County should do more to make its schools safe

Wake up, parents. At present, many of our county schools are unsafe, and I make this statement after having spent over 20 years assisting in the coordination and teaching of school safety programs in the county. However, let me state at this point that the superintendent of the Newport/Mesa School District and staff have taken a proactive stance and are working with the community to improve security in the district.

But while most criminal justice administrators and school district administration laud their efforts to provide safe school environments, the facts show otherwise.

Our school resource officers countywide are spread thin, with usually just one full-time officer being assigned to high school campuses with only part-time service being provided to district junior highs.

Typically, no SROs are assigned to elementary

schools, where most student/faculty assaults have taken place nationally.

And why is this? With local superintendents of schools and their administrative staffs being paid hundreds of thousands of dollars annually, there seems to be just no money left to hire additional security, including purchasing sophisticated surveillance equipment for elementary and junior high kids. Its just “too expensive” say our well-paid bureaucrats at the local level.

I ask, then, where are our local and state legislators regarding this shameful situation?

Only certain private preschools and parochial schools seem to be relatively safe from armed intruders. Miraculously, they somehow found the money to protect themselves.

And, what about the training that SROs are required to complete before being assigned to a campus? One would think

by now that this legislatively mandated training (Hughes SB1627) would be widespread, but it seems to vary from region to region throughout the state.

And some of the more rural jurisdictions in California do not even provide SROs or up-to-date training.

And what about the training curriculum and instructors?

It appears that there are only a couple of training programs for SROs in California. These are the POST (Commission on Police Standards and Training) class and the privately operated NASRO (National Assn. of School Resource Officers) training. While the POST training is very cost-effective, the NASRO training can cost hundreds of dollars per officer. So much for cost-effectiveness.

And the instructor qualifications in order to teach the SRO class? Study

See *Safe*, page A5

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THE DAILY COMMUTER PUZZLE

By Jacqueline E. Mathews

ACROSS

- 1 “_ Miserables”
- 4 Took it easy
- 9 Fundamentals
- 13 Very dry
- 15 Make amends
- 16 Shipshape
- 17 Cooking herb
- 18 Obeys
- 19 Roy Rogers’ love
- 20 Not likely to blush
- 22 _ roast; cut of beef
- 23 Start of a warning
- 24 Needle’s hole
- 26 Allow into a group
- 29 “Au revoir”
- 34 Dried fruit
- 35 Stops walking
- 36 _ for office; campaign
- 37 Isn’t well
- 38 Nightstand items
- 39 Celebration
- 40 Member of Congress: abbr.
- 41 Beauty marks
- 42 Not as daffy
- 43 Took a trip
- 45 Meager
- 46 100%
- 47 Ponder
- 48 Extend across
- 51 Vital
- 56 Emmy-winning sitcom
- 57 Tranquility
- 58 Hairdo
- 60 Zoo animals
- 61 Solemn pledges
- 62 Linear measure
- 63 Shingles symptom
- 64 Skirt fold
- 65 That woman

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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.

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

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

DOWN

- 1 _ Vegas
- 2 Pitching stats
- 3 Exhale audibly
- 4 Mourn
- 5 Slanted
- 6 Region
- 7 Concludes
- 8 Dinner courses
- 9 Jackson or Johnson
- 10 Suitor
- 11 Laid-back
- 12 Ladder rung
- 14 Benumbs
- 21 Pout
- 25 Agreeable reply
- 26 Fall _; have a nervous

- breakdown
- 27 Weeper
- 28 Mea _
- 29 Well-known
- 30 Peaks near Innsbruck
- 31 Blessed _; baby’s birth, e.g.
- 32 Slightly more than a quart
- 33 Suspicious
- 35 Fit as a fiddle
- 38 Sucker
- 39 Misconception
- 41 Allen or Gibson
- 42 Common seasoning
- 44 Disappear
- 45 Most unsullied
- 47 White Chocolate _; Starbucks order
- 48 Leading lady
- 49 Daddy
- 50 Sharp tools
- 52 Dinner, for one
- 53 Liver spread
- 54 TV’s Trevor
- 55 Michelin product
- 59 WWII president

Tribune Media Services

Houdini exhibit celebrates illusionist's legacy

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

One of the most well-known stunts of famed illusionist Harry Houdini, remembered for his escape acts, was the milk can escape, first performed in 1908 at the Columbia Theater in St. Louis.

Houdini, born Erik Weisz in Budapest, would climb into a milk can filled with water while others sealed the top with padlocks. A curtain would go up, and when it dropped a few moments later, a soaking wet Houdini would be standing triumphantly next to the milk can.

The milk cans the illusionist used for this act have become among the most coveted for Houdini collectors. "Houdini Unchained: The Legacy of Harry Houdini" at Muzeo Museum and Cultural Center in Anaheim celebrates Houdini and displays one of the four elusive milk cans. (Magician David Copperfield reportedly owns one of the remaining three.)

"Houdini Unchained: The Legacy of Harry Houdini" is a collection from one singular collector," said Kelly Chidester, executive director at Muzeo Museum and Cultural Center. "Everything is owned by Dr. Randall Bell,



Photos by Sarah Mosqueda

HOUDINI AND his wife, Bess, made a pact that the first to die would try to contact the other. Ten years after he died, Bess held a séance as a final attempt to contact him.

and everything that he owns has not been on display before."

Open until Jan. 22, the world-premiere exhibit features first-edition books, personal letters and contracts, handcuffs, stage props and locks along with the famed milk can. It is a collection Bell has gathered since reading a book

about Houdini as a young boy turned him into a lifelong fan. Bell began collecting authentic memorabilia in the 1990s, and the milk can is said to have come from the basement of Houdini's house.

"There is a lot of conspiracy around the authenticity of a lot of Houdini artifacts,"

Chidester said.

Theodore "Dash" Hardeen, Houdini's younger brother, was also a magician and escape artist, and after his brother's death, he sold many of Houdini's stage props — and fabricated others.

"After Houdini's death, Hardeen was selling quite a bit of locks and picks



THE METAMORPHOSIS trunk is featured in an exhibit celebrating the legacy of escape artist Harry Houdini.

that he claimed were Houdini's but were fakes," Chidester said.

All of the artifacts in Bell's collection have been authenticated by auction houses, including the milk can.

"This is probably the crown jewel for Dr. Bell," Chidester said.

The show also features a trunk from the 1890s used in one of Houdini's other famous illusions, called Metamorphosis.

"There are only a couple

of trunks that remain that he used for this illusion," said Chidester. "Just aside from it being used in an illusion, it is beautifully made, and you can see all the joints and the makers' names on it."

In Metamorphosis, Houdini's wife, Bess, would put him into the trunk, also known as the substitution trunk, in a sack with handcuffs and shackles.

"A curtain would go up

See **Houdini**, page A6

SAFE

Continued from page A4

matter experts in several learning domains need to be used to make the training viable.

Some school police administrators will list the remarkable qualifications of their so-called POST and other "triple vetted staffers," but why don't most of these school police administrators and instructors have school police experience themselves? This is what the founding program chiefs insisted upon in 1999, but, unfortunately for the public, it is no longer a POST requirement. It's worthy to note all NASRO instructors have school police experience. Additionally, the POST

course outline requires that its 40-hour classes include active-shooter drills. But please note that this key segment is now sometimes conducted through classroom simulator drills, not hands-on physical entry drills. This is inadequate. Do you suppose the Uvalde School Police Department trained with simulators instead of active shooter drills? Or did they drill at all?

I strongly urge parents everywhere to demand that city and education funds be made available for the immediate placement of elementary and junior high school SROs or other security personnel. Additionally, parents and the public should be allowed to review the qualifications of the SRO class-

room instructors, no matter where they train, along with the experience of the administrative personnel connected with SRO training. You may be surprised and dismayed.

And don't forget to ask these school police administrators how long they have been "triple vetting" their instructional staff members and note their reactions. Make them explain triple vetting and their instructors' qualifications and which ones have had school police department experience. Believe me, this is important.

KENT MOORE is a former Santa Ana College Criminal Justice Academies instructor/coordinator and former Orange County grand juror living in Corona del Mar.

CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU ANSWERS

L	E	S		L	A	Z	E	D		A	B	C	S	
A	R	I	D	A	T	O	N	E		N	E	A	T	
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		A	L			M								
S	P	A	N		I	M	P	O	R	T	A	N	T	
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ADMISSIONS

Continued from page A4

Another part of the plan that was so devious and brazenly rotten that I almost have to applaud it was Singer's sham nonprofit foundation used to pay bribes and give his clients the additional benefit of writing their bribe money off from their taxes as charitable donations. Let's hear it for philanthropy!

Now that the investigation is reaching its denouement, we might expect business as usual in college admissions. Move along folks, nothing more to see here.

Sure, many universities have made halfhearted moves toward making admissions more equitable. Some no longer require applicants to submit SAT or ACT scores, as those tests have been shown to favor more affluent students. There's been a little noise about curbing legacy admissions.

What we really need, though, is a top-to-bottom overhaul of our entire system of education. The huge, underlying problem is that our schools, from primary grades through higher ed, are riddled with inequality.

Huge funding gaps exist between schools in affluent areas and their poorer counterparts. Too many kids go to school hungry, are taught by inadequately trained teachers and have limited to no access to technology or even many basic supplies. Peeling paint, cracked flooring, broken toilets and lack of air-conditioning are all too common.

Counselors, librarians and nurses are luxuries that some schools can't afford. Those admissions representatives that turn out for college day at some high school campuses? They don't even bother to visit certain areas.

Since the pandemic, the wealth gap has worsened as many students with fewer resources fell even further behind their more affluent peers. I hardly thought it possible but the selfishness displayed by Singer and his accomplices appears even more grotesque as the gulf between the haves and have-nots grows wider still.

Singer has reportedly long since given up his Newport Beach digs and now lives in a Florida trailer park. He says he's really sorry and wants to be a better person. Maybe after prison he could make good on his words and start a free tutoring service for inner-city kids. Just a thought.

As for the rest of us, the beginning of a new year is traditionally a time of personal reflection and goal-setting. But our nation as a whole also needs to set meaningful goals, and fixing educational inequality should top the list. Granted, it would be a moon shot unlike any

other. Many might say it's impossible, that the problem is too big, too deeply entrenched, and we lack the will to make real change happen.

But I refuse to give up on a dream that one day every child in this country will have access to a quality education — not a bought-and-paid-for pedigree that some wealthy folks apparently believe their children are entitled to but a realistic chance for every student to learn and grow and strive for fulfilling lives.

If we learn anything from the Operation Varsity Blues saga, let it be that college admissions shouldn't be a game in which some players get extra points before they even start. Equal opportunity for everyone. That's how we all win.

PATRICE APODAC 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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CANVAS

Continued from page A2

She happily obliged. "She loves Huntington Beach and all of the people in Huntington Beach," Willis said. "She's one of the most sociable people I've ever met, and she's got a great heart."

Her business acumen is there. She greets people with a sticker but also a business card, and she sells art prints through her website. Though the rainy season has slowed Murphy's efforts recently, it hasn't dampened her enthusiasm.

She's currently working on art at Andersen Elementary in the Newport-Mesa Unified School District. Andersen's mascot is the dolphin, which means more of the sea scenes that Murphy loves.

Her process has evolved over the years, from just painting on the side of walls. Now she uses a primer and deluxe paint, and tops the mural of

with a coat of a two-component epoxy that acts as an anti-graffiti layer.

"People actually hire me to make their businesses look better," Murphy said. "Working with these small business owners, it's like a team. This building [at Sunset Lounge], nobody noticed it before. It was gray. Now people come in, because of the mural. It's just working together with other small businesses that makes it fun. They get to improve their business, and I get to do what I love to do. It's a win-win."

Huntington Beach residents and community leaders alike feel the same way about having "Melissa Murals" representing Surf City. Moser, herself a photographer, had always seen Murphy around town but got to know her more after being elected in 2020.

The following summer, the city held a modified Fourth of July parade, with vehicles driving around town and greeting residents. Moser commissioned Murphy to design



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

THE SUNSET LOUNGE in Sunset Beach is one of Melissa Murphy's biggest projects. Better known as "Melissa Murals," her work can be seen all over Huntington Beach.

the back of her vehicle, and she painted two surfboards, with dolphins and the American flag.

"It's incredible to watch," Moser said. "You see it just develop from nothing, and it just blows me away. Yeah, I'm a photographer, I can capture moments and document

them in a particular way from how I see it. But to see her create all of these scenes from nothing? And she has fun doing it.

"She's always smiling. She's just comfortable in her own skin."

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HOUDINI

Continued from page A5

and come down real fast and Houdini would be standing outside the trunk, free from all the handcuffs and restraints," said Chidester.

Then Houdini would open the trunk to miraculously reveal Bess, now bound and handcuffed in his place.

Besides stage props, the Muzeo exhibit details the many facets of Houdini. He was an illusionist and escape artist but also an author, actor, aviator and inventor.

Later in life Houdini became invested in debunking spiritualists like psychics and mediums, and even testified before a congressional subcommittee in 1926 on a bill that would ban the practice of "fortune telling" in the District of Columbia.

Houdini died on Oct. 31 that same year, though he famously had a pact with Bess that the first to die

would try to contact the other with a coded message. Each year Bess held a séance on Halloween night on the roof of the Knickerbocker Hotel. Through 10 years of séances, she never heard from her beloved Harry, and she considered the 10th attempt the last. A replica séance table is set up at Muzeo, complete with a bell for museumgoers to make their own attempts to summon the spirit of Houdini.

In sharing his collection, Bell and Muzeo are keeping Houdini's spirit alive in their own way. On Jan. 22, Bell will be at the museum for the show's closing and will host a "Meet the Collector" talk at 2 p.m. to give more detail about his artifacts and memorabilia.

"It is nice to have collectors that are willing to share," said Chidester. "Dr. Bell is collecting and preserving not just for himself but for a greater audience."

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DRY

Continued from page A1

and-coming category," said Dion. "But we've been making mock-tails for years before this category started popping up."

Amaro sodas or amaro soft drinks, for instance, are made by infusing soda with botanicals, like citrus peels and herbs.

"They are kind of like La Croix for a bartender," Dion said of the nonalcoholic version from Casamara Club that Mixing Glass stocks. "They have all natural flavorings. They also have a little bit of sea salt and a little of sugar just to make balance and make the drink enjoyable."

Using a shrub, like the small batch ones Mixing Glass carries from Cool Hand Co., are another way to bring complex flavors to a zero proof beverage.

"A shrub utilizes vinegar, in this case organic apple cider vinegar, and that provides acidity to a syrup," said Dion. "If you are just making a syrup, then you just have sweetness, but when you make a shrub, using vinegar as a preservative offers acidity back to it."

When Dion makes a mock-tail, it is always based on fresh ingredients with balance in mind, and



Kevin Chang | Staff Photographer

KHAN SAAB DESI Craft Kitchen in Fullerton offers a variety of 100% alcohol-free cocktails.

she recommends substituting water or tea in place of the spirit.

"When you just shake juice and syrup, you don't get very much volume and it is off-balance," she said. "So consider adding a little bit of tea, like an oolong or just plain water."

Another base alternative is aloe juice, made from the aloe vera plant, which is what Solstice Restaurant in Irvine uses in place of booze from most of the drinks on its zero-proof cocktail menu.

"Aloe juice helps digestion and skin and has electrolytes," said Solstice manager Brittany Scott.

Aloe juice is available in a sweetened and unsweetened version.

"They even have cranberry-flavored ones in health stores," Scott said.

Aloe juice has the substance and mouthfeel of liquor, which makes for a more believable dupe.

Since opening in March 2021, Solstice has featured a selection of zero-proof drinks or un-cocktails that get as much attention as the rest of the menu, Scott said.

"We take the same approach and style of our culture from our food and beverage into our zero-proof cocktails," she said.

That means seasonally inspired and ingredient driven with a focus on low waste.

"If the kitchen uses a whole pumpkin, we might

find ways to use a piece of that in our cocktails," said Scott.

The Un-French 75 is a take on the classic champagne cocktail that uses aloe juice in place of gin and club soda instead of bubbly.

Many of the drinks are virgin versions of alcoholic counterparts on the bar menu.

"We have the regular Vodka 2 on our menu, and we also offer the un-version," said Scott. "So we have about four regular cocktails that you can also get as a mock-tail."

While aloe juice and skipping the spirits have health benefits, Dion points out that people have different reasons for laying off liquor.

"When I was pregnant in 2012, I went to a very well-known craft cocktail bar in San Diego and asked for a mock-tail," Dion recalls.

She was served a disappointing lemonade and from then on made sure the bars she was managing at the time (Vaca in Costa Mesa and Broadway in Laguna Beach) had thoughtful, well-made mock-tails on the menu.

Khan Saab Desi Kitchen in Fullerton also has well-made mock-tails from its fully zero-proof bar, founded in order to adhere to Islamic dietary laws, or

halal. Part of meeting the terms for halal restrictions as defined in the Quran is not consuming alcohol or any food that has touched alcohol.

"My family, when we go out to a restaurant, if they serve halal meat but they have a bar, they will be skeptical about eating there," said Ahmad Hosseini, Khan Saab's resident mixologist.

When the Michelin-recognized restaurant opened in 2020, it was the first 100% alcohol-free bar program in Orange County and the fourth in the nation.

"We were thinking we can provide something to the community that hasn't been done before, and that is how the bar program started here," said Hosseini.

As a mixologist who doesn't work with alcohol, Hosseini said he pays special attention to taste and technique.

"When it comes to mixology, with me at least, I think it is a mixture of different flavors combined together, it doesn't have to include the alcohol," said Hosseini.

Khan Saab highlights the flavors and cooking of India, Pakistan and Afghanistan, and the drinks are just as innovative.

Popular drinks include the Dirty Sprite made with lime juice, salt and mint and served in a martini glass. The Mango Mojito, which borrows a flavor profile from the traditional mango lassi, uses mango nectar and jaggery, a cane brown sugar usually made with date or palm sap

popular in Southeast Asia.

The smoked Negroni is also a show stopper that is presented at the table in a smoke dome.

"The smoked Negroni, that is the spiced one," said Hosseini. "We smoke it with cloves and flavors that combine spices from our kitchen."

An off-menu drink special that is only available when Khan Saab can source the difficult-to-find falsa berry is the Falsatini.

"Falsa is a berry that is found on the Eastern side of the world, in the same family as the blueberry and raspberry," said Hosseini.

Sometimes referred to as a sherbet berry, the falsa is rich in antioxidants, and Hosseini uses it to make a blended drink that isn't unlike a smoothie.

Hosseini said he is happy to present drinks that match the caliber of food offered at Khan Saab, and the team is actively exploring more options, like non-alcoholic wine, to add to the menu.

"Right now we have so many options with non-alcoholic beverages we can create almost anything we want," Hosseini said.

Whatever your reasons for participating in Dry January, Mixing Glass' Dion assures you it doesn't have to be the buzzkill it is often made out to be.

"You can have an amazing mock-tail and still feel like you are still enjoying a cocktail and socializing with friends," she said.

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Byron Mitchell Tarnutzer

June 25, 1935 - December 23, 2022

Byron Mitchell Tarnutzer peacefully passed away on December 23, 2022, surrounded by his loved ones. Byron was truly one of a kind: loving, loyal, a story-telling extraordinaire, and a friend to all.

Byron was born on June 25, 1935 in Los Angeles to Byron and Consuelo ("Connie") Tarnutzer. Byron grew up in Beverly Hills, and attended Harvard Military School in Los Angeles, followed by Stanford University, where he majored in Economics and History. During his time at Stanford, Byron participated in the Reserve Officers' Training Corps program and attended U.S. Army basic training at Fort Lewis, Washington. Following his graduation, Byron was commissioned into the Army, where he earned the rank of First Lieutenant and cultivated a lifelong admiration for his country and those who serve it.

Byron was an entrepreneur at heart and wore many hats throughout his professional career. He demonstrated his talent early, when after three years working as a paperboy, he bought his own paper stand at age 12, later selling it for double the amount he paid. He would later go on to found his own mortgage, investment, and development businesses. During his career, Byron developed 109 different commercial properties as a real estate developer.

Since childhood, Byron was attracted to anything with an engine: truck, car, boat, and plane. He fostered this curiosity personally and professionally, whether it was restoring and collecting old cars, earning his Pilot's license and flying his own helicopter, or owning and operating a trucking business. Byron also served on the Orange County Sheriff's Advisory Council, and on many occasions, volunteered to fly his helicopter for Sheriff related activities. Byron had a unique ability to combine his curious mind, deep intellect, and unwavering passion into successful business opportunities.

Byron lived a life full of adventure. Throughout his life, he traveled to every corner of the globe, and his warm, personable spirit allowed him to make friends and memories everywhere he went. Anyone who knew Byron was always impressed with the stories he told, both for their content and the incredible detail with which he told them.

Byron had no shortage of friends. Byron treated everyone he met equally, always ready to share a warm smile and an interesting story. He considered everyone a friend, whether he had known them for ten minutes or ten years.

Of all his accomplishments and accolades, Byron was most proud of being a devout and loving husband, father, and "Papa." Byron married Shannon Tarnutzer in 1986, and they shared 37 beautiful years of marriage. He was the proud father of five children - Rick, Kim, Lee, Taryn, and Blair - and a proud grandfather and great-grandfather. Byron was a true model of unconditional love and support, and was always there when his family needed him. Byron was so proud of the beautiful life and legacy that he created.

Byron is survived by his wife, his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, his dedicated caretakers, and hundreds of friends. In lieu of flowers, please donate to: Orange County Sheriff's Advisory Council, P.O. Box 241, Santa Ana, CA 92702.



Robert Willits Prough

Robert Willits Prough was born in Riverside, California on September 4, 1950, and passed away in Newport Beach on December 23rd with his loving family by his side. A fourth generation Californian, Rob spent his early years playing in the orange groves of Ontario and Corona. Following the divorce of his parents, his mother moved the family to the lovely old beach house (built by his grandfather in 1936) on Bayside Drive in Corona del Mar, where Rob spent many happy years fishing, sailing, and surfing.

After high school, Rob attended Brigham Young University and Chapman College World Campus Afloat. An entrepreneur at heart, college held little attraction for him. Instead, he went to work for the Corona Foothill Lemon Company, which was founded by his grandfather, Robert Lee Willits. During this time, he lived in the ranch house with his dear uncle, Ned Willits. It was Uncle Ned who mentored him in business, the game of chess, and the appreciation of fine wines. Rob decided to pursue work in the wine industry and joined Stuart Imports of San Francisco as a sales rep. His love of wine became his career when he founded Central Coast Wine Company in Santa Cruz in 1979, which he sold ten years later. Rob couldn't stay away from the business for long and in 1993 Epic Wines was born. For twenty years it was his dream come true; a successful business with talented, knowledgeable people who loved wine. He traveled the world and formed lifelong friendships with many of those he met along the way. In 2013 Rob sold Epic Wines.

Aside from his family, Rob loved his boat "Cruz" and anything Hawaiian. He also loved playing golf, cheering on the Giants, the 49ers, and the Warriors (both Big and G-League), and following Formula One. In his younger years, he was an avid skier, and the family created many favorite memories at the house in Truckee.

Rob was predeceased by his parents, Nancy (Willits) and Bob Sattler, and his nephew Charlie Long. He leaves behind his beloved wife, Jane (Hillmeyer), and his adoring children Justin Prough (Yael), Leanne Butka (Todd), Elizabeth Fisher (Mike) and Ryan Burr (Lindsey Barigian), his siblings Steve Prough (Kathy) and Sara Hyatt. He also leaves Carol Prough; she is his little sister and the donor of the stem cells in 2015 that prolonged his life. She is our hero; we will forever be grateful for the years we had with him, that we would not have had without her generosity. He is also survived by his grandchildren Griffin and Jordan Prough, Eva and Makena Fisher, Zoe and Raegan Butka, and Jack Burr, they were the light of his life.

Words cannot adequately convey our thanks to the team at the Stanford Cancer Center who navigated his care. He presented challenge after challenge, and they kept him going, miraculously, for over seventeen years. In lieu of flowers, please consider donating to Stanford University, The Research Fund for Dr. Sally Arai, Development Services, PO Box 20466, Stanford, CA 94309 or 650-725-4360.

A Celebration of Life will be held on Saturday, January 28, 2023, at 11:00 am at Calvary Episcopal Church, 532 Center Street, Santa Cruz, California. A reception will follow 12:00 - 3:00 at Seascape Golf Club 610 Clubhouse Drive, Aptos.

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