

Daily Pilot & Times OC

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She puts a stamp on service with a smile

Postal worker Tiffany Nguyen is known by customers for her friendly attitude and attention to customers' needs at the Balboa Island post office branch.

BY SUSAN HOFFMAN

Next-door neighbor Pat Beek, manager of the adjacent J.P. Maxwell clothing store, visits the Balboa Island post office on a daily basis — and not just for business.

Beek has developed a warm friendship with Tiffany Nguyen, the post office clerk who runs the island location. "She's an asset to the island, and I think she goes above and beyond," she said. "She's very caring, helps people fill out forms, passport applications, international package, declaration forms — and unlike some post offices, she gets to know all of us."

"She works all day by herself, and I always go over and say good morning," Beek said. "She's someone you want to care about and enjoy making her day better by stopping in."

Other local customers also take the time to stop and stick their head in to say "hello." The camaraderie goes both ways, as customers say Tiffany's welcoming demeanor equally brightens the day of post office patrons. See *Smile*, page A2



Susan Hoffman

PAT BEEK ships a package with the help of postal worker Tiffany Nguyen, with whom she has become friends.



Coming soon to Irvine

UCI Health

A shot at redemption: Local promoter Roy Englebrecht pitches Irrelevant Bowl to NCAA

BY ANDREW TURNER

For several decades, Newport Beach has celebrated underdog stories through the annual festivities of Irrelevant Week.

The title of Mr. Irrelevant has been bestowed upon the last pick in the NFL draft each year since 1976. The members of that fraternity have been made over by a cult following that simply can't get enough of roasting and toasting the proverbial longshot, wishing them well as they move forward.

Arising from the same community now is an effort to give two college football teams one final shot at redemption. Newport

Beach resident and local promoter Roy Englebrecht said he contacted the NCAA last week hoping to obtain a waiver for the inaugural Irrelevant Bowl.

Unlike most bowl games, which generally require teams to earn six wins to become eligible, this pitch calls for two of the worst teams in college football to square off for an elusive win, giving them a chance to change their seasons.

Englebrecht made his name through a long career as a serial entrepreneur and prize fight promoter. Fight Club OC, a hybrid show featuring boxing and mixed martial arts, just completed its 13th season.

So what is spurring his foray into this new arena? Englebrecht might argue that everyone is looking for their 15 minutes of fame. That could range from schools that generally aren't heard from in college football's postseason to an overshadowed title sponsor.

"As an entrepreneur and as a promoter, I've died and gone to heaven because there's so many things that tie into the Irrelevant Bowl, the irrelevant city and the irrelevant sponsor," Englebrecht added.

The host site question could also provide some interesting

See *Bowl*, page A2



Roy Englebrecht

ALSO FROM THE DAILY PILOT:



Associated Press

CHILD LABOR FOUND IN L.A. COUNTY COULD AFFECT CONSUMERS IN O.C. PAGE A6

NATIONAL GARDEN BUREAU NAMES 2024 THE YEAR OF THE AFRICAN VIOLET PAGE A7

Orange Coast College hoping not to trash recycling center

Low commodity values and staffing issues lead to closure that could be permanent if new operator isn't found.

BY SARA CARDINE

Other men's trash used to be treasure at Orange Coast College's Recycling Center — where employees accepted everything from cans and bottles to scrap metal and cooking oil — but the recycling business isn't what it used to be.

Citing a staffing shortage, members of the Costa Mesa campus' Associated Students of Orange Coast College (ASOCC), which has owned the center for more than 50 years and oversees its budget, decided to close up shop in early November after the number of full-time union employees working there had dwindled from four to zero.

Operators are now looking for a third-party vendor to run the center on a contract basis in hopes the it can continue serving the community, while providing job opportunities for students who work there. Although other centers operate in Huntington Beach and Santa Ana, there is no other recycling option in Costa Mesa.

However, record-low commod-



James Carbone

ORANGE COAST COLLEGE'S Recycling Center has been temporarily closed for the past two months, the only such center of its kind in Costa Mesa, at OCC Recycling Center in Costa Mesa on Wednesday.

ity values combined with a campus-wide hiring freeze, more robust residential recycling programs and a decline in foot traffic, make the prospect of returning the OCC Recycling Center to its glory days dicey.

Ruben Barriga, director of col-

lege and community services, who oversees various on-campus enterprises, including the recycling center, the OCC Swap Meet and the campus mailroom, said what seemed like a downward trend bottomed out during the pandemic.

"Everything changed right after COVID," Barriga said Thursday. "A lot of people couldn't go outside of their home to go to the recycling center. Some people decided they wanted to throw it away or wanted someone to pick it up and donate it."

During the 2022-23 school year, the facility operated at a deficit of about \$183,000, records indicate. The previous year, it lost about \$89,000. Those shortfalls are paid for out of ASOCC's budget allocation, according to Rich Pagel, the college's vice president of administrative services.

"The students have passed a budget, and they've allocated enough resources to cover the negative budget this year," Pagel said. "It's really a struggling business — and it's a changing world. Do we really need this type of recycling still, or is it more important than ever? I don't know."

While the cost of employing the center has risen, the value the college receives from the tons of materials it trucks to area processing plants has decreased dramatically. Barriga said the center used to receive from \$140 to \$160 for a ton of cardboard. Now the going rate is \$40.

"The public and the community want to do the right thing, they want to save the earth, but we get no value for that," he added.

Meanwhile, the redemption value people receive per bottle or can has remained stagnant, possibly causing a decline in the number of people who recycle. Pagel said the financial imbalance

See *Center*, page A2

Surf City residents in battle with OC San

A 30-foot easement affects the backyards of nearly 30 residents on Rhone Lane, who have been told they need to move their obstructions that lie on it, including walls and city-permitted swimming pools.

BY MATT SZABO

Frank Clarke has lived at his house on Rhone Lane in Huntington Beach since the early 1970s. A couple of years after buying the property, he installed a pool, getting the proper permits from the city.

Clarke didn't think anything of it for decades. But in December he got a letter from the Orange County Sanitation District saying they needed to access a 30-foot easement in the back of his property, which contains a sewer pipe.

The pool needed to go. OC San wants Clarke to meet with them and sign a paper acknowledging that, but so far he's signed nothing.

"To me, somebody should have flagged [the construction] and said, 'No, you can't do it, because you're on an easement,'" said Clarke, who turns 80 in June. "The communication process should have been better. If I was Orange County San, maybe every 10 years send out a notice, 'Don't forget, part of your property is on an easement.' But the first time I heard from Orange County Sanitation was with that December letter."

The public utility finds itself in a battle with 29 residents on the block on the west side of Rhone Lane, south of Heil Avenue.

OC San wants to initiate the Miller-Holder Rhone Lane Sewer Easement Clean-Up. It says it needs to do this to ensure the public's health and safety, and prevent sewage spills that could be environmentally damaging. The 69-inch wastewater pipeline, installed in 1959 when most of the area was farmland, is nearing the end of its lifespan.

The pipeline transports 10 million gallons of wastewater daily, according to OC San, and is part of a regional wastewater pipeline system that serves Huntington Beach and seven other Orange County cities.

The cleanup is projected to start in September and run through December 2025, according to officials.

Jennifer Cabral, an administration manager with OC San, said there's currently not enough space for their trucks, which range in width from 8 to 15 feet, to access the easement.

"We have our crews that are driving on an active railroad site right now, because we can't get our trucks on



Photos by Don Leach

CLARK STEPHENS shows the impacted area where the Orange County Sanitation District is seeking to enforce a 30-foot-wide sewer easement on Rhone Lane in Huntington Beach.

FRANK CLARK'S

backyard has a permitted pool that partially lies over an easement where the Orange County Sanitation District wants to fix an underground pipe.



our easement that was intended for access to the regional sewer line," Cabral said. "We've been working around it as much as we can, but it's gotten to a point where it just continues to get worse."

"It's an unfortunate situation, and we understand that, but this has been something that's been kicked down the line for years and years and years. We finally have gotten to a point where it gets to get done, because this pipeline has been aging and we need to be ready to do construction when it's needed."

A letter sent to residents on Dec. 1 listed encroachments that each homeowner has built on the easement and needs to remove. For Clarke, that list includes his swimming pool and related equipment, pool decking, a block wall, wood fencing and landscaping.

The utility wanted residents to sign the settlement agreement within 60 days, and that Feb. 1 deadline is quickly approaching. Under the compromise, OC San would remove many of the encroachments at its own expense before constructing a 6-foot cinder block wall.

Clarke hasn't signed anything yet, though.

Affected property owners went to the Huntington Beach City Council for help. The council voted unani-

See **Battle**, page A8



Joe C. Wen & Family Center for Advanced Care

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SMILE

Continued from page A1

"A lot of seniors live on the island and get their exercise by going down to the post office to mail a letter or check their post office box," said Beek, adding the social benefit. "It's like the way people feel when you go into Starbucks, you get the same feeling when someone recognizes you."

Tiffany Nguyen has been an employee of the Newport Beach office for 27 years and began her role at the Balboa Island station in September 2020.

"Every time I raise the flag I pray for this country," said Nguyen, who moved to the U.S. as a refugee from Vietnam in 1991. "Now I have the freedom

and appreciate all America. I love America, people are very kind, I wish I could hug everyone."

"The reason I'm here is we didn't have freedom, my mom saw that we didn't have a chance to go to school, we had ability but no chance. I am very honored and appreciate this country to give me a chance to come here as a refugee," Nguyen said.

"She's never been angry or frustrated and I've never seen her complain about how bad interactions have been with any customer," said Beek. "She's always smiling for all of us."

Balboa Island residents, Balboa Island Improvement Assn. president Terry Janssen and his wife, Patti, concurred that Tiffany is always professional when handling complaints, such



Susan Hoffman

TIFFANY NGUYEN is the Balboa Island post office clerk.

as the ongoing issue of reduced lobby hours as a result of vandalism.

The Janssens, who also have a post office box, are

part of the local community affected by the inconvenience. "Tiffany is lovely, and I feel bad for her, she doesn't make that decision, and

she's taking the brunt of it," said Patti Janssen, who has observed Nguyen dealing with customers. "She's the fall guy, which is really unfair, and I've told her this no reflection on you, whenever I bring it up."

There's no question the limited hours between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. have caused hardships for everyone who depends on the Balboa Island location.

The Janssens and other residents have called the postmaster but have received no follow through or resolution.

"Every day customers are really mad, and I try to calm them down," explained Nguyen. "I tell them I don't have the authority to do that and give them the postmaster number to call."

Last June she asked the

postmaster to allow her to open the lobby on a Saturday so she could help her customers, but Monday morning when she arrived a box had been opened there and its contents stolen. To date Nguyen has reported four break-ins at the location.

Nguyen said she loves working on the island.

"The people are very nice, and I want to help the older ones who have trouble with addresses, so I look up for them," she said.

She'll even track down customers who have left wallets behind.

"It's a very good town and customers who don't need anything want to come and say, 'hi.'"

Susan Hoffman is a contributor to TimesOC.

BOWL

Continued from page A1

possibilities. If the bowl game comes to fruition, Englebrecht surmised that a little town could come together to make the event its own. The game could put a little-known town on the map.

"This little city, they're going to get the Irrelevant Bowl, and the whole town is going to get behind it," Englebrecht said.

Host city hopefuls would place a bid in the first quarter of 2024, covering lodging and meals for the two participating teams, stadium expenses, and a \$1-million site fee, according to a news release. All revenue generated from the event, including ticket sales, concessions and parking, would go back to the city that puts on the game.

While not directly connected to Irrelevant Week, Englebrecht had long admired the late Paul Salata, so much so that he has expressed a desire to name the potential bowl game's trophy after him. He connected with Salata's daughter, Melanie Salata Fitch, now the chief executive of



Courtesy of Roy Englebrecht

THE LOGO for the proposed Irrelevant Bowl.

Irrelevant Week, to explain the idea.

"There's not a better person that I know than Paul Salata, who gave so much, who had so much, who loved sports, who loved kids and so forth," Englebrecht said. "That's why I wanted Mel to see the logo and tell her I'm going to announce this, so that she would be aware of it."

"She was fine. She was laughing. She even thought it was cute. It's funny that we're both here in Newport Beach, both these ideas came out of one community, and I think if there would never have been an Irrelevant Week, I would never come up with the Ir-

relevant Bowl."

Salata Fitch was asked if she would lend her father's name to the trophy.

"If it's honoring football players or honoring a team, then yes," Salata Fitch said. "If it's making a joke out of one more loss, then we would not support his name to be attached to something that was being mean to players. I don't think that's what Roy's intent is. I think he's kind of like, 'Everybody should be able to play.' Let them play. They've done their practices, they have their helmets on, let them play and go for a win. ..."

"I would lend Dad's name to it as long as it was in an effort to celebrate the

underdog and let the players be showcased and be seen by scouts and be cheered on by fans."

Skeptics might wonder if teams would have an appetite to keep playing at the end of a trying season. A team would not have to accept an invitation to the Irrelevant Bowl, said Englebrecht, who added that he did not foresee teams tanking to be a part of it. Weekly standings updates would keep tabs on the top candidates to be invited to the Irrelevant Bowl.

"I'm a glasses-half-full guy," said Englebrecht when asked about his confidence level that the game would happen. "I can make a good case, but [the NCAA], they could look at it, like some people, 'You're degrading the sport. You're making fun of the sport. This is too comical. This is too tongue-in-cheek.' ..."

"I'm going to give it a 50-50, which is not me. I like to think I'm going to be more optimistic than that, but dealing with the NCAA is not easy. They control college sports. ... I'll tell you, I'm going to work hard in making my case."

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James Carbone

RECYCLABLE MATERIAL is left waiting for retrieval at Orange Coast College's Recycling Center.

CENTER

Continued from page A1

created a bit of an existential crisis for the center.

"The [Associated Student Government] passed a resolution in May 2023 asking the administration to take action because they couldn't sustain it," he said Wednesday. "Our business is education, it's not really recycling. So, our goal now is to regroup and form a partnership with a third-party provider."

Staff plan to submit some kind of proposal to the AS-GOCC after students return

to campus from winter break later this month. The hope is to find someone who shares the college's values and beliefs about recycling.

"I hope whoever the third-party is, it's someone who's going to come in and be part of the community and is fully involved in recreating what we had pre-COVID," Barriga said.

Page, too, is optimistic. "We are going to reopen — that is a fact," he said. "The facility is clean and ready to go."

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James Bridges | 20th Century Fox

TWO TEENAGERS fall in love in 2014's "The Fault in Our Stars," one of more than 100 reviewed in a study published in JCO Oncology Practice on the portrayal of cancer in films.

Study hopes to help assuage fears of patients frightened by films featuring cancer stories

BY LILLY NGUYEN

While some cancer patients may have experience with the disease through friends or family members, others have gathered information about it only from what they've seen portrayed on film. Oncologist Dr. David Benjamin at Hoag says it's become commonplace for him to see patients putting additional stress on themselves because of inaccurate movie portrayals that lead them to believe they have a terminal condition.

Benjamin and co-authors Dr. Mark Lythgoe at Imperial College London and Dr. Arash Rezazadeh Kalebasty at UC Irvine last year reviewed a little over 100 films released between 2010 and 2020 to discern if there was an obvious disconnect between what was being portrayed in films

versus what they saw in clinical settings. Their observations were collected into a study, though Benjamin described it as more of a "commentary" that was published on Jan. 16 by JCO Oncology Practice.

"As recently as last week, I had a patient tell me that they watched a movie and, in that movie, that a character was diagnosed with only a few weeks to live, but the type wasn't specified and it created a lot of uncertainty," Benjamin said. "The patient told me it created a lot of anxiety and stress when he'd first heard the diagnosis, and then thought about the film. That's really what the impetus for this study was, which is very different research than we typically do, like with clinical trials."

Benjamin noted the films the study team focused on were not documentaries.

"[The study] was to evaluate if what is being shown in movies is that accurate while acknowledging it's entertainment," he said. "It's just to emphasize both, to someone who's coming to clinic or to the doctor, that they should be aware that some may be influenced by prior portrayals of cancer in movies and their opinion may be skewed by the way cancer was depicted."

"From a patient standpoint, they should acknowledge they may have this bias to look to their physician for more updated and accurate knowledge."

The three watched films that were specifically tagged as involving cancer on online database IMDb, with their study including films like "The Fault in Our Stars," "50/50" and "Dead-

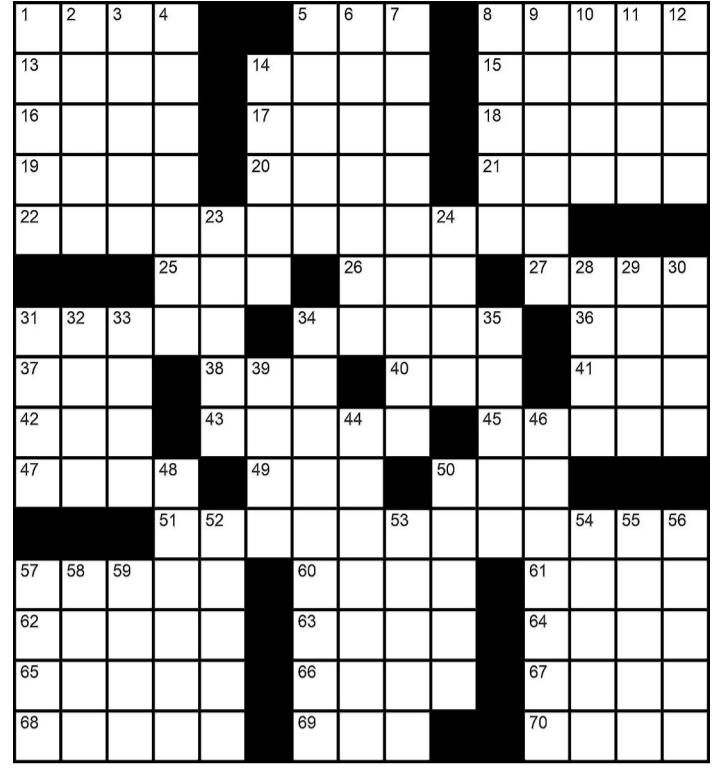
See *Study*, page A8

THE DAILY COMMUTER PUZZLE

By Jacqueline E. Mathews

ACROSS

- 1 Primary
- 5 Botanist Gray
- 8 Leather strip
- 13 Utah ski area
- 14 Relaxing video genre
- 15 Gender-neutral possessive
- 16 Glitzy, informally
- 17 San Antonio baller
- 18 Big concert venue
- 19 5,280 feet
- 20 Tiny brick brand
- 21 Oxidized, perhaps
- 22 "Blow, Gabriel, Blow" musical
- 25 Concert equipment, for short
- 26 Boy
- 27 Adorn
- 31 Last Greek letter
- 34 Fixes by sewing
- 36 Big fuss
- 37 Pastor's title: Abbr.
- 38 Messenger molecule
- 40 Chicago hrs.
- 41 Hot brewed drink
- 42 " _ you okay?"
- 43 Stressed out
- 45 Waterfront view, often
- 47 Glasses part
- 49 Spanish aunt
- 50 Laundry brand
- 51 Ability to repeat a movement through practice
- 57 _ lazuli
- 60 _ von Bismarck
- 61 Frozen drink brand
- 62 Central Florida city
- 63 Pulled tight
- 64 Meadows
- 65 "Peer Gynt" composer
- 66 Laundry brand



SUDOKU

By the Mepham 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.

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

For answers to the crossword and Sudoku puzzles, see page A7.

- 67 Wedding gown fabric
- 68 Have a feeling
- 69 Anger
- 70 "Carpenter" insects

DOWN

- 1 Underground lava

- 2 Bold poker bet
- 3 Rome's country
- 4 Conference-goer's ID
- 5 "Quaking" tree
- 6 Illegally import
- 7 Egotistical quality

- 8 Long look
- 9 Violently push
- 10 Director Dee
- 11 " _ Misbehavin'"
- 12 Talk to God
- 14 _ of the tongue
- 23 Korean grocery chain
- 24 Probability
- 28 Velocity, e.g.
- 29 Brain product
- 30 Haunted house noise
- 31 Not written down
- 32 Only
- 33 Smooth-surfaced
- 34 Tubular pasta
- 35 Retail outlet
- 39 Brooklyn's NBA team
- 44 Seaside scent
- 46 Queen of the U.K.
- 48 Looks happy
- 50 Overact
- 52 Grammar topic
- 53 Piano practice piece
- 54 Salty expanse
- 55 Respond
- 56 Affirmative answers
- 57 Sawn timber
- 58 Land area unit
- 59 Annoyance

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Deed of trust recorded 05/19/2006 as Instrument No. 2006000340242 In book ---, page--- and of Official Records in the office of the recorder of Orange County, California,
Date of sale: 03/04/2024 at 09:00 AM
Place of sale: **AUCTION.COM ROOM DOUBLETREE BY HILTON HOTEL ANAHEIM - ORANGE COUNTY, 100 THE CITY DRIVE, ORANGE, CA 92868**
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COMMENTARY | SANDRA MORGAN AND DEREK MARSH

A message to Orange County consumers about child labor and corporate accountability

Your dinner table may be more connected to child exploitation than you think. A Los Angeles-based poultry processor just beyond Orange County that supplies household names like Ralphs and Aldi was found employing underage workers in harrowing, dangerous conditions. This isn't a scene from a bygone era of industrialization; it's happening now, where children are used as cheap labor in the shadows of our bustling economy.

To understand the gravity, we must first unpack what human trafficking encompasses. It's an umbrella term that includes both labor and sex trafficking. Contrary to popular belief, labor trafficking accounts for a staggering 78% of the human trafficking in our nation, overshadowing sex trafficking's 22%. Labor trafficking exploits individuals for work through coercion, force or fraud — often less visible than sex trafficking, yet far more prevalent.

As January is Human Trafficking Awareness Month, the exploitation of our youth for labor is a stark reminder of this global issue's local impact. It's difficult to detect, with children coached to deceive authorities, stating they are older than they really are to mask the true nature of their employment. And, disproportionately, the children of immigrants—legal or not—are often the most vulnerable



Gina Ferazzi | Los Angeles Times

CHICKENS ROAM freely at a poultry facility in Nuevo, Calif. The Labor Department announced it had fined a Los Angeles County poultry processor for using child labor in December.

to this scenario. The implications of this deceit are profound. Every child coerced into labor is one less in school, one less educated citizen in our future workforce; potentially perpetuating a cycle of poverty and exploitation.

The recent push to lower the legal working age in some areas is a regressive move that endangers the progress made in child welfare. It's a movement gaining traction, as seen in states like Arkansas, Iowa, New Jersey and New Hampshire, where child labor laws have recently been relaxed, allowing minors to work in conditions and for hours that were previously deemed unacceptable.

What can we do? Your power as a consumer is significant. Challenge your local grocers everywhere in Orange County. Ask them

where the chicken in the display case comes from and whether they can assure that it's not the product of child labor. It's not merely a question of quality but of morality.

Be aware of legislative changes that seek to lower the age of legal employment and understand the implications of such laws. They aren't just adjustments to a statute; they're potential threats to our children's education and safety.

Our community is rallying to this cause. The Orange County Human Trafficking Task Force, with its new grant to tackle labor trafficking, is on the front-line. Resources like the "Ending Human Trafficking" podcast are available to deepen your understanding and sharpen your ability to make a difference. The recent \$3.8 million

in back wages, damages and penalties the local poultry processor mentioned above has agreed to pay after the U.S. Department of Labor found it had endangered young workers is not just a penalty; it's a beacon for corporate responsibility. It tells companies everywhere that profiting off the exploitation of children will not be tolerated in our county, in our cities, in our neighborhoods.

Orange County has always been a leader in California — a region of prosperity, innovation and ethical consciousness. Let's lead again by standing against the tide of labor exploitation. We have the means, the knowledge and the heart to ensure that our children grow up in a community that values them as the future — not as laborers.

As you reflect on your next meal, consider the hands that brought it to you. Let's commit to a community where those hands are not those of a child forced to work, but of someone paid fairly and treated with dignity.

DR. SANDRA MORGAN is a professor and director of the Global Center for Women and Justice at Vanguard University in Costa Mesa. **DEREK MARSH** is the associate director of the Global Center for Women and Justice and a founding member of the Orange County Human Trafficking Task Force.

MAILBAG

Costa Mesa dials back its plans for affordable housing

The Costa Mesa City Council promised us affordable housing if we voted for Measure K. It was a lie.

At midnight Jan. 16, all council members talked about was cutting affordable housing to accommodate developers. Strategically placed as the last item on the agenda, this Affordable/Inclusionary Housing Ordinance (IHO) has about as much to do with inclusion and affordable housing as the Peace-keeper missile is about peace. At that late hour the last veil fell, as council members openly agonized over how to meet the requirements dictated by the developers. They want market-rate housing, so the answer was simple and reached with great ease. Cut affordable housing even more.

Sacramento requires Costa Mesa to plan for almost 12,000 housing units. And 40% of them must be low or very low income units. According to the city staff report, approximately 47% of residents in the city earn a lower income and approximately 29% qualify for very low or extremely low-income housing. Costa Mesa

residents have long been asking for affordable housing. In 2022, the City Council said the only way to accomplish this was for residents to vote for Measure K, ceding their power on development to the City Council. Since then they have sat on the dais listening to the working poor constantly beg for help with housing, but all they hear are the voices of land owners and developers.

Instead of 10% to 15% affordable units in projects over 10 units, it's down to as little as 4% to 6%, and that only applies to projects under 60 units per acre or to parcels of 2 acres or more. To skirt this is child's play. Also the IHO does not apply to for-sale housing, and the in-lieu fees that developers pay no longer go to a first-time homebuyer's program. There will be affordable units going in north of the 405 at One Metro West, but that was decided before this ordinance. The coup de grace is the accommodations that allow developers to either pay in-lieu fees, agree to off-site affordable units or swap land instead of including affordable units in their luxury complexes. Rarely is this affordable housing ever built.

So, the only affordable housing in Costa Mesa will be restricted to the Fairview Developmental Center, near other low-income minority neighborhoods, next to the Emergency



File Photo

COSTA MESA City Hall. A reader writes that voters who approved Measure K may be surprised by the city's proposed Affordable/Inclusionary Housing Ordinance.

Operations Center with its 10-story tower of flashing lights clad in plastic to look like a tree. It will be Costa Mesa's version of the Watts Towers. No luxury homes will be built here. The air pollution is unhealthy and will only worsen when the EOC trucks arrive filling the warehouses with supplies — and the helipad is still in play. The high-density concrete high-rise next door will be affordable housing. And don't expect green space, trees, and parks, because developers can avoid those too with in-lieu fees. The term for this is redlining, and it's against the law.

Priscilla Rocco
Costa Mesa

GOP compare and contrast

What do the Huntington Beach City Council majority and the U.S. House of Representatives majority have in common? Yes, there are conservative Republicans in charge. Yes, they have been committed to tilting at ideological windmills. Yes, they are beholden to MAGA extremists supporting former president Donald Trump. But, the most devastating thing these deliberative "do-nothings" have in common is dropping the pretense of actually representing their constituents. Naturally, the Republican

leadership in the House has not addressed the pressing issues of the budget, foreign aid, immigration reform, voter rights and a multitude of others. They are off on their own witch hunts and investigations which only serve the interests of their base.

Not to be outdone in comparison, the vote-as-a-block council majority in Surf City is focused solely on their irresponsible and ruinous charter amendments, which only advance their authoritarian agenda. Their stated aim is to beat the "wokeness" out of the community by any means possible while ignoring real solutions to any of the city's pressing local government needs. This is in addition to taking on the county and state in losing battles over elections and housing. In the meantime, they have been busy crushing societal norms in the community and acting to benefit the special interests who installed them in power.

Yes, a critical thing these two government bodies have in common is a disrespect for democracy and a zero-sum game of their winning and everybody else losing. That can only change when both of these majorities are out of power. It cannot come soon enough for both Huntington Beach and the country.

Tim Geddes
Huntington Beach

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The African violet is having a day in the sun

BY JESSICA DAMIANO

African violets, those cheerful, shade-loving houseplants native to Tanzania and introduced to the U.S. in the late 1800s, are finally having their day in the sun: the National Garden Bureau has named 2024 the Year of the African Violet.

Violets in name only, the demure, 4- to 8-inch-tall flowering plants with velvety leaves and colorful flowers are not related to their namesake plants at all. Rather, they belong to the Saintpaulia genus, named for German baron Walter von Saint Paul, who found them growing in the East African rainforest and is credited with introducing them to the U.S. by way of Europe.

They've been among the most popular houseplants ever since.

And that popularity was one factor considered by the NGB's 160 members — leading companies and individuals in the horticulture field — when voting to spotlight the plant in the houseplant category, the nonprofit's executive director, Diane M. Blazek, told me. She cited the more than 300,000 uses of the hashtag #africanviolet on social media.

Other criteria considered included how easy African violets are to grow, their genetic diversity, and the fact that "they have been in the eye of breeders, which means there are new varieties coming through the pipeline," she said.

It's "one of those 'what's old is new again' plants," Blazek said. "I'm sure we all think of them as Grandma's plants, but based on numbers from our members, the African violet really has not gone out of favor at all."

The Downers Grove, Illinois-based NGB was founded in 1920 by James Burdett, a journalist who also wrote copy for seed companies, to provide

expert-driven, reliable gardening information to the public.

Burdett also was involved in promoting the first victory gardens, Blazek said, and the Bureau continues his work by recommending a standout vegetable, annual, flowering shrub, bulb plant, perennial and houseplant for home gardeners to grow each year (2024 is also the year of the squash, Angelonia, Buddleia, lily and hosta respectively).

GROWING TIPS

Although it's true that African violets are not difficult to grow, they do require specific conditions that might not be available in all areas of your home, so select a spot carefully.

For the plants to thrive and rebloom, Blazek said, filtered sunlight, the right moisture levels and watering habits are key. "Watering from below is ideal, but don't let them sit in water too long, and don't let them dry out too much," she advised.

Take care not to allow water to come into contact with the leaves or they may become spotted. And use only room-temperature water.

African violets also require high humidity and warmth, but not heat. In dry climates and over win-



THE NATIONAL Garden Bureau has named 2024 as the Year of the African Violet. Pictured, a bicolor variety of the plant.

Associated Press

ter, when heating units are in use, run a humidifier in the room or place plant pots on a pebble-filled tray to which you've added water. As the water evaporates, it will create a humid microclimate around the plant.

Keep them out of direct sunlight. During spring and summer, place the plants beside — not directly in front of — a north- or east-facing window, which provides less exposure than one facing south or west. A

sheer curtain between plants and windows would provide extra protection while allowing just the right amount of sunlight to reach plants. Move them into direct light from October through the end of February (except in the Deep South, where the winter sun is harsher).

The plants also prefer slightly acidic soil but do not require frequent fertilization. Feed them every two to three months with a 20-20-20 houseplant fertil-

izer (or one specially formulated for African violets).

And allow their roots to become somewhat crowded; they like cozy pots.

With proper care, your

African violets may bloom year-round.

JESSICA DAMIANO writes a weekly gardening column for the AP and publishes the award-winning Weekly Dirt Newsletter.

CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU ANSWERS

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FIRST COURSE SELECTIONS
select one

Corn Chowder
Fresh corn, Applewood smoked bacon

Bungalow Salad
Greens, hearts of palm, olives, feta, red onion, bay shrimp, tarragon vinaigrette

Classic Caesar Salad
Chopped hearts of romaine, herb croutons, tomato, shaved Manchego

ENTRÉE SELECTIONS
select one

Prime Filet Mignon
8 oz. prime filet mignon, Yukon Gold mashed potatoes, fried shallots

Bone-In Rib Eye
16 oz. prime bone-in rib eye, Yukon Gold mashed potatoes, fried onion strings
(Twenty-Five Dollar Supplement)

California Chicken Breast
Pan-seared chicken breast, oven-roasted tomatoes, avocado, Yukon Gold mashed potatoes

King & Blue Crab-Crusted Scottish Salmon
Herb-roasted red potatoes, broccolini, Meyer lemon beurre blanc

Miso-Marinaded Chilean Sea Bass
Soy glaze, coconut rice, stir-fried vegetables, mushrooms, lemongrass ginger beurre blanc

Double Pork Chop
Thick-cut grilled all natural pork chop, creamy caramelized onion barley risotto, creamed kale, sherry sauce

Australian Lobster Tail
10 oz. drawn butter, grilled lemon, Yukon Gold mashed potatoes
(Twenty Dollar Supplement)

DESSERT
select one

New York-Style Cheesecake
Fresh whipped cream, raspberry coulis

Vanilla Crème Brûlée
Vanilla custard, fresh raspberries

Berries & Ice Cream
Fresh seasonal berries, vanilla bean ice cream

20% Gratuity will be added to parties of eight or more.
A 3% processing fee will be added to all credit card transactions. For guests that choose to pay with cash, the 3% fee will be waived.
*Consuming raw or undercooked meats, poultry, seafood, shellfish or eggs may increase your risk of food-borne illness.

BATTLE

Continued from page A2

mously on Tuesday night to ask for up to 120 days of more time for the residents. The next night, at the O.C. Sanitation District board meeting, the board agreed to offer at most a one-month extension, until the end of February.

The answers aren't satisfactory for Phillip and Andrea Rizzo, who live a few houses down from Clarke on Rhone Lane. They have an above-ground pool that was installed last year, a swing and a fire pit all on the back portion of their property that would be affected.

The pool has a ramp behind it to accommodate their 19-year-old son, A.J., who has cerebral palsy and is wheelchair-bound.

"If you judge it according to the manhole, the pipe is somewhere between where the ramp is and the fence is," Andrea Rizzo said. "They haven't told us where the pipe is."

Phillip Rizzo, who spoke at Tuesday's City Council meeting, said he would be fine with hiring a crane and moving the pool while OC San accesses the easement. But with the utility's current offer, he would no longer be able to fit the pool in the reduced space of his backyard.

He believes that relocating the pipe when it needs to be replaced would be a better solution than taking backyard space from each house and constructing an 1,800-foot-long wall.

"If the pipe's at the end of its life, then let's discuss it when the pipe's scheduled to be replaced," he said. "If it's replaced in 2025, then give us until 2025 to remove the alleged encroachments. This arbitrary, 'We need to clean it up just in case,' with no dialogue, is just not a solution. There's a lot that's unknown. To give us a 60-day letter on Dec. 1 is just dirty



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

CATHY MONASTRA shows the area that would be impacted at her Huntington Beach home on Rhone Lane.

pool."

Cabral said OC San needs to go through a public contract and get a contractor to pay an estimated \$1 million to mediate the situation and get rid of the obstructions on top of the easement.

"We're using public funds through our ratepayers to compensate these 29 property owners that did something that they weren't supposed to," she said. "That kind of puts us at risk, too, but it's because we understand that it's an unfortunate situation. Just because it was a bad decision and/or situation doesn't mean we shouldn't correct it, because we're legally responsible for this pipeline. If something were to happen today, we could be found negligent."

"About three years ago or so, the board told us that we needed to take an active role in our property management, get an active understanding of where our pipelines are, where our easements are and actively manage them. We weren't actively managing them previously. We were working around situations, but now it's gotten to a point where the trucks that are being purchased now are bigger." Mayor Pro Tem Pat Burns is Huntington Beach's representative on the OC Sanitation District board. He said during Tuesday's Council meeting that the utility is worried about the weight on top of the pipe.

"It would be a hell of a mess if something happened and they didn't get to it right away," Burns said. "I don't suggest that we get between OC San and the owners in a legally binding way."

City Atty. Michael Gates said the language of the easement document itself is sloppily worded and

in a legally binding way." Councilman Dan Kalmick agreed with Rizzo that a 60-day notice sent at the holidays struck him the wrong way. He also shared residents' concerns that more open space behind the properties wasn't necessarily a good thing.

"You've got an area that property holders can't see back there," he said. "In the police blotter, we see there's trash fires back there and we have unhoused folks back there. To give more footage back there, I don't think that's a great solution. Does the easement need to be executed at 30 feet? Can it be 28½ feet, and that saves somebody's pool?"

City Atty. Michael Gates said the language of the easement document itself is sloppily worded and

overly complicated.

"I think the homeowners have a point," Gates said during Tuesday's meeting, adding that he's met with several of the residents as well as lawyers from OC San. "An easement basically holds that I have a right of certain use to somebody else's property. But when that easement, as OC San is basically saying, transmutes into complete entire ownership and total possession of the entire ground surface, that's really not an easement. That's owning it in fee."

Some residents have asked for a town hall meeting, but OC San has not provided one because every property's situation is different. "OC San wants to provide each property owner the opportunity to ask specific questions about their individual situation and not receive generic information in a town hall that could potentially lead to more questions," Cabral said.

The Rhone Lane residents are still mulling their options. Cathy Monastra and her husband, Scott, have lived at their property for more than 30 years. They planned to meet with OC San on Thursday.

Like Clarke, they have an in-ground pool that would be affected by the cleanup.

"There's zero consideration of us, because if there was, they would give us at least a couple of options," Cathy Monastra said. "It's not all or nothing. We built this [pool] for our kids, and we have four grandkids now that enjoy it too."

"We knew there's an easement, but we didn't know much other than that. Everything we've built has been permitted and approved, so we thought we were doing the right thing. If it's approved [by the city], it's like there's a huge lack of communication between those two entities."

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Twitter: @mjszabo

STUDY

Continued from page A4

pool." The team looked at what cancers were diagnosed in those movies and what treatments were offered. Benjamin said they noted that about 65% of patients were depicted as having incurable cancers, but that doesn't pan out.

"There's not big statistics out there; but in our own experiences, there's a lot of men and

women who have early stage cancers that can be treated before they ever even see a medical oncologist," he said. "When we were writing this article, we wanted to contrast it with real world data. Cancer's changed a lot over the last decade."

"With new treatments, there are individuals living longer now who, even a decade ago, wouldn't have been able to get a treatment that wasn't approved or available. There's data from a lot of sources

that the proportion of cancer survivors is going up in our country."

The National Cancer Institute reports that survivorship has been on the incline since the 1990s, and Benjamin noted new treatments like immunotherapy aren't being acknowledged as viable options for patients in many films.

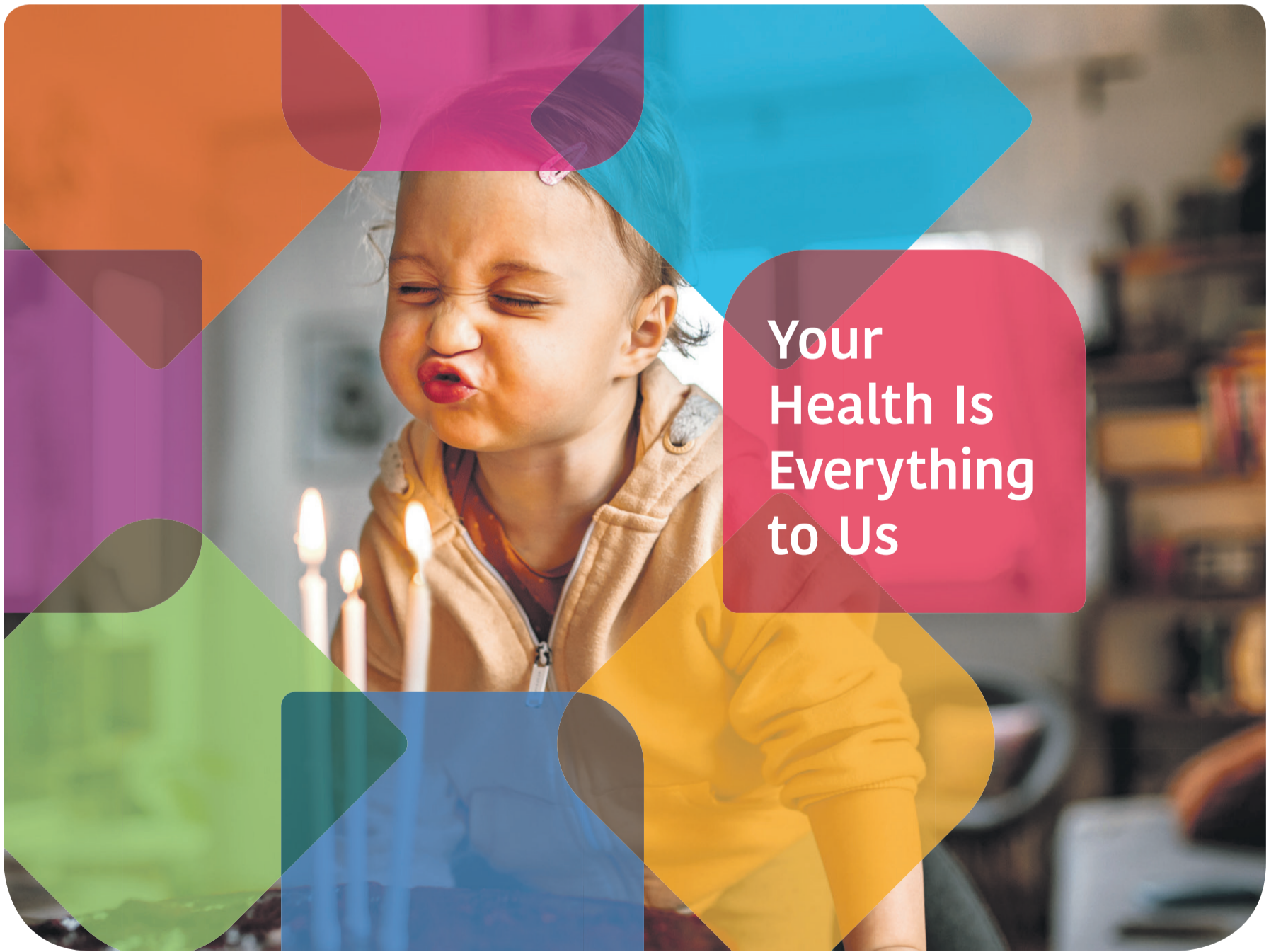
He noted that few, if any, of the films studied were egregiously off the mark but several lacked specificity.

"Because there's a lot of ambiguity in films, like with the type of cancer, whether it's curable or the types of treatments, that ... ambiguity or a lack of clarity or a clear plan causes a lot of anxiety and stress. They may depict cancer as this ambiguous disease, but really it's complicated," Benjamin said. "Each type of cancer is complicated from how it's treated, to the stage that dictates how curable it is and the many types of new treatments out there that may be

able to help."

Benjamin said that the commentary is intended not to harshly criticize inaccurate portrayals in film but to call for medical professionals to act as consultants and allow practicing doctors to unravel the misconceptions around what are often the scariest moments of people's lives.

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