

# TimesOC

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## THE DOCTOR'S (FOOD) ORDER

A longtime physician, Yolanda Quam provides 'fuel for the body & soul' at San Clemente's The Fuel Shack.

BY ADA TSENG

Yolanda Quam — a retired pediatrician, medical director and now the owner of the Fuel Shack restaurant in San Clemente — is also a certified laughter yoga instructor.

"Oh my God, it's hilarious; they do it every day in Laguna Beach," Quam said. "It looks like [really happy] people walking around in a circle laughing. My husband first saw it, and he told me about it because he knew that I would be one to participate."

She led a 30-second bout of laughter over the phone, to demonstrate how fake laughter quickly turns into real laughter, which triggers hormones like oxytocin, serotonin and dopamine that elevate one's mood.

Moods needed lifting that day. It was March 17, the coronavirus pandemic was just starting to take hold, and the O.C. health officer had ordered all dine-in restaurants and small gatherings to be shut down.

It was also day 467 of the Fuel Shack, which she and her husband David Quam, also a retired physician, opened in December 2018.

Yolanda's daily morning routine included updating the number, so even if locals were panicking and buying all the toilet paper from Costco, she could remember exactly how long she had been living her dream of having her own restaurant.

Though she didn't know it at the time, three days later, they would close and not open again until July 7.

David would soon be called out of retirement to help set up and staff a new hospital space to prepare for the possibility of overflow COVID patients.



Photos courtesy of the Fuel Shack

See **Food**, page R7 **YOLANDA AND** David Quam are retired physicians who opened up the restaurant the Fuel Shack together in December 2018.



**THE ACAI BOWL** at the Fuel Shack in San Clemente.



**HUEVOS RANCHEROS** on a jalapeno bagel.



**THE FUEL SHACK'S** coffee is ground to order.

## WALKING THE WALK

Laguna resident touts breast cancer awareness by walking 50 miles in 50 states (virtually) as she turns 50.

BY LILLY NGUYEN

Sharael Kolberg said she wanted to do something fun for her 50th birthday. At first, the plan was to visit all 50 states within the year.

Then, after beating breast cancer in December 2019, it became her goal to run 1 mile in every state to promote awareness and advocate for current patients and encourage women to do breast cancer screenings to catch the disease early. She started planning for her travel at the end of the year, only for her plans to be

interrupted by the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic.

By March, Kolberg decided to pivot — she would run virtually with one person from every state, every day for 50 days. She found her last runner on Sunday in Delaware, just two days before her run began on Aug. 11, the day of her 50th birthday.

"The people that I'm partnering with are running in their own town. They're not traveling. I'm not traveling, but I still get to see a little bit of every state," Kolberg

See **Walking**, page R2



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

**SHARAEAL KOLBERG** of Laguna Beach is joined by her local friends and family who participated in the first day of her "50 for the Cure" walk on Aug. 11, the day of her 50th birthday. Kolberg is a breast cancer survivor.

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Courtesy of Lincoln Property Co.

**THE TUSTIN** Mess Hall now features social-distancing stickers placed throughout its indoor dining space, and a reconfigured outdoor patio where customers can enjoy the view while feeling safe.

## Tustin Mess Hall intends to be a safe community space during COVID-19 pandemic with outdoor dining, drive-in movies

BY ADA TSENG

The Tustin Mess Hall Market, part of the FLIGHT at Tustin Legacy creative office campus, opened about a year ago and is home to 10 restaurants owned by O.C. locals: VaKa Burger, Fonda Moderna, the Sandwich Society, Saigon Kitchen, the Little Greek, Slapfish, Big Parm, Fowl Play, the Lost Bean and Drink Bar.

The eventual goal for FLIGHT is to welcome new tenants to the adjacent office buildings and for the Mess Hall to be a communal hangout not only for the campus but for the public. Tenants were just starting to move in earlier this year, when COVID-19 hit the U.S. and work-from-home became the norm for office employees.

The Mess Hall closed for a couple of months, but since then, the Lincoln Property Co. team led by Executive Vice President Parke Miller, has been developing ideas for how to make their 12,000-square-foot industrial, airy space with 40-foot glass walls a safe space during the pandemic.

Owners have produced safety videos that play outside as visitors walk into the Mess Hall, as well as adding hand-sanitizer stations. There is Plexiglas separating the food stall workers from the customers, as well as custom floor decals showing how people can social distance while ordering, waiting for food and picking up.

While all the interior seating has been removed, the outdoor patio has tables spaced 6 feet apart, and there are tables spread throughout the entire campus

**“Everyone has a different risk tolerance for COVID, so our goal is so that if you want to just grab something quick and get out of there, you can, but if you want to come in and have an experience like you used to have ... you can.”**

— Parke Miller

Executive Vice President of Lincoln Property Co.

that can be used if customers prefer more privacy.

There is also an adjacent park with walking and biking trails that opened in February.

Miller said the business is trying to create a clean environment that's like “an oasis in the desert,” while also offering options for different comfort levels.

“Everyone has a different risk tolerance for COVID, so our goal is so that if you want to just grab something quick and get out of there, you can, but if you want to come in and have an experience like you used to have before COVID in a spacious and flexible environment, you can,” he said.

Beginning Tuesday, there will be weekly “drive-in, dine-out” movie events on top of their neighboring parking garage. It's a partnership with Frida Cinema in Santa Ana, and organizers plan to include cult classics including 2001's “Donnie Darko,” starring Jake Gyllenhaal.

The Tustin Mess Hall will also continue its Paint & Vino art series on Sept. 5 from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. The classes will take place outside, with seating spaced out,

and participants can enjoy discounted beverages from the Drink Bar, as well as food or snacks from any of the other restaurants.

The business is also planning to bring back its regular yoga sessions on the patio.

“Food halls as a concept are all about being organic and authentic to the place, which means having local retailers as well as having [communal] experiences,” Miller said. “Before COVID, it was the density and activity and the people that created the energy. We're in a world today where we can't do that, so you have to be creative.”

The Mess Hall will also soon release an app that customers can use to order from any of the food stalls. The app was developed initially for future office tenants, but it will now be open to the public.

“We're trying to make it as easy and user-friendly as possible, to help things get as back to normal, or as close as we can get to normal, as soon as possible,” Miller said.

adatseng@latimes.com  
Twitter: @adatseng



Scott Smeltzer | Staff Photographer

**DR. JAY LEE**, the chief medical officer with Share Our Shelves, gives a tour of the SOS Community Health Mobile Unit to Costa Mesa Mayor Katrina Foley and Rep. Harley Rouda (D-Laguna Beach).

## Share Our Selves rolls out mobile unit that aims to treat people where they are

BY SARA CARDINE

For the past 50 years, community health center Share Our Selves has made strides to serve as many vulnerable and low-income people as possible, offering medical, dental and social services throughout Orange County with a main office in Costa Mesa.

In addition to providing at-risk patients medical and pharmacy services, the comprehensive center operates a food pantry and acts as a mailing address for homeless individuals who otherwise could not receive important mail. Staff provide rental and bill-payment assistance for struggling families and distribute school supplies to children in need.

Now, Share Our Selves can go even further, thanks to a new mobile health unit that aims to remove barriers to accessing healthcare by taking it out into the streets for those who need it most.

And, given the continuing coronavirus pandemic, it couldn't have come at a better time.

“The needs in our community are growing as we see an increase in unemployment and increasing numbers for not only our direct healthcare services, but in the number of families who have come to our food pantry,” said SOS chief executive Christy Ward.

“Now, the goal is to bring services to individuals who, for one reason or another, don't have a comfort level coming here,” she continued.

On Monday, Share Our Selves convened a group of stakeholders and local dignitaries for a ribbon-cutting ceremony meant to coincide with National Health Center Week, from Aug. 9 to 15.

Ward said the celebration was the culmination of approximately \$120,000 in fundraising and months of planning, as a defunct 2006 mobile vehicle housed in storage was retrofitted into a medical office on wheels, complete with a small intake office, restroom and two exam rooms.

SOS Chief Medical Officer Dr. Jay Lee described the new unit as a step forward in the evolution of street medicine, the

transport of medical and social services to where homeless populations reside.

“When you think about health you have to think outside the four walls of a clinic,” Lee said. “ZIP Code matters, social connection matters, whether someone has a roof over their head or access to a meal matters. With our mobile unit we have the opportunity to break down some of those walls of distance and isolation and be able to get to communities that are in great need.”

Rep. Harley Rouda (D-Laguna Beach) said such leadership is more vital than ever as communities, states and nations battle the coronavirus.

“It is people and institutions like SOS that are on the frontlines and really making a difference,” Rouda said.

“How apropos, during Health Center Week, to be rolling out — literally and figuratively — your new mobile office. That's going to help reach people who are harder to touch in these difficult times.”

A representative from the office of Assemblywoman Cottie Petrie-Norris (D-Laguna Beach) shared remarks, as did Costa Mesa Mayor Katrina Foley.

“The mobile unit is so critical right now. Costa Mesa is on the verge of 1,300 (coronavirus) cases and 71 of those are children,” Foley said. “Being able to serve people out in the community, wherever they are, helping them get tested and helping them get the healthcare they need — this is what we need to be working on in our country right now.”

Lee and a small team took the unit out for a test run or two in June, making the rounds at places homeless residents are known to congregate. It gave the group a chance to work out the logistics of driving a medical office on the streets of Costa Mesa and also see the Share Our Selves mission at work.

“We've been able to provide some services and a caring touch, even though it's a socially distanced touch, to people who do not often see the human caring they deserve,” he said.

sara.cardine@latimes.com  
Twitter: @SaraCardine

## WALKING

Continued from page R1

said.

“The fun part is that when I was going to travel, I was going to go to all the tourist destinations in each state to see the attractions. But through this process, I've been able to meet people in little tiny towns that I never even heard of,” Kolberg said, “and ... really get to know the insider's glance at different states.” Kolberg said she was diagnosed in August 2018 with triple-negative breast cancer, a type of breast cancer that can limit treatment options due to its lack of commonly found receptors. She said she was overdue for her mammogram when she felt a lump. She completed treatment in December 2019 after two lumpectomies and months of standard chemotherapy and oral chemotherapy.

“There definitely were days when I did not want to get out of bed. The fatigue was the worst thing because you can't move. I couldn't even open my eyes,” Kolberg said. “Your body just shuts down. Even on my worst days, my family was so great.”

“They were like, ‘You know what? Just get out of bed. Let's just go for a walk’ and it made such a difference to just get up, even when you don't feel like it,” Kolberg said.

“I really just wanted to give people hope and inspiration that are going through treatment right



**SHARAEI KOLBERG** of Laguna Beach, hikes over rocks on Cress Street Beach during her “50 for the Cure” walk.

now because not too long ago, I was in a position where I could barely get out of bed,” Kolberg said, “[I] just wanted to give people hope — that there is a light at the end of the tunnel.”

Kolberg's run will end on Sept. 29, just ahead of Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October. Kolberg said she would be participating in the Susan G. Komen Orange County's More Than Pink Walk with her team, 50 for the Cure.

“The tagline [of More Than Pink Walk] is ‘Walk where you are.’ [Kolberg's] no longer the one traveling to all 50 states and we're asking people to do the same thing,” said Megan Klink, chief executive of Susan G. Komen Orange County.

“You can walk in your neighborhood, go to a park, but this is really in honor and protection of all our immunocompromised brothers and sisters who are battling breast cancer,”

Klink said.

Kolberg said that she started searching for runners in March, first with her friends and family before she started reaching out through Facebook and LinkedIn. The organization also helped Kolberg find running partners in the states she needed.

“We saw this amazing woman come up with something really creative and dynamic for her 50th and she lives in Laguna Beach,” Klink said. “We really worked together to build awareness for breast cancer and give people a platform to take action against the fight in the disease.”

“I think that for us it's just inspiring to see that she was successful in getting a representative from 50 states to then rally people to walk where they are to build awareness for breast cancer,” Klink said. “For us, this is really critically important. In Orange County,



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

**KOLBERG WALKS** past Brooks Street with her team during her “50 for the Cure” walk.

five women a day are diagnosed and one woman passes away from breast cancer and that hasn't changed because of COVID-19.” Joining her on her inaugural run was her daughter, Katelyn Kolberg, 17, who matched her mother with a hot-pink face mask.

The Kolbergs and a group of their friends began their run Tuesday at Main Beach and finished at Bluebird Beach, where balloons celebrated Sharael Kolberg's birthday, doughnuts and coffee awaited.

“I think it was a really cool way for her to kind of come full circle,” Katelyn said. “Running was something that she was really passionate about before she went into treatment, so

for her to raise awareness to her journey while also doing something that she loved was really special. Today was the first day of her kicking this off.”

The Kolbergs said that the two would be running together, a mile a day, while streaming on Zoom with their running partners.

“Not a lot of people are doing this or utilizing Zoom in this way to connect on a physical level — getting out there, doing exercise — instead of using it for just strictly educational purposes,” Katelyn said.

“I think this was a really creative way for her to use this platform in a way that no one's ever really used it.” Michelle Dunn, a friend of Kolberg's, said she wanted to participate in the run on

Tuesday because she knew “this has been a hard road for her, fighting cancer.”

“She's such a survivor just in the way that she's handled it and I was excited for her to see how much she put into this in putting this on. My sister's going to run with her. She's in Colorado, so it's exciting how she's gotten so many people involved,” Dunn said. “I'm just impressed and wanted to support and be here for her 50th birthday.”

Kolberg was smiling at Bluebird Beach on Tuesday, adding, “I'm walking for those who don't want to get out of bed right now, who can't get out of bed and cheering them on.”

lillynguyen@latimes.com  
Twitter: @lillibirds



# ACLU and activist groups concerned over inmate deaths and COVID-19 procedures in O.C. jails

BY BEN BRAZIL

As four more inmates died last month, civil rights attorneys and local activists are continuing to advocate for better health safeguards in Orange County jails to protect inmates from COVID-19.

They contend that the Sheriff's Department hasn't been forthcoming about the true nature of the deaths and continues to forgo basic safety protocols like social distancing and adequate sanitizing.

Jacob Reisberg, a jail advocate for the American Civil Liberties Union, said he's skeptical of the Sheriff's Department's description of the inmate deaths.

"They say at the time of death these individuals were not exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19," Reisberg said. "They don't say they didn't have COVID. They don't say they didn't previously exhibit symptoms at a time prior to death. They don't say they had ever been tested."

"They don't say whether those individuals may have had other medical conditions, and the strain from COVID on the jail medical system could have exacerbated or led to them to not getting the treatment they need to survive. Looking at just their own words causes a great deal of skepticism."

ACLU coordinator Daisy Ramirez said there is a general distrust of Sheriff Don Barnes' department due to several scandals over the last few years, including the

evidence mishandling and illegal confidential informant scandals.

"I think any time that they put out info, the community at large is always skeptical of what is getting out and what's not getting out," Ramirez said. Three of the deceased inmates were at the Intake Release Center facility and another at Theo Lacy jail.

According to the ACLU, the inmates were Charlie Choi, 50; George James, 57; Willie Montes, 63; and James Neal, 73. Each news release from the department on the deaths say the deceased inmate "was not exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19." The deaths occurred between July 14 and 22.

Sheriff's Department spokeswoman Carrie Braun said in an email that no inmates have died from COVID-19. She did not have information on whether the four inmates had been tested for the virus.

Others in the activist community are also skeptical.

Rose Ochoa, founder of Transforming Justice OC, held a car rally last week in front of the central jail complex in Santa Ana to demand an end to inmate deaths in Orange County jails.

"Unfortunately, the Sheriff's Department withholds a lot of info," Ochoa said.

The ACLU has been fighting for months to secure better conditions in Orange County jails, setting up a hotline in March for people to reach them while in custody.



Jae C. Hong | Associated Press

**AN ORANGE COUNTY** sheriff's deputy watches over a group of detained immigrants in the medical and dental care area at the Theo Lacy Facility in Orange. Four inmates died last month due to illness at county jails.

The nonprofit launched a class-action lawsuit against the Sheriff's Department in late April calling for the release of medically-vulnerable inmates and better social distancing, healthcare, testing and personal protective equipment. The Sheriff's Department has released 800 "low-level" inmates since then. As of Thursday, 512 inmates have tested positive for the virus.

In late May, U.S. District Judge Jesus G. Bernal sided with the ACLU, ordering the department to implement a number of safety protocols in the jails, including social distancing among inmates, regular testing and supplying inmates with adequate cleaning supplies.

The Sheriff's Department appealed the order to the U.S. Supreme Court, which put Bernal's order on hold last week

with a 5-4 decision, effectively releasing the department from implementing the safety protocols.

However, the ACLU is still pursuing the federal case as well as a state case against the department. They are continuing with discovery and talks with the county.

The only response by the Supreme Court was penned by Justice Sonia Sotomayor, who dissented.

"This court normally does not reward bad behavior, and certainly not with extraordinary equitable relief," Sotomayor wrote in the dissent with Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. "Despite knowing the severe threat posed by COVID-19 and contrary to its own apparent policies, the jail exposed its inmates to significant risks from a highly contagious and potentially deadly disease."

Reisberg remarked: "We share

Justice Sotomayor's disappointment and think that what Judge Bernal had done in his order was extremely reasonable and necessary to protect people inside Orange County jails from the transmission of COVID-19."

Braun said there have been 11 deaths in Orange County jails so far this year. There were 10 deaths in 2018 and eight deaths in 2019 in county jails, according to the Sheriff's Department. According to data from the California Department of Justice, 77 people died in county jails between January 1, 2010 and January 1, 2020.

"I am pleased with the Supreme Court's decision to stay the order," Barnes said in an emailed statement. "As this litigation is ongoing, I will not comment on the lawsuit. This case

See **Inmates**, page R5

**WALKING SINGLE** file, inmates at Theo Lacy Facility in Orange enter the mess hall to eat lunch.



Gail Fisher  
Los Angeles Times



Allen J. Schaben | Los Angeles Times

**ORANGE COUNTY SHERIFF** Don Barnes speaks at the Orange County Board of Supervisors meeting on July 14 in Santa Ana.

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Matt Rourke | Associated Press

**A WOMAN** with Alzheimer's disease walks with a companion in a nursing home. Since the start of the pandemic, clinical trial sites have had trouble attracting volunteers.

## Alzheimer's research impacted by COVID-19 spread

Researchers of the disease fear that fewer volunteers and delayed studies due to COVID-19 may hinder the discovery of important treatments for the illness.

**BY BEN BRAZIL**

Alzheimer's disease researchers fear that fewer volunteers and delayed studies due to COVID-19 may hinder the discovery of important treatments for the illness.

Since the pandemic began, clinical trial sites across the country have had difficulty attracting volunteers during the quarantine.

John Dwyer, president of the Global Alzheimer's Platform Foundation, said it's particularly difficult to attract Alzheimer's volun-

teers because they're older, which makes them more susceptible to becoming critically ill or dying from COVID-19.

"They have to be very thoughtful about whether they are going to participate in research," Dwyer said.

Dr. Lorrie Bisesi, vice president and director of clinical operations of Santa Ana-based Syrentis Clinical Research, said her company has seen a steep decline in the number of volunteers taking part in its Alzheimer's trials.

"We are nowhere near

the amount of research volunteers before COVID," Bisesi said. "On average, we would acquire 150 to 200 new research volunteers a year and the way we would do that is we would participate in about 40 to 50 outreach events a year. All those events are canceled due to COVID, so we have no means to get out in community to spread the word. We have maybe 20 new research volunteers now."

Bisesi said most universities and hospitals have largely focused their research on COVID-19, placing the burden on smaller clinical research sites like Syrentis, which has 10 employees, to focus on other diseases.

"It's our mission to help

continue Alzheimer's research with 90% of universities and hospitals not focusing on it," Bisesi said. "But we can only do so much."

Harlan Comee, who is taking part in a Syrentis study, said he volunteers because he wants to take part in something important. Comee is a study partner for his wife, who has Alzheimer's.

"I may not get the benefit of it, my children may not get the benefit of it, but perhaps my grandchildren will," Comee said of the potential treatments that could be discovered through research. "So I am contributing to society and the scientific and medical community."

Wilma Ryder, a volun-

teer with a Syrentis Alzheimer's study, joined in part because she hopes the research will help produce a treatment for the disease.

"Perhaps the better things they know about older people can be applied to us eventually," Ryder said.

Comee and Ryder both said that taking part in clinical trials provides them with a much needed break from quarantine, allowing them to engage with others.

Bisesi said Syrentis has implemented a number of protocols to keep volunteers safe, including taking temperatures, pre-screening for COVID, social distancing and minimizing the amount of volunteers they see at a time.

Due to the new safety protocols, visits take about three to four times longer.

Studies are also taking much longer due to lack of volunteers. Duffy said this is an issue because Alzheimer's studies are already very long, lasting three to five years.

"My grandmother had Alzheimer's ... so we are very passionate about it and were devastated of the possibility that COVID would halt and slow the progress that we have made in clinical trials," Bisesi said.

For more information on Syrentis and how to volunteer, visit [syrentis.com](http://syrentis.com).

[benjamin.brazil@latimes.com](mailto:benjamin.brazil@latimes.com)  
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K.C. Alfred | The San Diego Union-Tribune

**ARTICLES IN** recent weeks have referenced "mask mouth," claiming that wearing masks causes mouth dryness and a buildup of bacteria. Local dentists disagree.

## Medical experts speak out against Anaheim councilwoman's claim that masks cause dental issues

**BY BEN BRAZIL**

Anaheim Councilwoman Lucille Kring said at Tuesday's council meeting that dentists are finding that wearing masks can cause serious dental issues, but local medical professionals are skeptical of the claim.

"Dentists are finding that it's causing very serious dental problems—cavities, gum disease and halitosis. So keep that in mind when you're snuggling up to a mask," Kring said.

Dr. Ramesh Gowda, president of the Orange County Dental Society, said Wednesday that Kring's comments were problematic.

"There is no scientific basis for that," Gowda said. "...My request to all the nonmedical people who don't have the expertise, please check with the proper authority ... It is not fair for any council people or anybody without any knowledge just to assume things and to make recommendations. Leave it to the

experts and follow the guidance of the experts."

The phenomena has been referred to as "mask mouth" in a few articles circulated over the last several days in the New York Post, Fox News and Daily Mail. Each article uses the same two dentists from New York as sources.

One of the doctors, Marc Sclafani, told the New York Post that wearing a mask causes mouth dryness and a buildup of bacteria that leads to dental issues.

Gowda said neither are likely feasible. Rather, if people are having increased dental issues, it's likely due to poor oral hygiene.

He said patients are also afraid to visit the dentist for cleanings due to the virus, which can result in poor gum health.

Dr. Shruti Gohil, associate medical director of Epidemiology & Infection Prevention at UC Irvine, said if masks caused dental issues then surgeons and other medical profes-

sionals would have a higher incidence of dental issues because they wear masks everyday for prolonged periods of time.

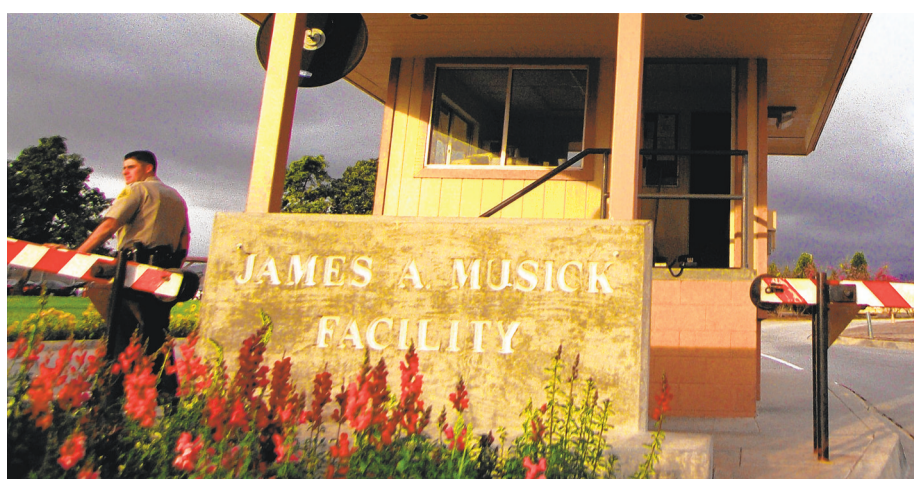
"Even dentists wear masks themselves all day long," Gohil said. "This flies in the face of any type of known information and really is concerning to me."

Gowda echoed her sentiments.

"I wear a mask almost seven or eight hours a day," Gowda said. "Two of my sons are physicians. They wear N95 masks, which are less porous than other masks people wear. They wear them almost everyday and I don't see gum problems, myself also."

He continued: "Look at how many people have died, look at the vulnerable populations ... Isn't it our duty to be considerate for them? All the health-care workers ask is to wear a mask. As simple as that."

benjamin.brazil@latimes.com  
Twitter: @benbrazilpilot



File Photo | Los Angeles Times

**ORANGE COUNTY** plans to add nearly 900 beds at the James A. Musick jail in Irvine.

## INMATES

Continued from page R3

will be tried in court, and not in the media. As always, we will protect the constitutional rights of the inmates in our care."

In its appeal to the Supreme Court, the county contended that the Sheriff's Department had implemented "robust COVID-19 protocols" prior to the ACLU's litigation. The county also argued that the injunction limited the ability of local officials to make quick decisions "without fear of running afoul of a federal court injunction."

"The injunction seizes all aspects of jail administration as to COVID-19 mitigation measures and prevents critical and rapid responses to the virus in an ever-changing landscape," the court documents say.

Braun said two key highlights of the department's COVID-19 protocols are enhanced medical screening for all inmates, law enforcement and staff entering the jail, including a temperature screening, and all incoming new booking inmates are quarantined for at least 14 days and tested prior to their release into general housing.

Concerns over the state of Orange County jails and inmate deaths is nothing new.

Two Orange County Grand Jury reports over the last few years found

deficiencies with jail conditions.

A 2017-2018 report found that 44% of deaths in the jails from 2014 to 2017 could have been prevented by timely and adequate medical care. A 2018-19 report found that 15 people who died in custody showed evidence of prior cardiovascular history.

Reisberg said they've had reports through the inmate hotline that inmates in "barracks-style" housing, like at Theo Lacy, are not socially distanced.

"They can still reach out and touch the person lying in the next bunk or underneath them," he said.

Ochoa said in addition to the lax COVID-19 prevention protocols, the jails are treating inmates inhumanely.

She said while inmates are banned from seeing family and friends, staff and guards are seeing their families and friends and are not forced to be regularly tested for the virus.

"Staff and guards go home or out to wherever they are going to go and come back the next day bringing whatever it is they may have contracted from outside," Ochoa said.

"Meanwhile, people on the inside are on lockdown, isolated from family and friends. That has been really hard for them."

The ACLU is also concerned with the department's planned \$289-million expansion, not including operating costs, of

the James A. Musick jail in Irvine — a move they consider unnecessary and financially irresponsible amid a pandemic economy.

Reisberg said the expansion is happening "at a time when the population is at an all-time low, and at a time when we need to be thinking about how to address people's needs in the community and not putting them in places where they are subject to COVID-19 and the other harms from incarceration."

Braun said the jails currently house about 3,400 inmates, with a total capacity of 7,483.

However, due to closures at the Musick jail and construction projects at the Intake Release Center and Theo Lacy facilities, there are currently 5,570 total beds that are usable.

"The Musick Project is a critical component of our ongoing efforts to reform our custody operations, move forward the integrated services plan, and ultimately help inmates achieve mental health stability and sobriety while in our care and custody," Barnes said in a statement.

"[Thirty-three percent] of our jail beds are more than 50 years old, and 70% of our jail beds are more than 30 years old. These new facilities will better meet the needs of today's inmate population."

benjamin.brazil@latimes.com  
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# Announcing Times OC Readers' Choice Awards for 2020

Nominations start July 20th!



On Sunday, November 15, we'll announce Orange County's favorite people, places and services in our special section—Times OC's Best of 2020. Winners get Times OC's Best of 2020 seal and award certificate to display in their business.

Nominations: July 20 – August 23 • Voting: September 1 – 30

## Times OC Readers' Choice 2020 Categories

### ENTERTAINMENT & LIVING

Beach  
Best City  
Best OC Event  
Best Sports Team  
College or University  
Live Music Venue  
Live Theater  
Museum  
Orange County Attraction

### FOOD & DRINK

24 Hour Restaurant  
Bakery  
Bar  
BBQ Restaurant  
Best Craft Brewery  
Breakfast  
Brunch  
Chinese Restaurant  
Coffeehouse  
Desserts  
Hamburger  
Italian Restaurant  
Mexican Restaurant  
Pizza Restaurant  
Seafood Restaurant  
Steakhouse

Sushi Restaurant  
Thai Restaurant  
Wine Selection

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Hearing Aid Clinic  
Hospital  
Medical Group

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# O.C. MARKET PLACE VENDORS LEFT HANGING AS OPERATORS, FAIR BOARD HAGGLE OVER REOPENING

BY SARA CARDINE

A 21-acre parking lot portion of Costa Mesa's sprawling Orange County fairgrounds, home of the O.C. Market Place since 1969, has remained quietly shuttered during the coronavirus pandemic.

But a battle over its reopening has been brewing for months.

Some of the 400 vendors who ordinarily peddle wares at bustling weekend swap meets, and who rely on that income, say they are the hapless victims of a dispute that has been locked in an impasse since May.

Jeanine Robbins and husband Mike run Paradise Cigars out of a mobile humidor that has become a swap meet staple since the business opened in 1979. Weekend sales have been a mainstay for the couple, who had to file for unemployment following a March 12 coronavirus closure.

"Here we are now in August, and it's been five months we haven't worked," said Robbins, who lives with Mike in Anaheim. "It's devastating — we desperately want to be able to reopen."

At the heart of the argument is Spectra, a food service and hospitality

business that has operated the weekend parking lot attraction since 2016, when the company entered a lease with the 32nd District Agricultural Assn. run by the Orange County Fair & Event Center Board.

The rental agreement runs through August 2024.

Spectra last year generated \$6,938,600 in revenue to the district — paying around \$2 million in rent for the Market Place space and handing over more than \$4.83 million from food and beverage concessions made inside the fairgrounds, according to financial figures provided by fair officials.

But since the O.C. Market Place was closed in March, Spectra has been trying to terminate its leasing agreement, citing a "force majeure" clause that states either party can exit the contract if unable to perform for 90 days or more due to extreme circumstances.

Executive Vice President Richard Schneider explained in a May 20 termination letter the coronavirus shutdown forced Spectra's hand.

"Anticipating that the stay-at-home order, or other government restrictions, will prevent the Outdoor Marketplace from reopening by June 12, the

purpose of this letter is to notify the Association that Spectra is hereby terminating the agreement, effective [June 20]."

O.C. Fair & Event Center chief executive Michele Richards, however, was not content to accept the termination. In a May 27 letter, she claimed the Market Place was, in fact, allowed to reopen under allowances given Orange County retailers by the state on May 23.

"Spectra is authorized to resume operation of the O.C. Marketplace immediately," Richards wrote. "Spectra remains obligated to perform under the terms of the rental agreement, including making all rent payments required under the agreement."

In a June 4 letter of rebuttal, Schneider countered that Spectra was told by the Orange County Health Care Agency "there are no guidelines or protocols in place to allow swap meets to operate."

Stephanie Singleton, a program manager for the Orange County Environmental Health Division, confirmed by email Friday that outdoor swap meets and flea markets, along with food operations there are, in fact, allowed to reopen as Stage 2 businesses under state guidelines.



**JEANINE ROBBINS** and husband Mike run Paradise Cigars out of a mobile humidor that has become a swap meet staple since the business opened in 1979. "It's devastating — we desperately want to be able to reopen," Jeanine said.

Kevin Chang  
Staff  
Photographer

Yet the stalemate continues. The fair board planned to address the matter at a June 11 meeting and then again on June 25, but twice heard public comments and tabled the talk until July 23, at which time the item did not appear on the agenda.

Fairgrounds spokeswoman Terry Moore confirmed Aug. 7 the last rental payment from Spectra was for the month of March, in the amount of \$171,666.

During the June 25 OCFEC board meeting, Robbins and other vendors pleaded with officials to do something to allow them to resume business.

Some suggested the fair board offer Spectra rent re-

lief to ease any claim of hardship, while others suggested OCFEC accept the company's termination and take over operations.

"Right now, everyone is losing — not only the vendors, but the state, the county and the city in tax revenue," said Greg Silva, a clothing vendor for the past 30 years.

"I would hope we can come to some kind of understanding, letting the Market Place reopen when the time is right."

Schneider declined a request for an interview, instead providing a statement.

"In June, Spectra terminated its contract to operate the OC Marketplace, as permitted by the terms

of the contract," the statement said. "Subsequently, we have asked the District to meet to discuss a new arrangement under which we could continue to operate the Marketplace, as we have for the last four years, so that its more than 400 vendors will have a place to sustain and grow their small businesses."

Speaking on behalf of the fair board, Moore said the ball was in Spectra's court.

"Spectra has a valid contract," she said. "If they'd like to open the Market Place, they need to get the permits and get the business going."

sara.cardine@latimes.com  
Twitter: @SaraCardine

## FOOD

Continued from page R1

To protect Yolanda, who has diabetes and is therefore immunocompromised, David had a diligent decontamination routine before entering their home, as well as a bag with at least two weeks worth of clothing and necessities in case he worried he had been exposed and needed to quarantine somewhere else.

Yolanda worked as the medical director of the nonprofit Kids Come First Clinic in Ontario, serving children without health insurance, before she left in 2015.

David was previously the area medical director and chief of staff for the Kaiser Permanente Fontana and Ontario Medical Centers for about 12 years.

"I did medicine for 25 years, and I did not get tired of it," Yolanda, 60, said. "I just wanted to see what else life had to offer."

Her grandma Mary, who grew up in Louisiana, was the "unofficial caterer" for her extended family until she got sick, and then Yolanda took over.

"My grandmother shared joy through food," Yolanda said. "She didn't care how full you were when you got there, you were going to have an eating good time. And you could just taste the love and care and heart and soul that she put into what she prepared."

Because her grandmother didn't measure things — "it was always a pinch of this, a little bit of that" — Yolanda had to figure out how to quantify the measurements.

Before Mary passed away in 2002, Yolanda successfully figured out the recipe for her sweet potato pie: "She tried it and gave me two thumbs up."

Yolanda was born in L.A. and raised in Carson and lived in Chino Hills for over 30 years, until she decided she wanted to open her own restaurant.

In San Clemente, she found the small community hangout spot she was looking for, and she and David decided to move to San Juan Capistrano a couple years ago.

While they didn't have the funding for marketing, many locals heard about them when a couple men broke into their restaurant, along with several other stores, less than a year after they opened.

"People came out of the woodwork," Yolanda remembered. "We read about what happened. That's not us. We're here to support you." It was so heartwarming. I still get choked up about it."

Earlier this year, the Fuel Shack was chosen as #13 of Yelp's Top 100 places to eat in the U.S. for 2020.

"I did not know that this was a goal to attain, that the top 100 list even ex-



**BECAUSE SHE'S** immunocompromised, Yolanda Quam tries to limit the time she's at the Fuel Shack during the pandemic. But now there's a full-sized cardboard cut-out of her there, for anyone who misses her larger-than-life presence.



**QUAM (RIGHT)** got a lot of her recipes from her grandmother Mary, who also wore flowers in her hair.

isted," Yolanda said, unable to contain her squeals.

"People were coming from all over. It was crazy; we were so busy."

The Fuel Shack has a seating area that's only about 300 seats. But what it lacks in size, Yolanda makes up for in energy.

When she was a pediatrician, she would wear a belly dancing hip scarf with hanging gold coins that would clink as she walked down the hallway. She'd try

to get the sometimes-nervous children to dance with her before doing their examinations.

Now, at the Fuel Shack, she has three decorated megaphones (one that's gold-plated with fun and rhinestones) that she used to take out when she thought anyone looked like they needed some cheering up.

"I say, 'Hey if you're happy about anything in your life today, I want you to raise your hands up in

the air and wave them like you really do care," she chanted.

"And they look at me, and I'm like, 'Hey I think you can look happier than that. Say heyyy, say hoouo. Hey ho, hey ho.' Like we're at a concert."

She explained that she was on drill team in high school and was the announcer during the half-time shows. No noise complaints so far, she said.

"I also like to give left-sided hugs," she said. "I call those my heart-to-heart hugs. Our hearts touch, and you can feel that kinetic energy right there.

People come in for those hugs, but now we'll have to do virtual hugs."

The Fuel Shack menu included items she used to cook at home, adapted for larger batches: kickin' chicken tinga waffle sliders, nutella dream waffles, five kinds of avocado toast, grilled cheese and a variety of breakfast and veggie bowls.

While they are currently limited to to-go orders, their menu is simpler, and now includes bagel sandwiches, the Fuel Shack salad, acai bowls, and fresh bakery items, including Auntie Carol's Wanna

Nanna Nutty Wuddy Banana Bread with Yummy Yummy Frosting.

Their head barista James Mata, who she calls their "coffee whisperer," is in charge of the coffee, which he grinds to order and includes a double shot of espresso.

"People will remember the food they ate, but they'll remember more how they felt while they were eating," she said.

Nowadays, she goes into the restaurant early to help their kitchen manager Richard Ward prep but she only stays until about 8:30 a.m., so there is a full-size cardboard cut-out of her so customers can feel her presence, even when she's not there.

On the cut-out is an empty speech bubble that her staff helps her fill out. On Wednesday, it said "Today is day #613! Today is indeed a great day to be happy!"

David, who is no longer working at the COVID hospital, was the one who encouraged Yolanda to follow her dream of opening her own restaurant, and he runs the Fuel Shack's Instagram page.

It's full of photos of Yolanda, alongside loving quotes like "You bring light and love to the world in a way that no one else can" and "May your day be filled with as much love as this beautiful woman brings to me every day."

"Honestly, I'm just being me," Yolanda said. "I was a cheerleader for my sons, I'm a cheerleader for life ... they wouldn't let me be a cheerleader in high school in the '70s because I couldn't do the splits, but I'm excited every day I wake up in the morning."

She sees similarities between serving the the community as a pediatrician and taking care of her customers through her restaurant's food.

"I was fueling the body [toward good health] back then, and now I'm still fueling the body and soul," she said. "I think it's one and the same."

ada.tseng@latimes.com  
Twitter: @adatseng

## TimesOC

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### CONTACT US

**Ada Tseng**  
Entertainment Editor  
(714) 966-4635  
ada.tseng@latimes.com

**Raymond Arroyo**  
Advertising Director  
(714) 966-4608  
ray.arroyo@latimes.com

**Online**  
timesoc.com  
**Social Media**  
@timesocofficial

### Address

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

**Business Office**  
(714) 966-4600  
**Newsroom**  
(714) 966-4699

**Email**  
dailypilot@latimes.com  
**TCN Classifieds**  
800-234-4444

**TCN Legal Phone**  
888-881-6181

### TCN Legal Email

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