

Daily Pilot

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'Virus gardens' sprout up across coastal O.C.



BY FAITH E. PINHO AND LILLY NGUYEN

Usually, 6-year-old Matthew Perez, who is autistic, isolates himself during family activities.

But when his parents took his older siblings outside to their Costa Mesa backyard a couple of weeks ago to plant some tomatoes, peppers and flowers, he joined them.

As the end of the stay-at-home order stretches further away, residents in coastal Orange County have turned to nature — even as cities close off beaches and parks.

The Perez family's backyard recently became a welcome reprieve.

They received a garden tray from Olga Parra, director of community development for the Wilson Street Learning Center. Rain prevented them from gardening for a few days, but as soon as the weather allowed, the family trooped outside.

"It's either our phones or watching TV," said Lety Perez, 34, Matthew's mother. "Having them to do something out of the ordinary ... it's pretty neat to watch them just have fun with it."

Since the planting day, the seedlings have flourished and the flowers have grown a few inches, Lety said. She reminds Matthew, 18-year-old Kathy and 11-year-old



Courtesy of the South Laguna Community Garden Park

IN EARLY APRIL, the South Laguna Community Garden Park gave out seedlings from the Ranch at Laguna Beach to interested gardeners.

Nathan not to water them every day. Matthew runs outside every morning to check on the baby plants' growth.

"To see him get excited about it was very satisfying," Lety said.

One hundred years ago, "victory gardens" sprouted as a way for patriotic Americans to aid soldiers in World War I by growing their own foods so that more supplies could be shipped overseas. Ruth Kobayashi-Sanchez, a Newport Beach resident, said her

parents were kids during World War II.

Her in-laws were sent to the Japanese internment camps.

"My mom used to talk often about how everyone in Los Angeles had a 'victory garden' due to shortages during the war," Kobayashi-Sanchez said.

"As I recall, it met the immediate need of self-sufficiency for produce, but was also a symbol

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O.C. families involved in Bryant crash file lawsuit

BY NATHAN FENNO

Nearly three months after the helicopter crash that killed Kobe Bryant, his daughter Gianna and seven others, the surviving members of two families have sued the company that operated the aircraft.

In wrongful death complaints filed Sunday in Los Angeles County Superior Court, the Altobelli and Mauser families allege that negligence by Fillmore-based Island Express Holding Corp. and Island Express Helicopters resulted in the accident in Calabasas.

The lawsuit said the plaintiffs suffered a variety of damages because of the "careless, negligence and unlawful conduct" of the defendants.

John Altobelli, wife Keri and their daughter Alyssa died in the crash. The lawsuit was filed on behalf of the family's two remaining children. Altobelli was the longtime baseball coach at Orange Coast

College.

Matthew Mauser, whose wife, Christina, died in the crash, also sued, along with his three children. Christina was an Edison High graduate.

An attorney for Island Express declined to comment on the lawsuit.

The Sikorsky S-76B slammed into a hillside near Las Virgenes Road and Willow Glen Street amid dense fog on Jan. 26 while flying to a youth basketball game at the Mamba Sports Academy in Thousand Oaks. All nine people aboard were killed.

Gianna Bryant and Alyssa Altobelli were teammates, and Christina Mauser was an assistant coach.

The other victims were Payton Chester, another teammate; Sarah Chester, her mother; and Ara Zobayan, the pilot.

A preliminary report by the National Transportation Safety Board didn't

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Census outreach efforts go digital in Orange County

BY BEN BRAZIL

As COVID-19 continues to fasten its grip on Orange County, county and city staff are adjusting 2020 census outreach efforts and figuring out creative ways to reach underserved communities that have traditionally gone uncounted.

Saul Viramontes, Orange County's head of Census 2020 special projects, said canvassing and event appearances have been replaced by digital and social advertising and influencer marketing and online call-to-action videos from local government officials.

Viramontes said the county is currently at a "good" response rate of 60.4%. Orange County had a 75% response rate in 2010.

But, Viramontes pointed out that just because the county is receiving a good response rate doesn't mean that every community is being counted.

"There's more people than your data might be telling you," Viramontes said. "How do we know who is being underserved if we don't know they are

there at all?"

The county is using targeted messaging to connect with the populations that are traditionally undercounted in Orange County — communities of color, children under 5, the homeless and veterans. Although, the inability to use in-person messaging makes the task challenging.

"It's 100% more difficult to get these hard-to-count people involved now after COVID," Viramontes said. "We are looking for ways to engage with people but a lot of the ways usually involve an element of being outside."

One method the county came up with is bus advertising in Spanish, Vietnamese and English. Viramontes said they are trying to reach every community in their own language through digital and social advertising. The county is also reaching out to ethnic media outlets and looking to advertise at ethnic grocery stores.

Local government officials will be recording call-to-action videos next week in various lan-

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COSTA MESA

Councilwoman Arlis Reynolds unloads her order of spring sale plants she bought from the Orange Coast College Horticultural Department. Reynolds is donating them to Olga Parra, who is giving them away to Costa Mesa families who want to learn about gardening.



Kevin Chang
Staff Photographer

PRO FOOTBALL

'Big Blue' deal being drafted for new Mr. Irrelevant

BY ANDREW TURNER

The world as Tae Crowder knows it is about to get a lot bigger.

Bigger and bluer, that is. The New York Giants selected Crowder with the 255th and final pick in the 2020 NFL Draft, making him the 45th member of the Mr. Irrelevant fraternity. "It's a blessing," Crowder said of having his name called in the draft. "It still feels surreal. Everybody means a lot to me, everybody in my community. I come from a small town, so this is crazy for me right now."

Crowder, a 6-foot-3, 245-pound inside linebacker, finished second on the Bulldogs with 62 total tackles as a senior this past season. Additionally, Crowder was one of 12 semifinalists for the Butkus Award, given annually to the nation's top collegiate linebacker.

He played in a New Year's Six bowl game for the third consecutive year. Georgia beat Baylor 26-14 in the



GEORGIA INSIDE LINEBACKER

Tae Crowder (30), seen during the Allstate Sugar Bowl in New Orleans on Jan. 1, was drafted with the final pick by the New York Giants, becoming the 45th Mr. Irrelevant.

Courtesy of Chamberlain Smith

Sugar Bowl this year.

Growing up in the small town of Pine Mountain, Ga., which has a population of about 1,400, Crowder has never been to New York. He has only been to California for the Rose Bowl, which Georgia won 54-48 over a Baker Mayfield-led Oklahoma team in double overtime in 2018.

The Giants, nicknamed "Big Blue," had not made the last selection in the

draft since taking fullback John Tuggle out of Cal in 1983.

Crowder said a couple of his former college teammates are already on the Giants in outside linebacker Lorenzo Carter and cornerback DeAndre Baker.

Paul Salata, a former NFL wide receiver who played for the San Francisco 49ers and the Baltimore Colts, came up with the idea of Mr. Irrelevant. For 45 years,

Irrelevant Week has celebrated the underdog and is a reminder that it is an honor to be chosen in the draft, no matter when.

Undoubtedly, Crowder fits the bill. He came to the University of Georgia from Hamilton (Ga.) Harris County High as a running back, but by the time he reached his redshirt sophomore season, he had to

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ALSO FROM THE DAILY PILOT:



Photo by Hillary Davis

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COMMENTARY: REOPENING ORANGE COUNTY WITHOUT GOV. NEWSOM'S OK COULD WORSEN THE PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS PAGE A3