

Daily Pilot & Times OC

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Theater returns to the mission

Four-year run of outdoor theater at the mission with Outside SCR will conclude this summer with a 'lively tale.'

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

South Coast Repertory will return to Mission San Juan Capistrano for a final season this summer as part of its Outside SCR program.

"Mission San Juan Capistrano is eager to welcome back audiences for a fantastic summer showing of 'The Old Man and the Old Moon' in its historic Central Courtyard," said Mechelle Lawrence Adams, executive director of Mission San Juan Capistrano. "This lively tale will captivate audiences of all ages in a setting that is unparalleled."

Directed by SCR associate artistic director Kim Martin-Cotten with book, music and lyrics by PigPen Theatre Co., "The Old Man and the Old Moon" is described as an "epic adventure across land, sea and sky, all in the name of love."

The play features indie folk music and tells the story of the Old Man who keeps the moon filled with light. When his wife is lured away by a strange melody one



Courtesy of Mission San Juan Capistrano

MISSION SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO will play host to South Coast Repertory as part of the group's Outside SCR program with a performance of "The Old Man and the Moon" in its central courtyard.

night while he is asleep, he goes on a journey to find her before the moon runs out of light.

"The Old Man and the Old Moon' is a beautiful, family-friendly, music-filled journey offering the finest of what has become so special about a night of theater under the stars," said David Ivers, SCR's artistic director.

Several SCR veterans have been cast in the production, including Jess Andrews ("Appropriate" and "The Little Foxes"), Tommy Beck ("A Christmas Carol") and Huntington Beach native Armando Gutierrez ("Million Dollar Quartet").

Outside SCR began in 2021 when the pandemic prevented indoor performances. Conceived as a way to bring theater outdoors for all to enjoy, Outside SCR opened with two plays that summer; "American Mariachi" and "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown."

In 2022, the theater group performed "Million Dollar Quartet" and brought "La Havana Madrid" to audiences last summer.

"It's amazing to think Outside SCR is moving into its fourth season in partnership with Mission San Juan Capistrano," Ivers said.

See **Theater**, page A8



Coming summer 2024 Cancer care reimagined UCI Health

O.C. ed board taps charter school leader as superintendent

BY SARA CARDINE

Filling a vacancy left by Orange County Supt. Al Mirajes — who announced in April he would retire June 30 due to health issues — the county Board of Education Tuesday appointed longtime charter school administrator Dr. Stefan Bean as his successor.

The appointment comes two years after Bean tried to unseat Mirajes in a June 2022 election, running on a platform of enhancing parental rights, particularly around school choice and pandemic precautions.

Officially endorsed by four of the board's five current trustees, one of whom donated \$500 to his election campaign, Bean lost with 45% voter approval.

The Garden Grove resident will be officially sworn in at the board's July 3 regular meeting to serve out the remainder of Mirajes' term, which runs until Jan. 4, 2027. He will earn an annual base salary of \$300,000, the same

amount Mirajes is earning after 12 years of service, according to a board vote Tuesday.

If history repeats itself, the appointed Bean, like Mirajes before him, will have the opportunity to run for a four-year term in 2026 as an incumbent, which could enshrine charter school advocacy among the county's top educational leadership for at least the next several years.

In an interview Friday, the 53-year-old father of four reflected on his educational background, which took him from the classrooms of traditional public schools in Long Beach and Fresno County to an educational consulting and training business, during which he advised curriculum and coached superintendents and principals.

It was in that role that Bean says he got a chance to closely observe charter school clients, the methods they used and the outcomes of that methodology. He recalled being inspired by one



O.C. BOARD of Education trustees, from left, Jorge Valdes, Ken Williams, Tim Shaw and Mari Barke with newly appointed Orange County Supt. Dr. Stefan Bean, seated.

Orange County Department of Education

school which, in one instance, grouped students by reading level, not grade level.

"Charter schools are able to take those kinds of instructional approaches or practices and have the freedom to do that as a public school," he said. "When I saw what some charter schools could

do it fascinated me, so I went into the charter school world."

Bean became principal of Los Angeles Unified School District's now-shuttered Cornerstone Academy in 2005 and served in the role for four years before accepting a principal position in 2010 at a South Gate campus of

Aspire Public Schools.

Moving up the ranks at Aspire, he became associate superintendent in 2016 and was two years later promoted to superintendent, a position he held until November 2021. During that time, he lost his wife, Janet, to metastatic breast cancer.

He said Friday that his wife, before dying, urged him to continue on the path of providing opportunities for all kids to "really believe in themselves and unlock that potential."

"When the [2022] election cycle came out and I had this opportunity, I thought, 'You know what, this is the way to have an impact across the county of Orange,'" he said.

By then, Bean was executive director of the Irvine International Academy, a newly formed Mandarin-immersion charter school. He was also serving on the board of the Orange County Classical

See **Leader**, page A10

Santa Ana Library closed for \$34M in upgrades

BY GABRIEL SAN ROMÁN

In the first step of a major overhaul of Santa Ana's public library system, the city's Main Library closed to the public on Thursday as renovation and restoration projects get underway.

The marble-veneered building first opened in May 1960 after voters passed a bond to help cover \$805,000 in construction costs.

Federal pandemic relief funds will cover much of the \$34 million in planned upgrades this time around.

"My goal is to make the Santa Ana Public Library a county hub for library services like it was before," said Brian Sternberg, the city's library services director. "We want it to be recognized as the gold standard in providing library and community services to everyone, especially the residents here."

By the time the main library reopens in spring 2026, the renovations will have transformed it into



File Photo

SANTA ANA'S Main Library will reopen to the public in spring 2026 after \$34 million is spent on renovations and restoration projects.

a "modern, dynamic space," according to city officials.

Construction accounts for \$22.7 million of the project's costs. Grant funding and the city's

Measure X sales tax revenue are also being allocated for the renovations and restorations.

Sternberg deemed the 64-year-old library's mechanical, plumb-

ing, electrical and HVAC systems "antiquated."

Beyond the upgrades buried in the walls, slated improvements also include a new interactive children's learning area and a second-floor maker lab to help foster creativity and innovation with up-to-date equipment.

"The focal point of this project is our children's area," Sternberg said.

Originally designed by architects Harold Gimeno and Francis Keally, part of the library's upgrades will also include restoration projects.

The Italian marble façade that front-faces West Civic Center Drive and gives the library its iconic look is set to be fully restored.

Rounding out other changes to come, amphitheater-style seating for library programming is slated for a reimagined east patio. The Santa Ana history room, a well-

See **Library**, page A8

ALSO FROM THE DAILY PILOT:



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

SAND REPLENISHMENT IN SAN CLEMENTE DEEMED AN EMERGENCY PAGE A2

A FALAFEL CART IN LITTLE ARABIA IS GROWING IN POPULARITY PAGE A7

PACIFIC SYMPHONY FINDS A HOME AT GREAT PARK PAGE A8

NEWPORT BEACH WELCOMES NEW SCULPTURES PAGE A10

Effort underway to replace sand lost to erosion

San Clemente approves \$2M North Beach emergency project to preserve coastline.

BY GABRIEL SAN ROMÁN

A vanishing coastline in San Clemente has prompted city officials to declare another emergency along its battered beaches.

Much of the amenities that make North Beach an idyllic summertime retreat — fire rings, swing sets, concrete picnic tables — are now threatened by creeping erosion that provides little to no sand buffer against relentless wave attacks.

Steep staircases leading to the beach at Diji Court and El Portal have been deemed unsafe due to lack of sand. Some fire rings have been swept into the ocean.

Retreating sands have also made it impossible for emergency response vehicles to access North Beach during high tide. A devastating landslide in January thwarted an alternate

emergency route through the city's coastal trail with bridge segments having been removed in repairs.

The lack of reliable entry points has raised concerns among city officials about serious safety risks posed by inaction.

"North Beach has been ignored for far too long by the city," San Clemente Councilman Chris Duncan told TimesOC. "It's a shame because North Beach has traditionally been the entrance point for San Clemente."

On Tuesday, San Clemente City Council considered an emergency declaration for sand-starved North Beach and the \$2-million sand dumping project it would fast-track.

"If you've been to North Beach lately, you will see that the beach is in pretty dire straits," Leslea Meyerhoff, San Clemente's coastal administrator, told



Photos by Don Leach | Staff Photographer

A SWING SET and on-duty lifeguard are shown at North Beach in San Clemente on Tuesday. Sand on the beach has eroded to extreme low levels along the stretch of beach.

council members. "There's very little sand except for at the very back of the beach. The concession stand and restrooms are being undermined by a direct wave energy. All the facilities are at risk."

The beach town issued a report on erosion "hot spots" last year and deemed North Beach "threatened" but with a high risk of infrastructure damage.

Meyerhoff, whose position was created, in part, to lead beach restoration efforts, called on the City Council to declare the emergency and approve the sand project, which, she claimed would also help protect the train tracks nearby.

San Clemente solicited bids earlier this month and recommended GCI Construction for the job.

During Tuesday's meeting, council members voted unanimously to award the local company with the \$1.7-million contract.

Expected to take 90 days to complete, the project entails trucks hauling 30,000 cubic yards of sand from a Santa Ana River stockpile site and dumping it along a 1,500-foot stretch of North Beach.

Sand dumping will start no sooner than July 8 and be carried out through peak summer tourist season but with only a Monday through Thursday workweek, leaving week-

ends free for recreation.

The city has already obtained two of four permits needed to carry out the work, with permits from the county and the Southern California Regional Rail Authority in process.

San Clemente will allocate roughly \$500,000 from unassigned general fund revenue to help cover costs. In addition, \$750,000 will be transferred from a sand replenishment project overseen by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as the North Beach effort overlaps in one stretch of the beach.

Other funds are set to be diverted from North Beach improvements as well as an Avenida Victoria street widening project.

Now approved, North Beach will be the second sand replenishment effort in San Clemente so far this year.

Kicking off Memorial Day weekend, the city celebrated the partial completion of a much larger federally supported beach nourishment project near its pier.

The effort initially suffered a months-long setback after the original dredge site near Oceanside pumped cobble-strewn sediment onto the beach. A new dredge site in north Orange County allowed the project to continue with beach-quality sand.

Similar concerns arose during discussion of the North Beach project.

"We've had this issue in the past," Councilman Mark Enmeier told Meyerhoff during the meeting. "What are we doing to make sure that we're getting actual sand and not rocks?"

Meyerhoff brought bags of the type of sand that will be dumped on North Beach for council members to inspect.

"What you see in that bag is pretty representative of what we will be expecting to receive on the beach," she said. "[It's] mostly very perfect beach sand with a few little gravels ... because it's coming from eroded mountains through the river channel."

Lois McNicol, a San Clemente resident, got an earlier glimpse of the sand during a meeting with

See **Erosion**, page A9



A MURAL at North Beach in San Clemente stretches out over the eroded beach, now largely gravel.



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Youth shelter in Surf City seeks 'Change for Change'

Waymakers, founded in 2006, has seen tough times due to decreased donations and grant money available.

BY MATT SZABO

Children and teenagers staying in the Waymakers Huntington Beach Youth Shelter can't have their cellphones with them. This is one reason that shelter co-director Isabel Kluwe believes they should be commended.

"I know a lot of adults who wouldn't be OK with that," Kluwe said with a smile.

The shelter provides for runaway, homeless, abused and at-risk youth, ages 11 to 17, in a home-like setting. Children are allowed to stay there for up to three weeks, free of charge to them and their families.

They are given a scheduled structure when they're within those walls, sleeping in one of the shelter's 12 beds.

The routine helps many of them. But Waymakers Huntington Beach Youth Shelter is currently looking for funding that it used to find, well, routine.

Shelter co-director Nancy Galeana said there has been a decrease in monetary donations in the current economic climate. Not only that, but grant money is drying up for the facility.

"For several of the grants that we were receiving, we've got to the point where we have to take a year or two years off," Galeana said. "We've hit that wall where we have to take a break from certain grants before we can apply again."

The shelter also has more competition than ever coming out of the coronavirus pandemic.

"All of the amazing COVID funding that was spread out in order to really maximize reach to children and families at schools, community centers, there's a great pot of money," Kluwe said. "We ended up with some competitors who are getting some of that money that would ordinarily maybe come to us. It's a shame, because we're all trying to do the same work, but we're also com-



Photos by Don Leach | Staff Photographer

CO-DIRECTORS Nancy Galeana, left, and Isabel Kluwe chat at the dining room table in the Waymakers Huntington Beach Youth Shelter.



THE WAYMAKERS Huntington Beach Youth Shelter provides services to at-risk youth ages 11 to 17.

peting for the same pot of money."

The shelter's last annual budget showed a deficit of \$200,000, Galeana said.

At the start of this month, the nonprofit started a "Change for Change" campaign. It will run for several weeks, until the shelter holds its 18th anniversary celebration on July 18.

Buckets with QR codes can be found around the city, or those who wish to help are asked to contact Waymakers Huntington Beach engagement and volunteer coordinator Emily Hein at ehin@waymakersoc.org or (714) 842-6600.

This year's Point in Time count showed that homelessness in Orange County is on the rise, with 7,322 people living either on the county's streets or in shelters. That number represents about 1,600 more people than the 2022 count.

Yet, of the more than 1.2 million children and youth nationwide

See **Shelter**, page A8

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New report on aging in Orange County outlines key concerns among seniors

BY GABRIEL SAN ROMÁN

An annual report on the status of Orange County's senior population continued to shed light on issues critical to older adults — from housing insecurity to loneliness.

Released earlier this month by the Orange County Aging Services Collaboration, the 2024 report incorporated a survey of more than 3,200 seniors 65 and older for the first time in five years to streamline data and draw sharper conclusions than in the past.

"This report tells a story that we need to focus on the aging population," said Jocelyn Rubio-Melendrez, collaborative programs director for OCASC. "As we know, older adults are the fastest growing population and also, unfortunately, one of the fastest growing among the unhoused, as well."

The county is home to about 470,000 seniors 65 and older, or roughly 16% of the population.

White residents account for 60% of that demographic while Latinos comprise 15.5% of that same age bracket. Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders constitute less than a quarter of the population.

According to last year's report, the number of all seniors is expected to almost double by 2050 and comprise 28% of O.C. residents, a wider demographic trend sometimes dubbed as a "silver tsunami."

To gain more insights into the concerns of older adults ahead of that shift, a survey conducted this year from January to April asked them 11 questions about various aspects of their life including health, social engagement, transportation, food security and housing security.

Twice as many women as men responded.

The ethnic demographics of respondents largely mirrored the county's elder population with 60% being white, 22% Asian American and 13% Latino.

Among the report's key findings is that 43% of O.C. seniors reported being worried about the rising cost of housing in the county.



Photos by James Carbone

SENIORS AT the Costa Mesa Senior Center learn about a proposal for a new affordable housing community.



ANTON DABHI, 88, picks up food from the Second Harvest Food Bank "Granny's Market" in Anaheim.

In general, most respondents felt most secure when living with family.

Just over half of all those surveyed live with family or their spouse. At 47%, older white peo-

ple were the most likely to live alone, next to native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander populations in the county.

In terms of food security, more than three-quarters of those sur-

veyed didn't cite worries about running out of food before being able to buy more, even as inflation has driven up the price of many food products.

But among older Latinos, 34% did harbor such concerns.

The report also looked at social engagement and loneliness among O.C. seniors.

While 48% of survey respondents reported having daily social interactions, 7% stated that they almost never see any family or friends, a statistic that Rubio-Melendrez finds significant.

"There's so many more health side effects to that," she said. "That's something we need to highlight, whether improving existing programs or creating different programs altogether."

The ethnic and racial breakdown allowed for insights into health disparities among O.C.'s senior community.

Although many older adults reported being in good health, there is a "pronounced disparity"

The county is home to about 470,000 seniors 65 and older, or roughly 16% of the population.

among those who acknowledged having multiple health issues, particularly among American Indian, Alaska Native, Latino and Black populations.

Roughly 10% of those ethnic and racial groups reported more than one health issue, which is a much higher tally than other surveyed groups.

Following Gov. Gavin Newsom's executive order in 2019 to create a statewide master plan for aging, the Orange County Board of Supervisors commissioned a needs assessment for its elderly population in January 2023.

The survey wrapped up in December with data being analyzed to help guide the county's development of its own master plan for aging.

The needs assessment is expected to be completed this year while the master plan has a targeted completion date of summer 2025, according to Jamie Cargo, a spokesperson for the county Social Services Agency.

The collaborative, which was founded 15 years ago and now includes 40 member groups, is not involved in the needs assessment but works closely with the county's Office on Aging. Rubio-Melendrez cited a need for more collaboration between county government and senior groups, especially in light of the report's findings.

"We need to do something about it," she said. "We can't wait for things to happen, unfortunately. We need to be prepared. After reading this report and seeing where the barriers and gaps are at, we need to work cooperatively to tackle these issues."

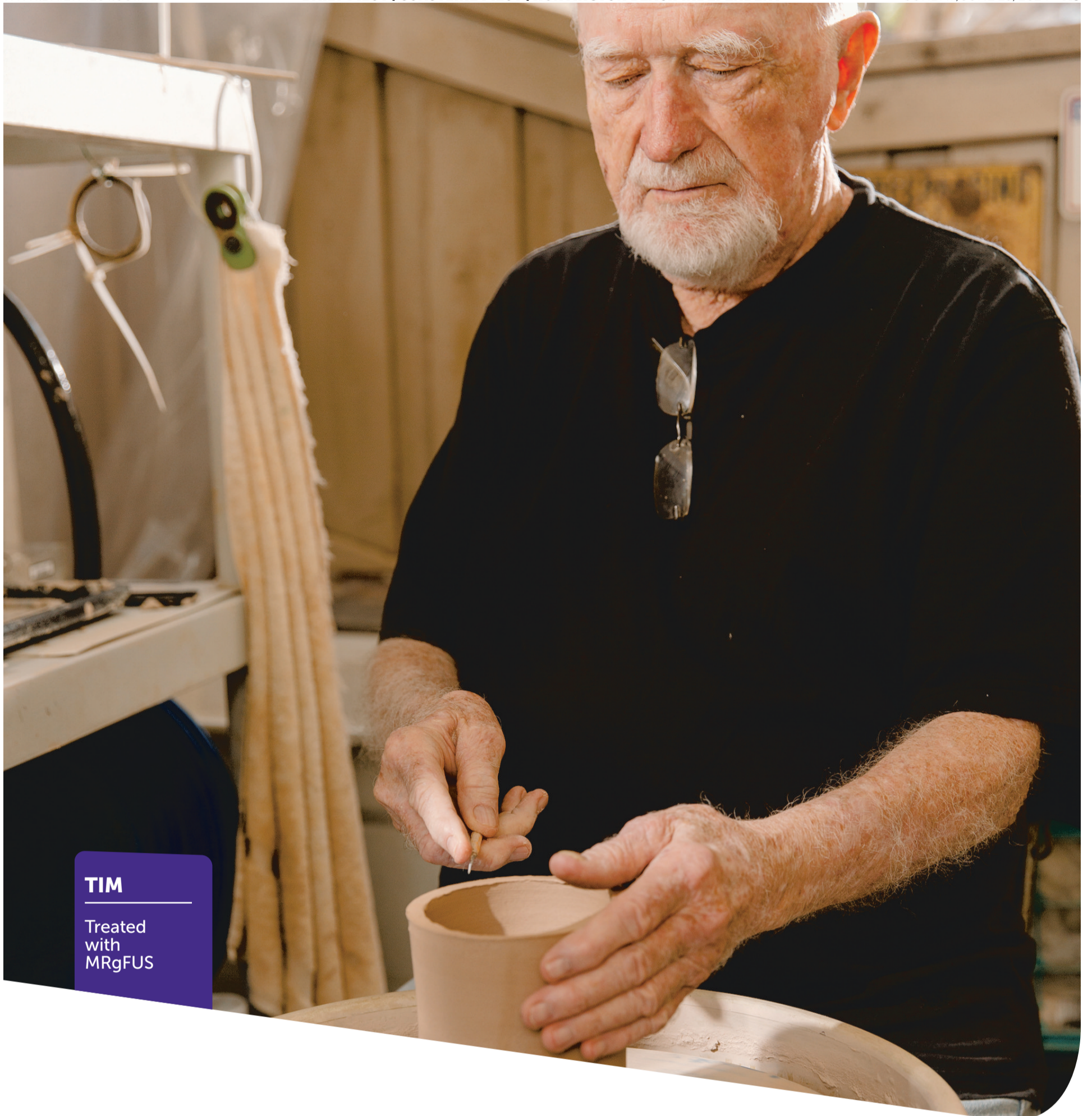
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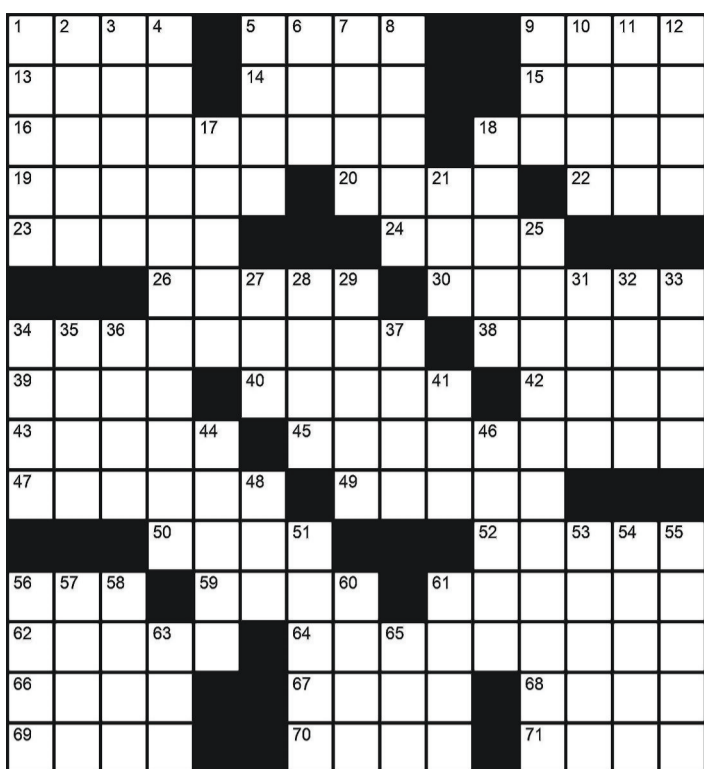
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THE DAILY COMMUTER PUZZLE

By Stella Zawistowski

- ACROSS**
 1 Location
 5 Smartphone programs
 9 Gets older
 13 Truant soldier: Abbr.
 14 Actress Perlman
 15 _ fiction
 16 Leg-baring garment
 18 City of civil rights history
 19 Accuses
 20 Intend
 22 Seattle clock setting: Abbr.
 23 Big poker bet: 2 wds.
 24 Cold _ (chilly period)
 26 Jottings
 30 President after Roosevelt
 34 December movie, often: 2 wds.
 38 Remove from memory
 39 Segment
 40 Threaded fastener
 42 Yale grads
 43 Railroad vehicle
 45 Chest pulsation
 47 Autographed
 49 More wily
 50 Infectious agent
 52 "Cool!"
 56 Not working
 59 Artificial colors
 61 Makes sense: 2 wds.
 62 Put clothes on
 64 NYC suburb
 66 Supermarket part
 67 Identical
 68 Chief Norse god
 69 Hardens
 70 Little devils
 71 Empty space
- DOWN**
 1 Brazilian dance
 2 "Allow me!": 2 wds.
 3 Like much



SUDOKU

By the Mephram Group

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

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

For answers to the crossword and Sudoku puzzles, see page A9.

- Western music
 4 Getting rid of
 5 Torah holders
 6 _ Beta Kappa
 7 Hair-curling treatment
 8 Fully fills up
 9 Imitate
 10 Big swig
- 11 Shade trees
 12 Petty quarrel
 17 Spanish man's title
 18 Drum kit part
 21 Tiny hill dweller
 25 Pet that's not a mutt: 2 wds.
 27 "Conan"

- network
 28 Apiece
 29 Fathers
 31 Tom turkey, e.g.
 32 Biggest continent
 33 Hatchling's home
 34 Makes a selection
 35 Draped garment
 36 Jagged cliff
 37 Blue-green shade
 41 Wittily amusing
 44 Requires
 46 Has an inclination
 48 Canada _
 ginger ale
 51 Lionel of soccer
 53 Carne _ (beef dish)
 54 Dutch flower
 55 Uncorks
 56 Probability
 57 Costing nothing
 58 Fedora fabric
 60 Ponzi scheme, e.g.
 61 Greek war god
 63 Sibling's nickname
 65 Electric guitar attachment

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A WORD, PLEASE | JUNE CASAGRANDE



Dania Maxwell | Los Angeles Times

JALAPENOS FOR SALE at Mercado Gonzalez Northgate Market in Costa Mesa. June Casagrande writes that "like" would have been better than "such as" in "Some studies suggest that eating chili peppers such as jalapenos can relax inflammation."

'Like' can mean 'such as,' but why use either?

It was January 2022, and I was frustrated by a trend I was seeing — that I kept seeing — in articles I edited: writers obsessively using "such as" when they could have opted for the shorter, simpler "like." So I did what every American did with their frustration in 2022: I posted it on social media.



"Someday I will edit a writer who understands you can, in fact, use 'like' to mean 'such as' ..." I wrote, and below those words I posted an image of Aragorn from "Lord of the Rings" shouting "but it is not this day!"

Discussion ensued. "Writers? I thought only editors upheld this empty fetish," replied John McIntyre, longtime copy editor and author of "Bad Advice: The Most Unreliable Counsel Available on Grammar, Usage, and Writing."

"Someone somewhere has been propagating this rubbish."

Writers who hadn't worked as editors were surprised to hear it.

"Oh thank goodness," one replied.

"Wait ... you can?" replied another.

Yes, for the record: You can use "like" as a syno-

nym of "such as" if you want to. Though 2½ years later, if my own editing work is any indication, writers still haven't gotten the memo.

In a recent two-week period, I edited about 25 articles that used "such as" before a list of examples. Only five used "like."

"The restaurant serves elevated pub food and satisfying eats such as hand-tossed pizzas and specialty burgers."

"Some studies suggest that eating chili peppers such as jalapenos can relax inflammation."

"Wear protective clothing such as wide-brimmed hats and long-sleeved shirts."

"He became an illustrator for major magazines such as Life and National Geographic."

"... to demonstrate qualities such as co-operation."

None of these is wrong. But it's a problem that the writers all seem to think they have no alternative.

A lot of grammar myths have easy-to-trace histories. This isn't one of them. Yes, if you go back to the 1950s or so, you'll find certain language cops telling people that "like" means "similar to." And

Dictionaries define "like" as a synonym of "such as," meaning you can use either one to set up a list of examples.

when something is similar to something else, they're not one and the same. Thus, these people said, "chili peppers like jalapenos," by definition, excludes jalapenos. It means only peppers similar to jalapenos and not jalapenos themselves. If that were true, you would be required to use "such as" anytime you wanted include jalapenos in the examples.

But it's not true. Dictionaries define "like" as a synonym of "such as," meaning you can use either one to set up a list of examples. If you want my opinion, "like" is better. It sounds more natural, more conversational, which makes your message more accessible to readers. In fact, in that same two-

See *Word*, page A9

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MAILBAG

Council chaos a reflection of Surf City divisiveness

Even though outsourcing of library management was no longer on the agenda due to the withdrawal of Library Systems & Services, the sole bidder, a Huntington Beach City Council meeting once again devolved into chaos (*Trouble in Surf City: Polarized Huntington Beach City Council squabbles over library proposal process*, Daily Pilot, June 20).

Right at the get-go, Mayor Pro Tem Pat Burns demanded that Councilwoman Natalie Moser remove the tiny Pride flag in front of her on the dais, in recognition of Pride Month. His true colors are showing, and they're not the colors of the rainbow. Several public speakers recommended censure of Burns for calling the three minority council members "pieces of s**t" when they walked out of the previous meeting to protest his agenda item. No censure, no apology. Instead, he doubled down and labeled them narcissistic for assuming he was referring to them. It's a very poor reflection on our city that our next mayor would behave in such an outrageous manner.

Mayor Gracey Van Der Mark lectured us on polarization in the community due to all the lying and fear-mongering, called for cohesion, then immediately launched an attack on minority Councilman Dan Kalmick. Her hypocrisy is stunning, having



Eric Licas

COUNCILWOMEN NATALIE MOSER, left, and Rhonda Bolton sit at the dais with Pride flags on the dais.

banned the minority council members from nearly all committees and commissions. The polarization and lack of cohesion is coming from the MAGA majority on the dais. Mayor Gracey deals in selective enforcement of decorum in the council chamber, pounding her gavel at Protect HB people, but not at those on the MAGA side. Apparently the rules of decorum apply only to those she disagrees with; those who support the MAGA agenda can get away with just about anything, including harassing Protect HB and LGBTQ+ speakers. MAGA speakers harangue us, flip us off, call us pedophiles and perverts, and we're not allowed to respond upon threat of eviction.

In the meantime, we are still collecting signatures on two petitions to protect our beloved library from

those who would do it damage. The majority four are an embarrassment to Huntington Beach and cannot be trusted.

Michele Burgess
 Huntington Beach

My thought upon reading recent Daily Pilot reporting about the June 18 City Council meeting in Huntington Beach: We are truly not in Kansas anymore. It is bad enough that Mayor Pro Tem Pat Burns clearly referred to elected board members as pieces of excrement. In the moment, he no doubt pictured himself as some lonely crusader, bravely saying what needed to be said. Far from behaving like the lion he imagines himself to be, he cowardly turned tail and refused to own his words. I will leave it to Daily Pilot readers to

See *Mailbag*, page A8

The Balad Falafel brings a halal cart to O.C.

BY GABRIEL SAN ROMÁN

Waiting in line on a recent afternoon, the fragrance of fresh falafels wafted from the Balad Falafel and overpowered the aroma of In-N-Out's grilled burger patties across the street in Little Arabia.

"As-salamu alaykum," a man greeted before picking up a phone order. "Peace be upon you."

Soon after, two youngsters ordered falafel sandwiches at the halal cart latched to a Ford truck in a west Anaheim parking lot.

Ziad Morra got to work on the order from within the cart's tight quarters along with a hired chef.

Falafels were lowered into a vat of boiling oil to give them a browned, crunchy exterior before being mashed and stuffed into pita bread pockets. Finely diced tomatoes, pickles and cucumbers filled out the rest of the Middle Eastern meal drizzled with tahini sauce.

The patrons took their sandwiches and munched on them in their car.

After nightfall, the Balad Falafel kept its grill hot. More patrons arrived, ordered and ate underneath a pop-up tent with tables and chairs.

"As long as there's business for the night, we will continue," said Moe Morra, Ziad's brother. "The other night, we left the parking lot at 5:30 in the morning."

Falafel sandwiches aren't new to Little Arabia, but a halal cart is.

Serving everything from kebabs to falafels to hot dogs, halal carts are a more ubiquitous sight on the East Coast, particularly in New York City. The Halal Guys, now a fast-growing national and international franchise, humbly began as a Manhattan food cart.

But before three Palestinian brothers — Ziad, Moe and Sanad — set up shop as co-owners of the



Photos by James Carbone

SANAD MORRA, co-owner of Balad Falafel, left, poses with his children, Zaina and Mahmoud, at the halal cart.



CUSTOMERS ORDER at the Balad Falafel halal cart in Anaheim's Little Arabia.

Balad Falafel, the next closest thing in Orange County came courtesy of Shawarma Palace at Disney's California Adventure.

More than a month into business, the Morra brothers report that the concept is working.

"We have noticed that people are coming back and bringing more family to enjoy our sandwiches," Moe said. "We haven't had any complaints, just people complimenting how good our sandwiches are." The Balad Falafel's sim-



FALAFEL SANDWICHES stuffed with lettuce, tomato, tahini sauce are a draw at the Balad Falafel.

ple but scrumptious menu also includes chicken, chicken liver and rib-eye sandwiches.

Unlike the falafel sandwiches, the meat fillings are piled into lengthy sesame seed baguettes. Patrons can also order fries and drinks separately.

Taco trailers and stands have come and gone along Little Arabia's stretch of Brookhurst Street, but the Balad Falafel is poised to

become a fixture.

That's because it's situated in the parking lot of the Morra brothers' next business venture.

The siblings are hoping to open Al-Karmel Meat Market and Bakery sometime next month. Once it does, there are no plans to move the Balad Falafel into its quarters.

"That's actually where the idea started from," Moe said. "We thought we

can have the Arabic market and have the food trailer right in front of our business."

Originally from the West Bank Palestinian city of Ramallah, the Morra brothers are following in their family's footsteps in many ways.

For years, the Morra family has imported cattle to the West Bank. An older brother still living in Palestine has worked professionally in the food industry for over a decade.

With "Balad" roughly translating to "a taste from home" in Arabic, the Morra brothers take great lengths to live up to the halal cart's name. The recipes are culled from family traditions.

"We also bring olive oil from Palestine," Moe said. "We focus on quality more than anything else."

With exorbitant shipping costs, olive oil isn't easy to import, but the effort is part of the brothers' ethos of putting patrons before profit.

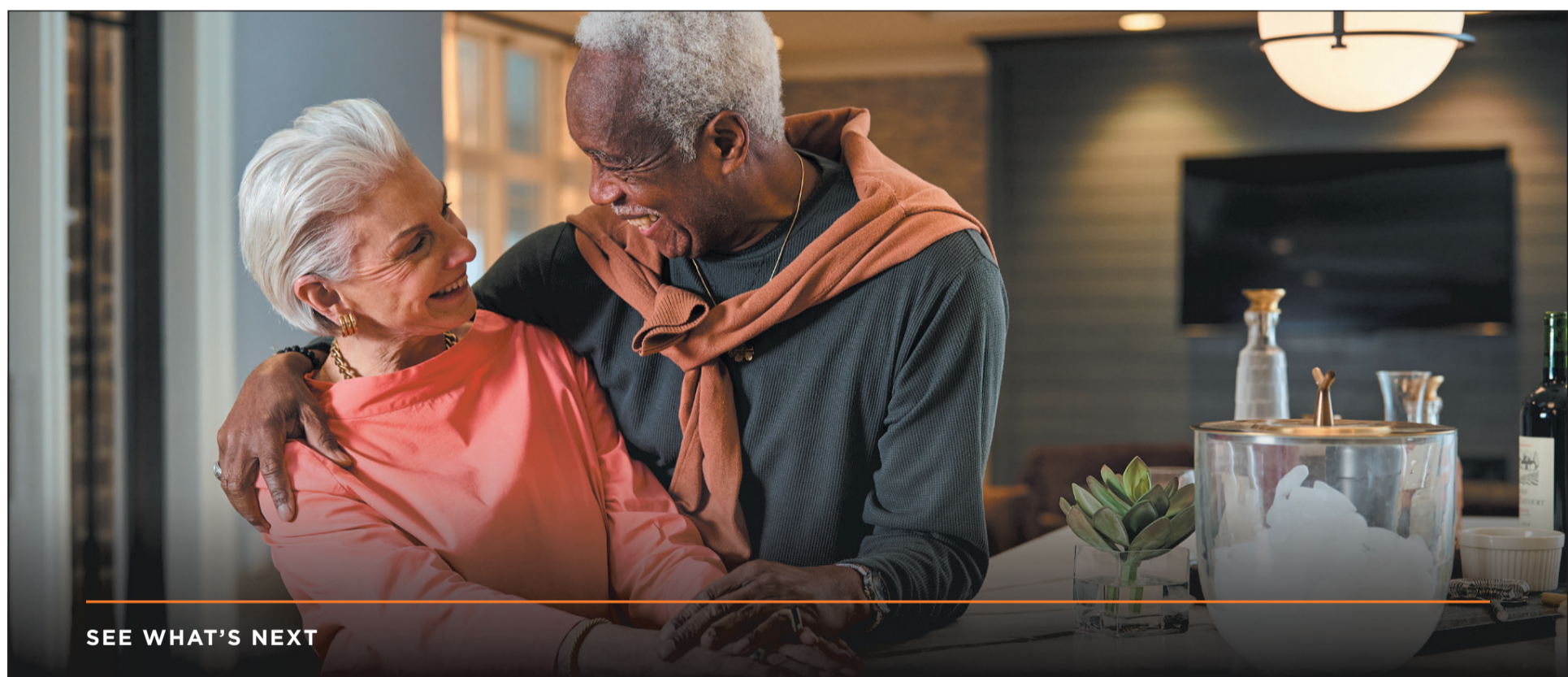
Another way the Balad Falafel sources from the Arab world comes from the sodas they sell. Whether Pepsi or 7-Up, the slim cans are emblazoned in Arabic and are made in countries like the United Arab Emirates.

Aside from sandwiches, the Morra brothers team with the Kunafa Man, a local caterer, to give patrons pastry options. Knafeh, a sweet and salty shredded phyllo dough dessert undergirded by gooey Palestinian nabulsi cheese, helps draw a crowd beyond local Arab Americans.

All the early success has the Morra brothers hoping to expand their menu in the future.

"We want to be the best that we can," Moe said. "That's our mission."

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Pacific Symphony finds a new summer home

The orchestra will perform a five-part concert series this summer at Great Park Live in Irvine.

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

When the Irvine Meadows concert venue was closed in 2016, the Pacific Symphony lost the site of its annual summer program.

"Pacific Symphony had a multi-decade relationship with Irvine Meadows, which was our first summer home," said John Forsyte, Pacific Symphony's president and chief executive.

The orchestra was founded in 1978 as a collaboration between Cal State Fullerton and north Orange County civic leaders, spurred on by the late Marcy Mulville.

Pacific Symphony has been the resident orchestra of the Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall since 2009. From 1987 to 2016, Irvine Meadows, which later became known as the Verizon Wireless Amphitheatre, hosted the symphony's summer concert series with orchestral music under the stars.

"We settled on the Pacific Amphitheater in Costa



Courtesy of the City of Irvine

THE PACIFIC SYMPHONY will settle into its new summer home at Great Park Live in Irvine this summer.

Mesa for a few years and then eventually ended up at FivePoint Amphitheater," Forsyte said.

In October 2023, Five-Point Amphitheater also announced its closure, and the city of Irvine planned a

temporary live music venue to replace it. The result is Great Park Live, an outdoor live entertainment

venue that will serve as the summer home for Pacific Symphony this season. "We've transformed a

corner of the Great Park Sports Complex into this temporary live music venue in a matter of months, and this ensures that we have live music and entertainment this summer while we work to develop the city's permanent amphitheater facility," said Great Park chair and Irvine Councilman Mike Carroll.

Made possible by a partnership between PSQ Productions and the city of Irvine, the state-of-the-art venue with a capacity of up to 5,000 opened for the season on June 14, with a performance from DBS, a Journey tribute band.

"With Great Park Live, we have set the stage for what promises to be an exciting summer of live music in Irvine with artists covering genres to suit every musical taste," Irvine Mayor Farrah Khan said. "It promises to be a place where we can come together and experience fun, music, laughter and a shared sense of community here at the Great Park."

Forsyte said the symphony is happy to have a new summer home.

"I think outdoor experiences with a symphony orchestra affords us an opportunity to serve a multi-

See Symphony, page A9



Sarah Mosqueda

GUESTS VISIT Mission San Juan Capistrano.

THEATER

Continued from page A1

South Coast Repertory was founded in 1964 and the Tony Award-winning theater company is recognized as one of the leading professional theaters in the U.S. Martin-Cotten joined SCR in 2021 as associate artistic director and is the co-director of the Pacific Playwrights Festival. While she has many director credits under her belt, this will be her first with SCR.

Ivers is looking forward to seeing the play under Martin-Cotten's direction, saying he's "confident her artistry will elevate the experience into an unforgettable gathering."

Although this will be Outside SCR's last season with

FYI

"The Old Man and the Old Moon" will run July 20 through Aug. 11, with all performances beginning at 7:30 p.m. Tickets range from \$40 to \$60, with special pricing offered for those age 25 and under.

the mission, Adams said she hopes the programming has inspired audiences of all ages to fall in love with the local theater.

"While this summer marks the end of our successful four-year run of outdoor theater at the Mission, we truly hope appreciative audiences far and wide will continue to support the masterful array of offerings wherever they take place by Orange County's premier and award-winning South Coast Repertory," Adams said.

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SHELTER

Continued from page A2

experiencing homelessness identified by public schools in the 2021-22 school year, only 4% were unsheltered and 12% were staying in shelters. The rest were staying in motels or temporarily with other people due to a lack of alternatives.

That trend holds true in Orange County, Kluwe said. Many Waymakers Youth Shelter families fall under the umbrella of being either homeless or on the precipice of becoming so.

"The most common thing that we see working with some of our parents is that they're working their jobs, making ends meet just barely, but their child is in crisis," Kluwe said. "Every moment that keeps them away from work because they need to attend to their children puts them at risk of losing employment."

"A place like this is preventative in that sense. Go



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

A PROGRESS CHART and words of wisdom are displayed at Waymakers Huntington Beach Youth Shelter.

to work, stay in contact with us. We'll do our best to accommodate your schedule. We have clinicians who work weekends. We have clinicians who stay as late as 8 p.m. if needed to accommodate parents."

The children at the shelter have plenty to do after they wake up at 7 a.m. That includes therapeutic activities, plus alone time and meals together. Three associate clinicians are avail-

able, plus two clinical practicum clinicians when the school year starts.

"I often tell people out in the community when we do outreach that when they come here, it's not camp," Galeana said. "They're actively working on themselves, on whatever crisis is going on. Not only that, but they're learning coping skills, they're learning different mechanisms."

The funding shortage is a

cause for concern. Waymakers Huntington Beach Youth Shelter doesn't get money from the state. It does receive funds because of the federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, but Galeana said that represents only about a third of the budget.

The leadership team finds that many locals, even in Huntington Beach, aren't aware of the shelter, which is located in Central Park East, not far from the Central Library.

It has helped prevent youth homelessness for more than 2,200 Orange County children and teenagers since 2006, yet it also needs help.

"I think one of the best ways people can help is just telling the people that you know," Hein said. "You might not be the person, but you might know the person, or they might know the person. I think just extending our reach is invaluable."

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LIBRARY

Continued from page A1

traveled repository for researchers, will be expanded with enhanced services on the second floor.

In an effort to modernize, a STEM lab is slated as part of the renovations instead of an old-fashioned newspaper reading room.

"When it reopens, this library is going to be ready to serve the community for another hundred years," Sternberg said. "It will be of service to generations of people who aren't even born yet. We're really excited for that."

In the meantime, Santa Ana is adding eight hours of extended services per week at the Newhope branch library, which will become the city's de facto main branch, starting Monday.

Community centers across the city will also host library services and programs in the interim.

In addition to upgrades to the main library, the city is anticipating new library projects before its completion.

City officials hope to open a new branch location within the Delhi Community Center by early 2025. Later that year, Jerome Park will host an innovative outdoor library with nearly 400 self-serve books and movies.

Newhope Library's doors will remain open until \$6.8 million in upgrades get underway this winter with an expected completion date by next summer.

A new-and-improved bookmobile ready to hit the streets rounds out the ambitious library overhaul to come. "Santa Ana is a city of over 300,000 people," Sternberg said. "This community deserves the same type of high-quality library services enjoyed by other cities in Orange County."

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IRVINE RANCH WATER DISTRICT NOTICE OF FILING OF REPORT AND OF A PUBLIC HEARING ON HAVING SEWER CHARGES FOR CERTAIN PARCELS OF LAND COLLECTED ON THE TAX ROLL

NOTICE is hereby given that a report has been filed with the Secretary of the Irvine Ranch Water District relative to having sewer charges for certain parcels of land within the Newport North area of the District collected on the tax roll. The report contains a description of each parcel and the amount for annual charges for Fiscal Year 2024-25 (annual charges of \$441.48 per year for single family units and \$308.40 per year per apartment). The report is on file with the Secretary of the District at the District Office and is available for public inspection on the District Bulletin Board located at 15600 Sand Canyon Avenue, Irvine, CA. This report is filed pursuant to Section 5473 of the Health and Safety Code of the State of California.

NOTICE is further given that on Monday, July 8, 2024 at 5:00 p.m. (or as soon thereafter as is reasonably practicable) in the District's Board of Directors meeting room at 15600 Sand Canyon Avenue, Irvine, CA, the Board of Directors will conduct a public hearing and consider all objections or protests, if any, to the report.

Dated: June 23, 2024 /s/ Kristine Swan
June 30, 2024 District Secretary
Irvine Ranch Water District

LOST & FOUND 400

Lost

To whom this May Concern, I'm a foreigner living in Huntington Beach, CA over a year ago I unfortunately lost my middle eastern passport. I'm writing my plea for anyone that might have found and returned my passport to the local law enforcement office in Huntington Beach or surrounding law enforcement offices. It would be greatly appreciated if anyone can contact the Huntington Beach police department. I'll check with them at least once a week to see if anyone has returned my passport. Thank you so much

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MAILBAG

Continued from page A6

decide which of City Council members Tony Strickland or Casey McKeon displayed the requisite heartlessness and stupidity to claim the roles of the Scarecrow or Tin Man in our little civic production. There is plenty of short-sighted cruelty instigated by the council majority to go around, particularly in transforming the Central Library from a refuge for the unhoused children of this city into a crater-marked no-mans-land in their culture war.

But let us not be distracted by the fireworks in the chamber of the Great

and Powerful: The legal "wizard" behind the curtain, City Atty. Michael Gates, had until Friday to decide if he would further appeal the release of the airshow settlement. He claims that he would only do so under council direction. This direction will have to come from the final member of our little production. I write not of Dorothy (meek and mild of Kansas), but rather the other raven-haired someone who is afraid of having a housing element dropped upon her out of the troubled sky.

Galen Pickett
Huntington Beach

Due in no small part to exposure in the Daily Pilot,

Robert C. Reid

April 17, 1950 - May 14, 2024

Bob Reid passed away peacefully at Hoag Hospital on May 14th, 2024 of complications from kidney failure. He is survived by his wife of 49 years. He was a longtime member of Balboa Yacht Club and enjoyed many summers at Whites Cove on Catalina Island.

HOW TO GET PUBLISHED

Send an email to erik.haugli@latimes.com and include your full name, hometown and phone number (for verification purposes) with your submission. All letters should be kept to 350 words or less and address local issues and events. The Daily Pilot reserves the right to edit all accepted submissions for clarity, accuracy and length.

everyone in coastal Orange County is aware of how dysfunctional local government has become in Huntington Beach. That dysfunction was on full display at the June 18 City Council meeting where council members squabbled on the dais and over 30 residents skewered the council majority in public comments over the failed attempt to outsource library operations to a private for-profit company. The lame attempt to justify the outrageous lengths the amateur authoritarians went through to ostensibly achieve "efficiencies" in budget savings to paper over fiscal deficits of their own making was cringe-worthy. The majority's attempt to demonize Councilman Dan Kalmick in particular for being

"divisive" was more than the pot calling the kettle black. It was the height of hypocrisy and irony that has flowed freely since the majority came to power in 2022. And yet it was a cathartic experience for many in the full house chamber audience. The cold truth setting in is that these political posers are not only incapable of leading but wholly unfit for office. It will require residents taking charge of their own civic destiny for the community to weather this dysfunctional storm until 2026 and then chart a new course for the future. We are lucky the Daily Pilot and other media are standing up for us in this endeavor.

Tim Geddes
Huntington Beach

Sushi Roku maintains tradition and navigates trends

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

On June 18, International Sushi Day, diners strolled into Sushi Roku in Newport Beach when it opened at 11:30 in the morning.

The Fashion Island restaurant is usually busy for lunch, even without the food holiday, and guests settled in at the bar and banquets positioned around potted bonsai trees. Some were there for the limited-edition bento box, filled with six pieces of nigiri, a spicy tuna cut roll and more to mark the occasion.

Others were there for the usual sushi lunch they have come to expect from Sushi Roku. The popular restaurant focuses on what Lee Maen, founding partner at Sushi Roku, refers to as "new-school sushi."

"Our menu's focus is on authentic Japanese cuisine and technique that is married with global flavors and seasonal, local ingredients," Maen said.

Besides celebrating International Sushi Day, Sushi Roku is marking nine years since the restaurant opened in Orange County.

Innovative Dining Group, Sushi Roku's parent company, operates the O.C. location, four in Los Angeles, one in Las Vegas and a newly opened location in Austin.

The decision to bring Sushi Roku to Orange County nine years ago was an easy one, Maen said. "With so many coastal communities, diners are drawn to fresh seafood," he said. "Finding the perfect location at Fashion Island was the key to setting us up for a welcome reception and introduction to a demographic that has active lifestyles and are looking for a healthy dining option."

There are many options around the county when it comes to sushi, from strip malls to tasting menus. With such abundance it can be difficult to fathom



Courtesy of Sushi Roku

SUSHI ROKU'S owner says sushi has changed since the restaurant opened nine years ago at Fashion Island.

that the concept of the sushi bar was once fairly exotic. Food historians note the first sushi restaurants came to America sometime between 1964 and 1966 and the 1970s and '80s saw an increase in Japanese immigrants and businesses and a growing demand for traditional Japanese cuisine in the States.

"Sushi has changed a lot in the last nine years," notes Maen. "While its popularity has increased, the abundance of low-quality options has skyrocketed as well."

Today, even grocery stores offer grab-and-go sushi.

Maen said the saturated market means Sushi Roku's

dedication to the freshest fish and hiring seasoned sushi chefs is more important than ever.

"Our head chefs are truly master craftsmen in Japanese cuisine who pride themselves on artistry and dedication to their craft," Maen said.

While the menu features classic sushi, nigiri and sashimi, Sushi Roku has also become known for its signature hanabi, a tuft of spicy tuna served on a small block of crispy rice. There are also creative rolls that use wagyu beef and non-sushi dishes, like Japanese fried chicken and edamame hummus.

Maintaining authenticity while staying on top of current dining trends is a balancing act Maen sees as necessary to elevate the sushi experience. A compelling bar program is part of that equation too.

"Our bar program is overseen by similar expertise, with certified sake sommeliers and mixolo-

gists," Maen said. "We offer a vast selection of sakes in all styles and price ranges, including craft sake."

In addition to staying on top of the sushi and sake game, Maen said Sushi Roku has worked to become part of the local community.

"Their warm welcome nine years ago set the stage for our success, and the way in which they continue to embrace us today fuels our continued excitement in the region," said Maen. "Locally in Orange County, we continue to introduce ourselves to new guests. While we love serving the tourists that flock to Orange County, we are always most focused on our local clientele who have become friends and regulars."

"We look forward to many more years ahead at Fashion Island."

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SYMPHONY

Continued from page A8

generational and multicultural audience in ways that are more difficult indoors ... it removes some of the psychological barriers to coming to hear orchestral music."

Forsythe notes the audience benefits from the environment in which orchestral music is performed, like in an outdoor venue like Great Park Live.

"There is the sheer beauty of being in nature with something that is this epic. Having 80 musicians on stage performing these epic sounds, you can't describe that," Forsythe said.

The Pacific Symphony's five-concert SummerFest series will launch on Independence Day with a "Fourth of July Spectacular."

"Richard Kaufman is our Principal Pops Conductor

emeritus. He has conducted the orchestra for 35 years, and he is so wonderful at the Fourth of July [concert]," said Forsythe. "He has a whole patriotic first half and invariably tells wonderfully humorous stories about the hot dog-eating contest that takes place each year on the Fourth of July."

The second half of the show will feature Brass Transit performing the music of American rock band Chicago and the evening will end with a fireworks display.

On July 27, Pacific Symphony will celebrate the 100th anniversary of George Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" with the California premiere of a new piano and orchestra work from composer Peter Boyer, "Rhapsody in Red, White & Blue." Pianist Jeffrey Biegel will accompany the Pacific Symphony, under the direction of Carl St. Clair.

On Aug. 10, "Star Wars: Return of the Jedi" will screen at the venue, with its score performed live. Principal Pops Conductor Enrico Lopez-Yañez will make his SummerFest debut on Aug. 23 conducting a program of symphonic film music titled "The Magical Music of Harry Potter."

The season will close on Sept. 9 with the "Tchaikovsky Spectacular," which will feature excerpts from "The Nutcracker," a violin concerto performed by Philippe Quint and cannons and fireworks to punctuate the performance of the "1812 Overture."

In addition to the Pacific Symphony SummerFest, Great Park Live is set to host tribute bands and outdoor movies as part of its Irvine Nights series, and more concerts will follow in the fall, with country artist Clay Walker on Oct. 25 and Brooks Nielsen on Oct. 31. The venue expects to announce more shows as the 2024 season continues.

On July 6, Great Park Live will also open a new gourmet eatery, the Layover, with food and beverage options for concertgoers.

Forsythe said he hopes this season's SummerFest is just the first of many great events featuring the Pacific Symphony at Great Park Live and its subsequent permanent venue.

"My dream is that when there is a permanent venue we will be able to do things such as multicultural festivals, jazz programming and world music that benefits from the sound of an orchestra with it," said Forsythe. "I have always had a fire in the belly about ensuring that there was a successor venue for Irvine Meadows."

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Mailbag for guidelines.

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EROSION

Continued from page A2

North Beach residents before attending Tuesday's council meeting.

She remained unconvinced.

"It simply does not feel like beach sand," McNiccol told council members. "We need to be thinking about retaining the sand on the beach and growing sand on the beach. That's the way we have to start thinking, instead of spending millions of dollars to just put sand out there."

After the meeting, Councilman Duncan noted key differences between North Beach sand dumping and the federally supported pier area dredging project, including real-time monitoring of sand quality.

That gave him the confidence to vote for the emer-



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

NORTH BEACH in San Clemente has substantially eroded, prompting city officials to declare an emergency.

gency declaration and the contract.

"Our goal is nothing short of bringing North Beach back to its deserved prior glory as a beautiful beachfront area to recre-

ate," he said. "We won't stop until we accomplish that. This is the first step."

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WORD

Continued from page A6

week span of editing projects, I noticed that "like" was far more popular in quotations. It rolled off the tongues of the speakers talking to the writers, but the writers themselves avoided "like."

But if you really want to engage your reader, both "such as" and "like" can be a problem. Why? Because both these terms upstage the details that readers find most interesting.

"Wear wide-brimmed

hats, long-sleeved shirts and long pants" puts the emphasis on tangible, visual things. "Clothing such as" is far less sensory.

"He became an illustrator for Life, National Geographic and other major magazines" immediately makes me think of the oversized, visually stunning Life magazine covers I used to see in the grocery store checkout lane near those gold-bordered National Geographics. "Major magazines such as ..." just doesn't make the same connection to my world. "Eating jalapenos and

other chili peppers" immediately conjures an image of medium-sized green peppers, more so than "chili peppers such as" does.

So don't hesitate to use "like" in place of "such as." Instead, hesitate to use both. If you can lead with a specific, tangible, sensory noun, you'll keep your reader interested.

JUNE CASAGRANDE is the author of "The Joy of Syntax: A Simple Guide to All the Grammar You Know You Should Know." Reach her at JuneTCN@aol.com.

CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU ANSWERS

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Courtesy of the city of Newport Beach

"GECKO," BY artist Doug Snider, is installed as part of the city's revolving sculpture garden. The piece was one of the three top-voted pieces from the public poll, according to city staff.

Newport Beach to hold art exhibition, dedication of statues at Civic Center

BY LILLY NGUYEN

In conjunction with a dedication ceremony for the next phase of the city's revolving sculpture garden, Newport Beach will host its 57th art exhibition next weekend, on June 29 at the Newport Beach Civic Center.

The sculpture garden came into being in 2013 with the completion of the Civic Center, which includes City Hall, the public library and a 17-acre park where "Bunnyhenge," human-sized stone statues set in a circle, draw visitors. The new phase of sculptures is the ninth since the program's inception and will bring the total on display to 20.

"I look forward to the upcoming city Arts Commission Art Exhibition and Sculpture Exhibition grand opening, happening just as the summer season kicks off in Newport Beach. It's not just about the bunnies!" Arts Commission chair

Maureen Flanagan said in a statement issued Friday.

"We had many strong applicants for Phase Nine of the Sculpture Exhibition, and with the collaboration of residents who voted in the public poll, selected 10 sculptures that display a wide range of artistic sensibilities and styles," Flanagan said. "The City Arts Commission is confident these vibrant pieces will greatly enhance the experience of Civic Center visitors, who can soon walk through the park and see the wonderful new sculptures on display."

Doug Snider's "Gecko," Peter Ambrosio's "Interplay" and Hilde DeBruyne's "Growing Wings" received the most votes in the poll of residents. Rounding out the 10 new artworks are Vojtech Blazejovsky's "Heavy Landing," Michele Moushey Dale's "Natural Wonders," Cindy Debold's "Glee," Matt Cartwright's "Trillium Bus Stop Bench," Giuseppe Palumbo's "Duality," Ron

Whitacre's "Reaching Man" and Catherine Daley's "Millefolium."

Members of the city's Arts Commission approved the sculptures in March, and City Council ratified the decision in April.

The sculptures were installed last week and will be on display for two years. Artists are granted an honorarium for display of their works and will be required to perform maintenance on them as necessary.

The dedication will be held as a celebration in tandem with the one-day arts exhibition, which will take place from 1 to 6 p.m. at 100 Civic Center Drive. Entry and parking are free, and the event will include children's activities, food and music. Artists will be present to discuss and sell their works.

About 20% of each sale is earmarked for the Newport Beach Arts Foundation.

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LEADER

Continued from page A1

Academy, a charter school launched in August 2020 by charter advocate March Bucher, founder of the anti-union California Policy Center — who along with wife Bronwyn donated \$4,400 to his campaign — and Dr. Jeff Barke, then-husband of Board of Education Trustee Mari Barke.

It was through Mari Barke that Bean would be introduced to other educational leaders in Orange County, including fellow OCBE trustee Ken Williams, who endorsed Bean and, according to campaign finance records, donated \$500 to Bean's

2022 bid for superintendent.

Williams said Thursday the candidate reached out to him on the campaign trail seeking an endorsement and, upon meeting, he was compelled by Bean's personal story as an individual living with disabilities who fled Vietnam as a child in 1975 and was later adopted by his foster family.

"His success and what he's accomplished has been very admirable and impressive," he said of Bean. "We also aligned very much politically, in educational governance and policy-wise. Because of his vision for education, I thought he was a very excellent candidate, and I

supported him."

Despite backing from the openly pro-charter school Board of Education, trustees maintain Bean's appointment as superintendent was conducted in a fair and transparent manner over the course of a May 22 special meeting, during which six candidates were publicly interviewed, and regular meetings on June 5 and 18, at which endorsements and comments were taken from the public.

"I'm proud of the process we ran — it was as good as could be expected," Board President Tim Shaw said Thursday, adding that to hold a countywide special election for superintendent would have been a costly endeavor.

"I wanted to allow the public to have plenty of time to watch the interviews and give us feedback. I even said publicly I'm not going to be calling applicants one on one because I don't want any backroom deals."

Two days after the board's May 22 interview panel, Bean's executive director position at Irvine International Academy was posted on online education job portals. Bean said Friday he'd given the charter school's board notice of his interest in the superintendent position, but had no intention of leaving if his second bid was unsuccessful.

Williams, who's served on the Board of Education since 1996, agreed with

Shaw that Bean's selection was handled in a fair manner. He said Thursday he remains hopeful the new appointee will usher in a new era of collaboration between the board and Department of Education, which have been entangled in recent years in a series of legal disputes over the power and authority of the board and superintendent when it comes to budget decisions, the hiring of legal counsel and other matters.

"I hope and pray that the division and the discord between the superintendent and the board will be resolved so we can govern together," Williams said.

Bean said Friday he was more focused on getting

down to business in his new job than on whether he might seek to extend the position another four years by running for office in 2026. He plans to better familiarize himself with the county's 28 schools and specialized programs and the people who operate them, by conducting a series of listening tours.

Like Williams, Bean said he's keenly interested in being a bridge between the board and the department.

"My hope [now] certainly is to resolve any disputes," he said. "We want to repair any damage that was done and come to a mutual resolution."

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