

Daily Pilot

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 2024 // dailypilot.com



Photos by Susan Hoffman

ASSEMBLYWOMAN COTTIE Petrie-Norris, center, with Costa Mesa Fire Chief Dan Stefano and Mayor John Stephens (golden hard hat) to the left and City Manager Lori Ann Farrell Harrison, second to the assemblywoman's right.

Old Costa Mesa fire training tower set to be extinguished

BY SUSAN HOFFMAN

City and state leaders joined the Costa Mesa Fire and Rescue team Friday morning for the groundbreaking ceremony of a new training tower facility located at Fire Station No. 4.

The new building was made possible with \$3.5 million in city capital improvement funds and \$2.5 million of state budget funding, according to city officials. The 57-year-old existing tower will be demolished to make way for the project.

State Assemblywoman Cottie Petrie-Norris spoke about the importance of the Costa Mesa Fire & Rescue Regional Training Center in equipping firefighters and recruits to handle multiple challenges during fire and rescue operations in the city and region.

"My No. 1 job is to protect the public and my first responsibility is to insure that you have the best possible supplies and equipment. This has been a phenomenal team effort," said Petrie-Norris, who secured \$2.5 million in state money for the project.



See **Tower**, page A4

THE 57-YEAR-OLD existing C.M.F.D. tower is scheduled to be demolished this month.

Church, guests honor outgoing building

Ukrainian refugees who found sanctuary in old structure at Orange Coast Unitarian Universalist Church pay respects.

BY SARA CARDINE

A two-story building on the campus of Costa Mesa's Orange Coast Unitarian Universalist Church will in the coming days be demolished to make room for a new sanctuary under a renovation plan several years and \$3 million in the making.

Although historically used for an ancillary purpose, primarily as a communal space for Sunday morning coffee meetings, the structure recently served as a different kind of sanctuary — sheltering 139 Ukrainian refugees escaping a war-ravaged homeland.

Orange Coast UUC leaders and congregants gathered Sunday alongside some of the shelter's

See **Church**, page A3

Plans drawn for Art and Nature

Laguna Art Museum announces Christian Sampson's 'Ocean Ions' will be highlighted at 12th annual exhibition.

BY ANDREW TURNER

The unrelenting temperatures might say otherwise, but at least for the art festivals in Laguna Beach, the sun has set on the summer season.

Art enthusiasts will now look to the fall, when Laguna Art Museum will renew its vows to the outdoors with the 12th annual Art and Nature.

The exhibition, which explores the intersection between artistic expression and environmental

See **Nature**, page A4

Blessing of the Waves returning to offer unity



Sarahi Apaez

CHRISTY HERNANDEZ of Saints Simon & Jude Catholic Church performs during the 2022 Blessing of the Waves ceremony in Huntington Beach.

BY MATT SZABO

In many ways, the Blessing of the Waves is uniquely a Huntington Beach tradition.

The 17th annual event that celebrates unity and spirituality in the community returns Sunday evening at Pier Plaza.

There will be music and dancing and prayer, culminating in a paddle out.

The Greater Huntington Beach Interfaith Council presents the Blessing of the Waves each year.

"The reason we do this is to build bridges in the community, and not just between faith groups," GHBIC President Jynene Johnson said. "That's a major mission, of course, within all faith groups to build a bridge, but also between all walks of life, those that don't even necessarily have a designated faith. We're bringing people that all appreciate the same great things that we enjoy in our community. The water and the ocean, we all benefit

See **Waves**, page A4

ALSO FROM THE DAILY PILOT:



Sarahi Apaez

LOBSTER FESTIVAL EMERGES THIS WEEKEND IN FOUNTAIN VALLEY PAGE A2

10.17-24
NEWPORT BEACH FILM FEST 25th

theEnvelope UCI Health FASHION ISLAND K11
BE PART OF THE SCENE

Laguna warned of phony fire inspector scam

BY ERIC LICAS

The Laguna Beach Chamber of Commerce recently warned business owners to watch out for a fraudster posing as a fire inspector.

The impostor was driving a white truck bearing the words “fire

department,” the Chamber wrote in a bulletin last month. The person claimed to be performing an inspection at a local business.

Real fire inspectors always wear a blue uniform and have badges as well as photo ID from the Laguna Beach Fire

Department, officials said. They do not ask for payment or leave invoices for an inspection, and they don’t service fire extinguishers.

Phony inspector scams aren’t new and have been reported throughout Southern California. In one exam-

ple from 2016, a Newport Beach man was charged with felony burglary and extortion after claiming to be a fire marshal and then swindling a Huntington Beach car audio business and other shops in Santa Ana and Anaheim. Those approached by

someone claiming to be an inspector for the fire department can try to verify credentials or report suspicious activity to the Fire Marshal’s office at (949) 497-0352.

Chamber officials reminded people to be wary of any service companies that show up un-

announced. They also encouraged business owners to keep fire extinguishers marked with up-to-date tags and train their staff about code enforcement and to be wary of scammers.

eric.licas@latimes.com
Twitter: @EricLicas

Daily Pilot

A Times Community News publication.

CONTACT US

Carol Cormaci
Executive Editor
carol.cormaci@latimes.com

Beth Raff
Advertising Manager
(424) 225-9928
beth.raff@latimes.com

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

Reporters:
Sara Cardine,
Costa Mesa
sara.cardine@latimes.com

Eric Licas,
Newport Beach
eric.licas@latimes.com

Sarah Mosqueda, TimesOC
sarah.mosqueda@latimes.com

Gabriel San Román,
TimesOC
gabriel.sanroman@latimes.com

Matt Szabo,
Huntington Beach and Sports
matthew.szabo@latimes.com

Andrew Turner,
Laguna Beach and Sports
andrew.turner@latimes.com

Send Letters to the Editor to
erik.haugli@latimes.com. See
Mailbag for guidelines.

The Daily Pilot, established in
1907, is published Thursday
through Sunday by Times
Community News, a division
of the Los Angeles Times.
Subscriptions are available
only by subscribing to The
Times, Orange County.

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AROUND TOWN

Lobster festival is this weekend in Fountain Valley

The 28th annual Original Lobster Festival takes place this weekend at Fountain Valley Sports Park, featuring fresh live Maine lobster that will be flown in and cooked up for the event.

Organizers promise dancing, arts and crafts, activities for the kids, carnival rides, a karaoke lounge and more. All the details, including hours and ticket information, can be found at originallobsterfestival.com.



CROWDS ENJOY fresh live Maine lobster at the Original Lobster Festival held at Fountain Valley Sports Park. The event returns this weekend.

Sarabi Apaez

‘Tchaikovsky Spectacular’ to be held tonight

Fireworks are sure to boom tonight when the Pacific Symphony will present its “Tchaikovsky Spectacu-

lar” at 8 p.m. in Irvine Great Park, 8000 Great Park Blvd. Carl St.Clair conducts.

Among the works that will be performed is Tchaikovsky’s Violin Concerto, featuring young American violinist Aubree Oliverson.

Admission ranges from \$43 to \$225. General parking is included in the price of the tickets, which can be ordered at pacificsymphony.ticketspice.com.

OASIS Senior Center.

The six qualified City Council candidates have indicated they plan to participate. They are Michelle Barto and Nancy Scarbrough (District 1), incumbent Noah Blom and Jeff Herdman (District 5) and Miles Patricola and Sara Weber (District 7). The hosts of “Good Morning Newport,” Riley Hayes and Alex Crawford, will moderate.

All local residents and business owners are invited to attend the forum, which will focus on issues that affect Corona del Mar residents, according to organizers.

A reception with the candidates will be held in the center’s courtyard beginning at 5:30, then attendees will move into the OASIS auditorium for a moderated question-and-answer forum.

There is no charge to at-

tend. The OASIS Senior Center is located at 801 Narcissus Ave. Visit CdMRA.org to register.

H.B. candidates forum to take place Sept. 19

The Huntington Beach Chamber of Commerce is hosting a City Council candidates forum on Thursday, Sept. 19.

The forum takes place at the Huntington Beach Senior Center, beginning at 6 p.m. It is free to attend, but those interested must pre-register at HBChamber.com.

Eight candidates are vying for three available City Council seats in Surf City this fall.

For more information, contact Tina Figarsky at tfigarsky@hbcoc.com or (714) 536-8888, ext. 703.

— From staff reports

CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU ANSWERS

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N.B. City Council Candidate Forum set for Sept. 18

The Corona del Mar Residents Assn. and Chamber of Commerce are co-sponsoring a candidates’ forum for the upcoming Newport Beach City Council election.

The event will take place from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Sept. 18, at the

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CHURCH

Continued from page A1

erstwhile inhabitants in a symbolic groundbreaking ceremony to celebrate the new plans for the site and honor a grassroots effort to provide a safe haven for those in need.

“The shelter, which has been a symbol of resilience and unity, concludes its operation this month, making way for the construction of the new sanctuary,” Rev. Sian Wiltshire said at the ceremony. “This transition marks the end of a chapter but signifies the beginning of a new era for the church and its commitment to serving the community.”

In an interview with the Daily Pilot on Tuesday, Wiltshire explained the building plans had practically been in the works for as long as the day church leaders purchased the property and its three buildings — located at 2845 Mesa Verde Drive East — in 2013.

A capital campaign started gaining steam around 2018 and 2019, when the cost of a new sanctuary building had a \$1.8-million price tag. Then COVID-19 struck, halting plans in their tracks.

A backlog of projects and permits at Costa Mesa City Hall caused further delays that, due to supply chain issues and inflation, drove up the cost of construction to about \$3 million and necessitated more fundraising for the 140-member congregation.

Although the long lag time ended up hiking the cost of the renovation, the unforeseen delay turned out to be a blessing in disguise, Wiltshire reasons, as it ultimately allowed the vacant structure to serve as ad hoc housing, when one congregant’s volunteer efforts to help Ukrainian refugees came home to roost in Costa Mesa.

Tatiana Houser, a member of Orange Coast UUC for the past four years, recalled watching the news of



Photos by Don Leach | Staff Photographer

ORANGE COAST Unitarian Universalist Church minister Rev. Sian Wiltshire stands Wednesday in a building that served as a temporary shelter for Ukrainian refugees but will be replaced.

the war in Ukraine and being filled with a particular dread. Having come to the U.S. in 1999 from Omsk in Russia, and having a father from Ukraine, she had loved ones on both sides of the conflict.

“It was definitely a shock, absolute devastation when the war broke out,” Houser, 44, recalled Tuesday. “And because of my heritage it was emotionally impossible for me. I was at a very low point in my life. It was like there was nothing you can do, absolutely nothing, it’s just going to be awful.”

Wanting to do something, Wiltshire and congregants organized regular rallies outside the Costa Mesa church as a plea for peace. But Houser felt called to do even more.

When the Costa Mesa resident learned the Biden administration was allowing refugees through the country’s southern border without the threat of deportation, she went with a friend to San Diego and met up with the nonprofit humanitarian aid organization Nova Ukraine. They were looking for churches

that would be willing to sponsor individuals and families.

“I left [San Diego] with a family of four in my car, and I brought them to my mom’s apartment, it was available because she was traveling,” Houser said. “They had nowhere else to go.”

She reached out to Wiltshire to see if OCUUC might help and, in no time at all, the close-knit community sprung into action.

“We had a committee and within just a few days we managed to get the whole church donating bedding and cots,” the minister recalled. “I remember our first families. It was late at night, and two of my wonderful congregants drove down to the border and picked them up.”

“They brought them back, and we had these wonderful people. And then it just started filling up after that.”

As the war raged on, and American protocol for accepting refugees changed, Orange Coast members shifted to sponsoring individuals and families who’d

come through airports with visa clearance that extended sheltering needs to months-long periods.

Local families helped the newcomers fill out the required documentation, registering them in the system and helping them secure temporary work permits, driver’s licenses and emergency benefits and even helping them apply for jobs or register their children in school.

As the weeks wore on, that assistance evolved into helping the displaced Eastern Europeans find more permanent living situations, allowing new waves to occupy the bedrooms inside the church’s shelter.

“The community, it was such a beautiful thing,” Houser said. “We had people from the church and community bringing things, making food, bringing furniture. We had church members come and



COSTA MESA resident Tatiana Houser, a member of Costa Mesa’s Orange Coast Unitarian Universalist Church with Ukrainian and Russian heritage, helped refugees fleeing war-torn Ukraine find shelter in the U.S.

teach English. We had seven cats and six dogs, so people would bring treats and pet food.

“People donated cars, some people donated money — it was just incredible.”

At Sunday’s groundbreaking, church leaders welcomed those for whom the old building had provided sanctuary, inviting them to write messages on the soon-to-be-demolished walls.

Although their words of gratitude, some penned in

English, others in Ukrainian, will last but a moment, what happened inside those walls will live on in the collective memory of the Orange Coast UUC community, Wiltshire said. “It will be interesting to see how this impacts us and where we’ll go next. I think the important thing is our congregation knows we can do this. We’ve got the chops.”

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12:59

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Los Angeles Times TimesOC



California State Parks seasonal lifeguard Sierra Fockler discovered a 14-inch Pacific football fish around 2:30 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 13, near the lifeguard station located at Crystal Cove State Park in Orange County. It’s the second such case of the fish washing ashore over the last three years. (Courtesy of California State Parks)

Good morning. It’s Wednesday, Oct. 25. I’m Carol Cormaci, bringing you this week’s [TimesOC newsletter](#) with a look at the latest local news and events.

Watch where you’re stepping on O.C.’s famed sands, because you may encounter a rare specimen of marine life. One, in fact, that has very sharp teeth.

That’s what happened on a recent afternoon to lifeguard Sierra Fockler, who found a spooky-looking black angler fish, specifically a Pacific football fish, while she was walking near the lifeguard headquarters building on Moro Beach, located within Crystal Cove State Park.

NATURE

Continued from page A1

awareness, will return to the doorstep of the beach town from Nov. 2 through 11.

Christian Sampson will provide the headlining exhibit for the show, museum officials have announced. The Los Angeles-based artist is known for creating layered installations of color, light and form.

"With a solid 12-year history of attracting thousands to the beach right outside the museum's door, there is always a bit

of pressure in selecting a featured artist for Art and Nature," said Julie Perlin Lee, the museum's executive director. "We are so excited for Christian Sampson's 'Ocean Ions' to come to Laguna Beach, as we know it will dazzle audiences, help draw deep introspection about our human interaction with our environment and push us to think deeper about time, perception, unseen forces and even the possibility of transcending dimensionality."

The Art and Nature period at the museum will include two additional ex-

hibits in "Jay DeFeo: Trees" (Sept. 21 to Jan. 12) and "Fred Tomaselli: Second Nature" (Oct. 6 to Feb. 2).

In other Laguna arts-related news, the application period for artists hoping to exhibit their work in the Festival of Arts fine art show in 2025 opened this week.

Artists who have resided in Orange County for at least one year prior to the close of the application period on Oct. 30 may enter. Five digital images of their work per medium must be submitted along with the application. Exhibitors will be juried into the show af-



LAGUNA ART MUSEUM will host its 12th annual Art and Nature event from Nov. 2 through 11.

Don Leach Staff Photographer

ter having their work evaluated on the bases of craftsmanship, design, media expertise and profes-

sional presentation. "Part of our mission is to provide a platform for local artists to reach a wider au-

dience, and every year we are amazed by the depth of talent in our community," said Christine Georgantas, the exhibits director at the Festival of Arts. "We look forward to welcoming new and returning artists and seeing how they contribute to the festival's rich legacy."

A free informational seminar to assist artists with the application process will be held at the Orange County Center for Contemporary Art in Santa Ana on Sunday from 10 a.m. to noon.

andrew.turner@latimes.com
Twitter: @AndrewTurnerTCN

TOWER

Continued from page A1

Costa Mesa City Manager Lori Ann Farrell Harrison spoke on the city's obligation as a premier public safety district in the entire state.

"We are thankful for our leadership that secured millions of dollars for the state-of-the-art project that will provide help to the entire region of Orange County."

Costa Mesa Mayor John Stephens surveyed the crowd of about 50 people and said he was pleased to see the show of support toward the fire department from every department in the city.

"It's so great to be here for this groundbreaking and see this major project move from funding to groundbreaking and soon to ribbon-cutting," Stephens said.

Also on hand for the groundbreaking ceremony was Adam Othman, owner of a local contracting business, Caliba Inc., which will begin demolishing the existing tower and asphalt surrounding the building this month. Othman noted that the aging structure is



Susan Hoffman

ASSEMBLYWOMAN COTTIE Petrie-Norris addresses attendees during a groundbreaking ceremony at the Costa Mesa Fire Department Training Tower on Friday.

literally falling apart.

"We want to keep our firefighters safe when they're training," said Othman. "The concrete's cracked and falling apart, there are 2-by-4s used to hold up the stair tower inside. There's holes in the walls, exposed rebar inside and outside the building."

Othman added that his company will be working directly with WHP Training-towers, based in Kansas City, Mo., who will be erecting the tower.

In a written statement, Costa Mesa Fire Chief Dan Stefano said, "Our new

state of the art fire and rescue regional training facility will be one of the most incredibly valuable public safety infrastructure training assets not only for us here in Costa Mesa, but more importantly, for our entire region, providing our professional firefighters and fire service professionals with the highest quality of training resources and tools available to serve our community, our region, and our statewide interests at our absolute best."

Susan Hoffman is a contributor to the Daily Pilot.

WAVES

Continued from page A1

from it in many ways." Sunday's event kicks off at 5:30 p.m. with music from Crew 52 Lifeguard Band, a group which is made up of retired Huntington Beach lifeguards. The program starts at 6 p.m.

This year, the Blessing of the Waves will give special recognition to several non-profit organizations that enhance the beaches and ocean. Local high school surfers will also speak.

"Interfaith leaders are presenting a short message about the spirituality and the blessing of God's creation, more or less, from different faith traditions," Johnson said. "We have four or five different faith traditions represented on the program. It's an interfaith program, so there you go."

The paddle out will follow the program at about 6:45 p.m., Johnson said.

Elaine Bauer Keeley, the daughter of the late former Huntington Beach Mayor Ralph Bauer, is the chairperson of the event. Her father was one of the original founders of the Greater Huntington Beach Interfaith Council in 1996.

In its early years, the Blessing of the Waves was held at the break of dawn by the late Father Christian Mondor of Sts. Simon & Jude Catholic Church, another Interfaith Council



File Photo

RABBI STEPHEN Einstein of Congregation B'nai Tzedek blows the shofar during the 2022 edition of the Blessing of the Waves ceremony in Huntington Beach.

founder. This is the second year the event will be held in the evening rather than the morning, as many religious leaders tend to be busy on Sunday mornings.

"I've been to lots of these through the years," Keeley said. "There's always music and dance and just thoughtful consciousness about who we are on this little blue planet that's our spaceship through the universe, and how respectful we should be of all that happens. Any time people can get inspired to be part of the community and give service, and feel that energy from others, those are the kinds of things we want to do and participate in."

The paddle out will feature surfers forming a cir-

cle in the water, signifying solidarity and remembrance. Johnson said a Marine Safety boat will be present to make sure everyone stays safe, and a spiritual leader will come out and give a blessing.

Interfaith Council officials are well aware that Huntington Beach is in the midst of a tense election season, but the Blessing of the Waves may provide respite for some residents.

"When you're all participating at something at the ocean, nobody's talking about whether you're a Republican or a Democrat," Johnson said. "You're just all enjoying the same thing."

matthew.szabo@latimes.com
Twitter: @mjszabo

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Paul B Birdwell
James E Williams
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Laura A Mayr

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For further information, call Kyle Aube, Project Manager at (949) 644-3296

NOTICE:

No contractor or subcontractor may be listed on a bid proposal for a public works project (submitted on or after March 1, 2015) unless registered with the Department of Industrial Relations pursuant to Labor Code section 1725.5 [with limited exceptions from this requirement for bid purposes only under Labor Code section 1771.1(a)].

No contractor or subcontractor may be awarded a contract for public work on a public works project (awarded on or after April 1, 2015) unless registered with the Department of Industrial Relations pursuant to Labor Code section 1725.5.

This project is subject to compliance monitoring and enforcement by the Department of Industrial Relations.

This is a HUD Section 3 construction contract. Contracts of \$100,000 or more shall be required to address the Section 3 employment, training and subcontracting opportunity regulations set forth by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development at 24 CFR Part 135 by 1) demonstrating that the firm is a Section 3 Business, or 2) submitting a written commitment (Economic Opportunity Plan) to hire Section 3 Residents or to subcontract with Section 3 businesses, or 3) certifying that no new hires are necessary to complete the contracted work and that no subcontracts will be awarded.

THE DAILY COMMUTER PUZZLE

By Stella Zawistowski

ACROSS
1 Complete collection
4 Serious TV genre
9 Police alerts: Abbr.
13 _ and feather
14 "Here's the thing...": 2 wds.
15 Play the trumpet
16 Vegas WNBA player
17 Epidemic
18 Singer Bareilles
19 Book with synonyms
21 Beehive product
22 Rowing machine, for short
23 Hitch-free
25 Buccaneer
28 Drop _ (moon someone)
29 "I get it now!"
30 Profess
33 Vegan protein option
37 Berra of baseball
39 Round green morsel
40 "I'm all _!"
41 Go across
42 Lady friend: 2 wds.
45 Entry charge
46 Celebrity
48 Doesn't get an F
50 Records ahead of time
54 Tire measurement: Abbr.
55 Loosen up
56 Dining surfaces
61 "Put a lid _!": 2 wds.
62 More ventilated
63 Regret
64 _ out (allot)
65 Stings
66 "You _ too much!"
67 Has to pay back
68 Gives temporarily
69 Headed up

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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.

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

For answers to the crossword and Sudoku puzzles, see page A2.

DOWN
1 Bit of info
2 Apiece
3 Family diagram
4 Floods
5 Backside
6 Pricey beef variety
7 Rodent catcher

8 Amazement
9 Unmitigated
10 Aircraft
11 Dull people
12 Moves side to side
14 Old rival of Athens
20 Salty body of

water
21 Insurance option: Abbr.
24 State-of-the-
25 Feet the bill
26 Breakfast chain
27 Indian musical form
31 Leisure hours: 2 wds.
32 "Electric" fish
34 Clods
35 On the loose
36 Draws upon
38 Puts in office
42 Hiatus
43 Web-browser programs
44 Surgical light beams
47 Income levy
49 Plop on the sofa
50 "Coming soon" ad
51 Replenish
52 Privileged group
53 Plastic wrap brand
57 Flying creature
58 Taken by mouth
59 Unadulterated
60 Acorn, e.g.
62 System with hand motions: Abbr.

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