



Matthew Murphy

TWO PERFORMERS in "Beetlejuice the Musical" at the Segerstrom are Isabella Esler as Lydia and Justin Collette as Beetlejuice.

'Beetlejuice' haunts the stage

Based on the 1980s Tim Burton film, the musical comedy comes to the Segerstrom Center ahead of the release of "Beetlejuice 2."

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

"Beetlejuice the Musical" made its debut at Segerstrom Center for the Arts in Costa Mesa this week. Billed as an edgy musical comedy, the play is based on the 1988 Tim Burton fan-favorite film starring Michael Keaton and Winona Ryder.

Like the film, the musical tells the story of Lydia Deetz, a self-described "strange and unusual" teenager who discovers an "un-alive" couple in her family's new house along with a demon named Beetlejuice the couple summons to help them scare away Lydia and her parents.

The show first opened in April 2019 at Broadway's Winter Garden Theatre in New York and went on to win the Drama Desk Award and Outer Critics Circle Award for David Korins' scenic design. The show was also nominated for eight Tony Awards in-



ISABELLA ESLER as Lydia, left, Will Burton as Adam and Megan McGinnis as Barbara in "Beetlejuice the Musical."

See *Stage*, page A3

Digital sign gets nod to light up in F.V.

Mike Thompson's RV Super Stores says visibility of its business has been diminished by the 405 expansion.

BY ANDREW TURNER

A new electronic message board could be going in overlooking the 405 Freeway in Fountain Valley.

A divided City Council ultimately approved the first reading of an ordinance to allow for freeway-oriented signs with a digital display to be placed on properties that are engaged in vehicle sales and have at least 1,100 continuous linear feet of freeway frontage.

The ordinance allows for an on-premise sign to be put in within the Fountain Valley Crossings Specific Plan area. The council's decision on the code amendment mirrored a 3-2 vote of the Planning Commission on Nov. 8.

The deciding votes Tuesday were cast by Mayor Glenn Grandis and Councilmen Patrick Harper and Jim Cunneen; Vice Mayor

See *Sign*, page A3

ALSO FROM THE DAILY PILOT:



Courtesy of Knott's Hotel

RENOVATED KNOTT'S HOTEL HONORS WALTER AND CORDELIA KNOTT'S HOSPITALITY PAGE A2

Disney union workers set to fight for higher wages

BY GABRIEL SAN ROMÁN

A coalition of Disneyland Resort labor unions is gearing up for a "hot labor summer" of its own in hopes of boosting wages for its members.

Theme park ride operators, candy makers, custodians and cashiers rallied just outside of Disney's California Adventure on Tuesday morning to kick off a contract campaign a week before the first round of bargaining is set to begin.

"It is time for Disney to step up and take care of their cast members," said Andrea Zinder, president of UFCW Local 324, at a press conference. "They are the reason Disney's revenue continues to grow.



Gabriel San Román

DISNEY UNION workers raise their fists and hold signs demanding better pay from Orange County's largest employer during an April 16 press conference.

They are the reason why Disney can plan a \$1.9-billion expansion project because the theme parks are so profitable."

The Master Services

Council, comprised of four major unions, represents 13,000 workers at the Disneyland Resort.

See *Workers*, page A5

Public unable to view full study of park's expansion

BY GABRIEL SAN ROMÁN

The Anaheim City Council unanimously voted to move forward on Tuesday with the biggest expansion of the Disneyland Resort in nearly 30 years.

Channeling Walt Disney, who once said the work of Disneyland would "never be completed," Disney officials are one step closer to securing at least \$2 billion in new development within 10 years with final approval scheduled for May 7.

Dubbed "Disneyland-Forward," the expansion calls for granting the company greater flexibility through relaxed zoning to transform surface parking lots into new themed lands, attractions, hotels and entertainment within



Irfan Khan | Los Angeles Times

DISNEYLANDFORWARD would represent the biggest expansion since a 1996 deal was approved by Anaheim that paved the way for Disney's California Adventure, Downtown Disney and the Grand Californian Hotel.

490-acres of existing Disney properties through the next 40 years.

Ahead of Tuesday's council meeting, an econ-

omic impact report from Cal State Fullerton touted the benefits of Disney ex-

See *Study*, page A5

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Irvine Co. gives school district \$2M for arts, music, science

BY LILLY NGUYEN

A \$2-million gift received Tuesday from the Irvine Co. and the Donald Bren Foundation, part of a \$50-million, 20-year commitment, will continue to bolster the arts, music and science programs at elementary schools within the Irvine Unified School District, officials said.

“Educational opportunity and excellence have always been at the heart of our planning efforts in Irvine,” said Jeff Davis, Irvine Co. senior vice president, in a news release announcing the gift. “The funding commitment made through the Excellence in Education Enrichment program has deepened our decades-long partnership with [IUSD], students and families to support enrichment programs in science, art and music.”

The gift goes toward financing two one-hour science lessons a week, two 40-minute music lessons weekly and six, one-hour art classes annually for students in grades 4 through 6. The district estimates the funds have so far helped nearly 200,000 elementary students.

District officials noted in the news release that students have had their works exhibited at regional art events and venues like the Laguna Beach Festival of the Arts and the Orange County Imagination Celebration in addition to more than 300 projects submitted this year to the Orange County Science and Engineering Fair.

A large, symbolic presentation check was handed over to district officials at the 40th annual Donald Bren Honors Concert at Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall, in

which more than 600 students participated.

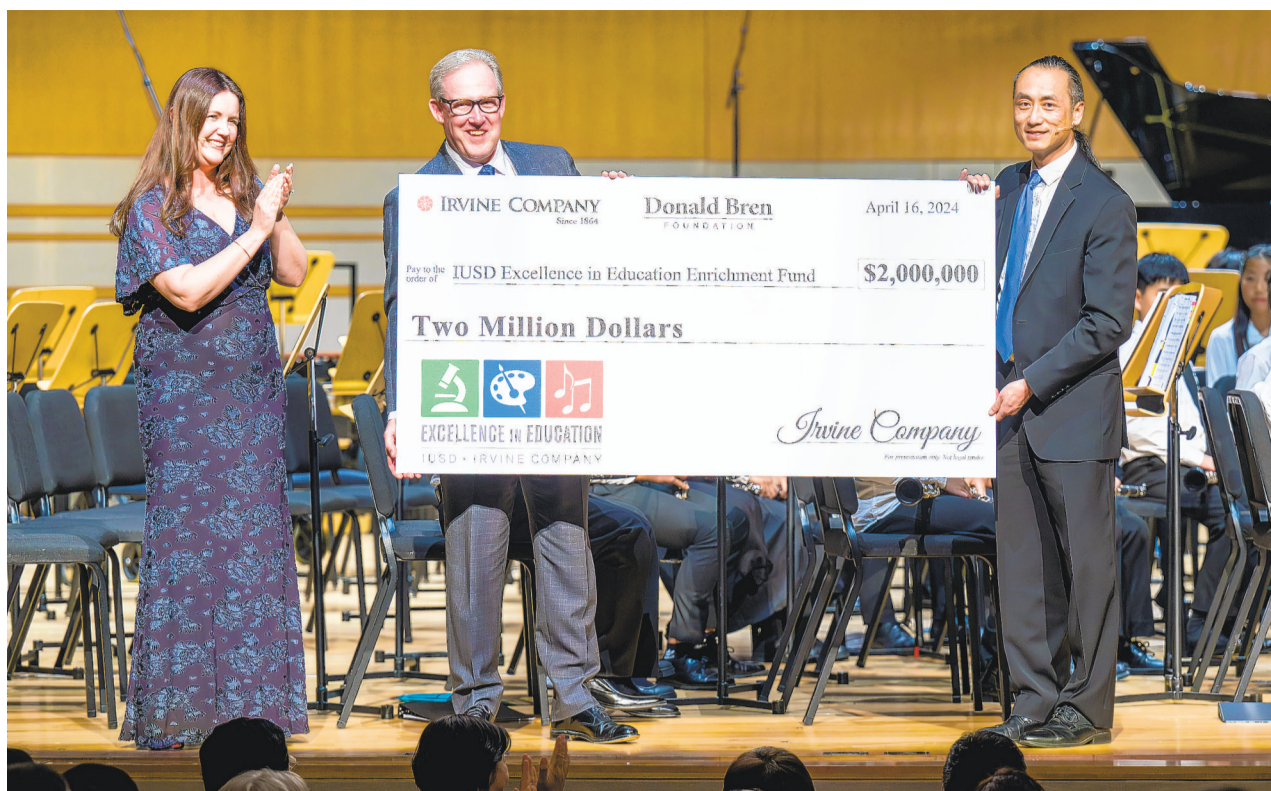
IUSD Board of Education President Cyril Yu said in an interview the funding helps bridge a gap. He noted that while the district has robust programs for students in its middle and high schools, the same isn't true at the elementary school level, where budget cuts have impacted the ability to educate in those fields not only in Irvine, but in other districts as well.

“We have other partners that help in that funding as well, but [the Irvine Co. and Bren Foundation gift] is a significant amount of money that helps fill that definite need. Without that, we wouldn't be able to provide the programming for students,” Yu said.

“Early introduction to scientific concepts, experiments and doing that kind of work engages students in activities that may lead to their interest in [science, technology, engineering and mathematics] fields, which has tremendous importance to the fields they may go into in the future,” Yu continued. “There's a lack of diversity in those fields, so how do we get girls and other minorities to be interested outside of providing them opportunities at a young age so that they are excited about it? And then, on the arts and music side, they're having concepts being taught to them that can benefit them whether they choose to pursue careers in those fields or not.”

“These [arts, music and science] skills are all foundational skills that are just as important as the other things they're learning in classes.”

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Courtesy of the Irvine Unified School District

ERIN ZOUMARAS, left, director of arts education at IUSD applauds as Jeff Davis, Irvine Co. senior vice president presents IUSD Board of Education President Cyril Yu with a \$2-million check for the IUSD Excellence in Education Enrichment Fund.

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Renovated Knott's Hotel honors founders' hospitality



Courtesy of Knott's Hotel

THE REDESIGNED Knott's Hotel features details that honor Walter and Cordelia Knott.

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

The boysenberry may be at the heart of the Knott's Berry Farm story, but the true beginning starts with Walter and Cordelia Knott. The theme park's founders and their love of hospitality are at the center of the narrative at Buena Park's newly renovated Knott's Hotel.

Formerly known as the Knott's Berry Farm Hotel, the rebranded hotel showed off its multimillion-dollar renovation at an open house event on April 12. The hotel features 322 redesigned guest rooms and suites, a lobby and great room, outdoor courtyard, expanded gift shop, and a new coffee bar and full-service hotel restaurant.

“As we were looking at one specific story that we would want to tell and base all our designs on, it was really the love story be-

tween Walter and Cordelia,” said Ken Parks, corporate director of creative development at Cedar Fair Entertainment Co. “They were partners not only in marriage but in business and spent their lives together on this property.”

Walter Knott and his wife, Cordelia, farmed boysenberries on a 30-acre farm in Buena Park in the mid-1920s. Named for creator Rudolph Boysen, the berry is a hybrid strain of the blackberry, red raspberry and loganberry. Besides selling fresh berries, the family sold homemade preserves and boysenberry pie. Then, to make ends meet during the Great Depression, Cordelia began serving fried chicken dinners in her tea room on the nicest dishes the family owned, her wedding china. The farm's location on Highway 39, the major connection between Los Angeles and Orange coun-

ties, helped the demand for the dinners grow. Eventually the concept evolved into Mrs. Knott's Chicken Dinner Restaurant.

It was Walter who came up with the idea to build interactive displays to entertain the hungry diners waiting to get a plate of Mrs. Knott's famous fried chicken. A 12-foot-tall volcano, rigged up with a boiler to blow steam, and a pan-for-gold activity were among the early attractions, followed by Virginia's Gift Shop and a Ghost Town. Today the park spans 160 acres with thrill rides and Camp Snoopy, in addition to some original attractions and an annual Boysenberry Festival, this year taking place now through April 28.

Cedar Fair, which became the owner and operator of the theme park in 1997, worked to honor

See **Knott's**, page A3



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

MIKE THOMPSON'S RV Super Stores, adjacent to the southbound 405 freeway in Fountain Valley. An ordinance approved by the Fountain Valley City Council on Tuesday will allow freeway-oriented signs with a digital display to be put on properties with at least 1,100 linear feet of freeway frontage in the Fountain Valley Crossings Specific Plan area.

SIGN

Continued from page A1

Ted Bui and Councilwoman Kim Constantine dissented.

Frank De Gelas, owner of Mike Thompson's RV Super Stores, located on the south side of the freeway at 18240 Ward St., said the business has struggled in recent years. He called on the council to push through the ordinance, making a case that his business had lost visibility due to the recent freeway expansion project.

"What you have now looks like an RV storage yard," De Gelas said. "Behind it are buildings that look like RV repair shops. We've lost that freeway visibility. ... What we're trying to do, and the reason that we need the sign that we're talking about, is when you view it going northbound, the center divider is now very high. ... We need it high enough that you can see it."

The recreational vehicle dealership is on city-owned land, formerly the corporate yard, that has been leased by the business since 2003.

Fountain Valley has already opened the door for two electronic billboards to catch the eyes of those traveling along the freeway.

Since the Mike Thompson's RV Super Stores sign would advertise its own goods and services offered on site, it would be classified as an on-premise sign.

"I think we should be a little more accommodating to these folks right here," Harper said, referring to the Mike Thompson's RV Super Stores team in the room. "They've been a good partner with the city. It's not going to have a major impact on the other sign that is 2,000 feet away. It's going to help their business. I think the sooner we approve this and they get the sign up, the better. Don't cut your nose off to spite your face."

Fountain Valley senior planner Matt Jenkins said the proposed sign would be 50 feet tall, with two digital display panels measuring 13 feet tall and 34 feet wide for an area of 442 square feet.

Mike Thompson's RV Su-

per Stores would still have to apply for the sign, and the city sign committee would have to approve any on-site digital signage in the Fountain Valley Crossings area, Jenkins added.

Grandis pondered whether a sign for the recreational vehicle dealership could be put on hold until the two electronic billboards it previously approved could be installed. That prompted De Gelas to say the business would "probably move" in order to be competitive.

De Gelas added that an on-premise sign would not be regulated by Caltrans, which was then confirmed by Community Development Director Omar Dadabhoy. That allayed what Grandis called his "biggest concern."

"... The reason that we need the sign that we're talking about, is when you view it going northbound, the center divider is now very high. ... We need it high enough that you can see it."

Frank De Gelas
owner of Mike Thompson's RV Super Stores

Councilwoman Kim Constantine has repeatedly opposed electronic message boards along the freeway as they have come up for consideration.

"Council majority approved the digital billboard by the water tank," said Constantine. "It's not here yet, and I don't care if it ever comes, but people have got to be looking where they're going, getting on the freeway and merging, not looking at signs."

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Dr. Stefan O. Ciurea is an internationally recognized hematologist and director of the Hematopoietic Stem Cell Transplantation and Cellular Therapy Program.

STAGE

Continued from page A1

cluding Best New Musical. The show played 366 performances at the Winter Garden Theatre before the pandemic shut down the theater and the rest of Broadway in March 2020. Then the show was raised from the dead for a 2022 tour at the Marquis Theatre. Now the musical enjoys a run at Segerstrom, running until April 28.

While film composer, singer-songwriter and frequent Tim Burton collaborator Danny Elfman wrote the score for the film, the music and lyrics for the musical version are by Eddie Perfect, with a book by Scott Brown and Anthony King.

The four stars Justin Collette as Beetlejuice and Isabella Esler as Lydia. Megan McGinnis is Barbara and Will Burton plays Adam, the two roles originally

played by Geena Davis and Alec Baldwin in the movie. Lydia's father, Charles, is played by Jesse Sharp, and her step-mother, Delia, is played by Sarah Litzinger.

The musical hits Costa Mesa just following the buzz around the release of the trailer for the Warner Bros. movie sequel, "Beetlejuice 2," coming to theaters on Sept. 6. Keaton will revive his role as the title character, and Ryder will return as Lidya Deetz. Jenna Ortega, who has cemented herself as a goth girl favorite in movies like "Scream" and "X" and the Netflix series "Wednesday," will appear as Lydia's daughter, Astrid Deetz.

Tickets for "Beetlejuice the Musical" start at \$49 and are available in person at the box office or at scfta.org. Performances run through April 28.

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KNOTT'S

Continued from page A2

Walter and Cordelia in a number of details found throughout the renovated hotel.

"As you walk through the hotel today, you will see their love story in all of our design decisions and material choices," said Parks.

Each guest room is decorated with one of four sets of dinner plates harkening back to Cordelia's wedding china. Each set depicts different eras of the farm, starting from the berry stand to the roaring '20s.

In a nod to the Knott's family's hospitality, parts of the guest accommodations have been renamed in a way that evokes the family home rather than a hotel. The lobby has been redesigned into an open floor plan, called the great room, with a large chandelier made with glass bulbs fashioned to resemble the preserve jars used by the Knott's family. The rug design includes artfully placed boysenberries, and Walter and Cordelia's wedding photo appears prominently on the wall.

The outdoor event space is referred to as the courtyard, a new coffee bar serving Starbucks



Joshua Sudock

THE NEW Thirty Acres Kitchen is part of the refresh at Knott's Berry Farm Hotel.

coffee and grab-and-go items is referred to as the Pantry, while rustic farm elements and old photos of the park's history decorate the clapboard walls.

The greatest addition is Thirty

Acres Kitchen, a full-service restaurant and bar that captures elements of Cordelia's first dinners. Named for the 20 acres of farmland Walter originally leased from the city of Buena Park and

the additional 10 acres he purchased, the restaurant serves breakfast, lunch and dinner. A sliding barndoor with a chalkboard wall, like the board Cordelia wrote her dinner specials on,

reveals the buffet. Art from creators like Eric Lynxwiler, author of "Knott's Preserved," and a tile wall inspired by Paul Von Klieben's vintage design of the park's Ghost Town, work together to create a farmhouse chic atmosphere.

The menu boasts new takes on classic farm fare Cordelia might have fed weary travelers or farm hands after a long day. Granny's Chicken Pot Pie, a puff pastry filled with creamy chicken gravy and vegetables, and the Maple Bourbon Glazed Pork Chop, brined for 72 hours before getting pan-seared and glazed with house maple bourbon, are just two of the popular entrees.

Knott's Hotel is a short walk from Knott's Berry Farm's front gate, and room rates start at \$149 a night.

Parks said he believes the design team has captured the spirit of Walter and Cordelia Knott's homespun hospitality.

"I think that they would both be really thrilled that we have created a place where we can continue their legacy," said Parks.

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Grieving spouses meet in mutual support

BY SARA CARDINE

Throughout nearly 50 years of marriage, Iris and Robert McCray were like two peas in a pod — doing practically everything together, from camping to traveling the world together to building a robust social network with other “couple friends.”

Though he was more than a decade her senior, Iris recalls first meeting Robert as a youth while visiting Malibu. He was an officer in the Navy and had just come back from deer hunting with a friend. Several years later, they would marry, settle down and raise a family in Westminster.

“We had a wonderful relationship,” McCray, now 78, recalls. “We were never apart, unless he went deer hunting.”

The couple’s closeness and camaraderie served them well, all the way until Robert’s passing in August 2018 at the age of 93. His last provision was that the couple’s adult son, Erick, move into the family house so Iris wouldn’t be alone.

Despite having a family companion in residence, the septuagenarian found it difficult to maintain the same social life she’d previously enjoyed as one half of a dynamic duo.

“Once you’re single again, it’s very hard to stay in with the couples. And, being my age, everyone I know is passing,” says McCray, who still keeps a photo of her husband in his military uniform as her cellphone background.

“Your first year is rough, but your second year is even rougher. People drop you. You’re on your own.”

When the time was right, however, McCray discovered a life line available to her through an unexpected source — Westminster Memorial Park and Mortuary, which had handled the details of her husband’s service.



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

MEMBERS OF LIFT, a social support network for widows and widowers, take a tour last week of the Marconi Automotive Museum in Tustin.

The organization is one of six local sponsors of a campaign, created nationally by Dignity Memorial and organized in Orange County through Santa Ana’s Fairhaven Memorial Park & Mortuary, designed to create a supportive community for those who’ve lost their spouse or partner.

Living Information for Today (LIFT) offers monthly meetups, outings and classes designed to help seniors who may be still grieving their loss, experiencing isolation or learning to navigate the world on their own, accord-

See **Support**, page A10



Courtesy of Cynthia Adair

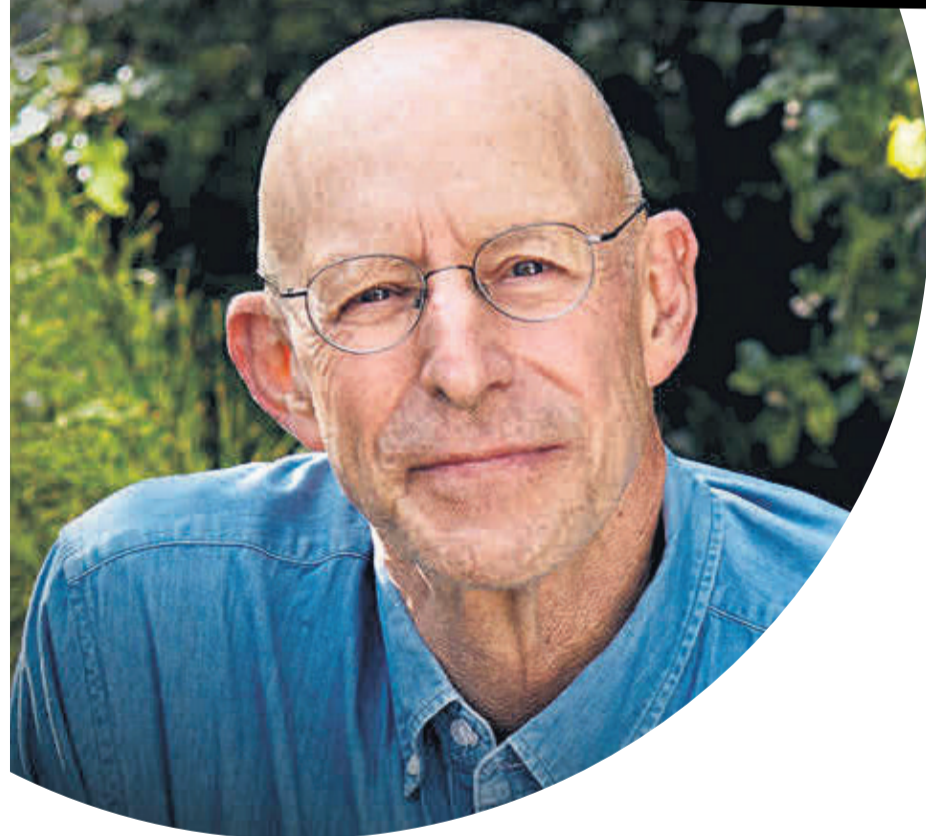
PARTICIPANTS IN Living Information for Today (LIFT) enjoy a painting class together.



Courtesy of Cynthia Adair

LIFT, A SOCIAL group for people grieving the loss of a spouse or partner, offers classes and outings like goat yoga.

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Disney Vacation Club reps seek union election

BY GABRIEL SAN ROMÁN

It's never happened at the Disney Vacation Club since the timeshare program first began in 1990.

But after the pandemic and with the Villas at Disneyland Hotel, a new 12-story 344 room tower of timeshares, open for business, sales representatives in Anaheim are fighting for the right to unionize.

An April 10 filing with the National Labor Relations Board seeks an election on the question of whether dozens of sales reps will join Unite Here Local 11, a union that already counts thousands of Disney hotel workers among its ranks.

Sales reps, who sell timeshares at the Villas as well as other Disney Vacation Club products in Florida and Hawaii, hope that joining the union will allow them to push for better pay and commission rates.

"We are responsible for directly generating revenue for the Disney Vacation Club," said Jason Polito, a sales rep. "We're the ones that are able to actually sell the product and we have to have a license to do that. It's a unique role within Disney."

But after the pandemic, that role began to change, Polito claimed.

While sales reps were brought back into the fold, sales assistants were not. Polito reports that he and his colleagues are taking on additional work tasks once covered by assistants, like dressing in business attire to stand at different theme park locations with information about Disney Vacation Club opportunities.

"We also saw substantial changes in our commission structures after the pandemic," Polito added. "The old structure allowed for a lot more consistency."



File Photo

DISNEY VACATION CLUB sales reps work within the Disneyland Hotel in Anaheim. They have filed for a union election.

Sharing a common frustration, Polito and other sales reps started organizing their workplace.

"We started talking with each other about how we could make a difference at work, and then our leadership team started acting strange," said Rana Salama, a sales rep, in a Unite Here Local 11 press release. "They pulled some of us into meetings and finally fired three people who were involved in the organizing efforts — including two of our best sellers and one person who

had almost 13 years of experience."

In the lead-up to filing for a union election, the Disney Vacation Club in Anaheim faced a flurry of seven unfair labor practice charges against it.

Allegations include surveillance, threats and retaliatory firings against legally protected union organizing activity.

All related unfair labor practice cases remain open pending NLRB investigations.

"We support our cast mem-

bers' right to a confidential vote that recognizes their individual choices," said Jessica Good, a Disney spokesperson.

Polito values his role as a sales rep and even spoke in favor of DisneylandForward, a huge expansion plan that could include more local Disney Vacation Club products, at Tuesday's Anaheim City Council meeting.

"I sold more than I've ever sold," he said of the Villas going on the market.

But Polito feels like the value

of sales reps like him has been diminished in recent years and is turning his sights toward a future union election to course correct.

"My hope is that we have enough support to be able to join the union," Polito said. "With that, we will be able to craft an employment contract that would address all of these issues, ranging from pay to business operations, as well as job security."

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WORKERS

Continued from page A1

Its current contract with the company expires on June 16, but both sides will come to the bargaining table soon in hopes of hammering out a deal.

"We value our cast members and have a long and positive history of working with the unions that represent them," said Jessica Good, a Disneyland Resort spokesperson. "We look forward to meeting next week to begin negotiation discussions."

Good also pointed to a contract reached last summer with Workers United Local 50, which represents nearly 10,000 food and beverage workers. Wages will rise to \$23 an hour in September under the agreement.

But pay at the so-called "Happiest Place on Earth" has remained a contentious issue since 2018, when a broader coalition of Disney labor unions backed a living-wage ballot measure in Anaheim.



Gabriel San Román

ANDREA ZINDER, president of UFCW Local 324, emceeds a Disney workers press conference ahead of contract negotiations later this month.

The city's voters approved the initiative only to see it tied up in court for years where it concerned Disney.

In October, the California Supreme Court refused to hear an appeal from the company, ending its legal fight. Disney complied with

an appellate court's earlier ruling that the wage law applied to its workers.

The current minimum wage under the measure is

\$19.90 an hour, which boosted pay up from \$18 an hour under the Master Services Council's expiring contract.

"It is a good start, but it's not enough to live on in Orange County," said Zinder after the press conference. "So many members have to commute from far distances, even on that wage. Again, it's a start, but we've got a ways to go, and that's what we're going to do in these negotiations."

Hector Ojeda, a union member with SEIU-USWW, is one of several Disney super commuters. He makes the trek from Moreno Valley, where rent is more affordable, but heavy traffic days can leave him gridlocked on the road for two hours.

"I'm spending about \$20 on gas a day," Ojeda said. "That's why I have to work two jobs."

Ojeda, who began working for Disney in 1998, used to live in La Habra but moved to the Inland Empire and does Door Dash deliveries on the side. He said his main job prepping

costumes for character performers at Disneyland simply doesn't pay enough for him to consider moving back to Orange County.

The Disney union coalition is also looking to tackle seniority head-on as many workers who tally years of experience with the company said they don't see that longevity meaningfully reflected in pay.

David Hernandez, a ride operator at Tomorrowland attractions who is a Teamsters Local 495 union member, has worked at Disneyland for the past 19 years.

He said the difference between starting pay for a new hire and his own wage is less than \$1 an hour.

"It's very frustrating to see, being a longtime cast member," Hernandez said. "It's a weekly struggle to make ends meet for me. Getting a raise would mean a little less stress in daily life, especially in trying to provide for my children."

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STUDY

Continued from page A1

pansion.

According to a nine-page executive summary, a full build-out of Disney theme park, hotel and vacation club entitlements would bring a "dramatic increase in tax revenue" to Anaheim. The projected \$244 million a year from such expansion would double Disney's current fiscal contribution to the city.

Despite the rosy forecast, the complete report from the Woods Center for Economic Analysis and Forecasting at Cal State Fullerton hasn't been made publicly available — a chief concern among residents critical of the Disney expansion plan.

"We need to see the study if it's the only justification for the city to completely leapfrog over negative impacts from DisneylandForward," said Cynthia Ward, a longtime Anaheim resident and former mayoral candidate. "Why would the city even consider signing any of this if Disney withholds that report from us?"

The city obtained the re-

port's executive summary, instead, which it made publicly available.

"The summary is fairly detailed," Lyster added. "We would point to more than 20 years of experience that tells us when the parks expand, we will see more revenue that we turn around and use for police, fire, community centers, libraries, and all the things we do for residents."

Carolina Mendez, an Anaheim resident and member of Chispa, a Latino advocacy group, asked the city for documents regarding any discussion of the report, especially between council members.

"Ultimately, at its core, it's yet another question of transparency," Mendez said. "This economic study was cited constantly throughout this process."

All she received in return was an email exchange in March where the CEO of Spectrum Development Group provided city staff with a copy of the executive summary.

TimesOC requested comment on the study from all Anaheim council members. None responded by press deadline.

Anil Puri, co-director of the Woods Center, said that report was commissioned by Disney for \$150,000, half of which was spent on university overhead and software purchases. The rest of the money was divided

among three researchers and a grad student to compensate their labor.

"It is commonplace for businesses to commission studies with independent third parties, often universities," said Suzi Brown, a Disneyland Resort spokesperson. "We are fortunate to have the highly respected CSUF Woods Center in our own backyard to conduct this study regarding the economic benefits of DisneylandForward."

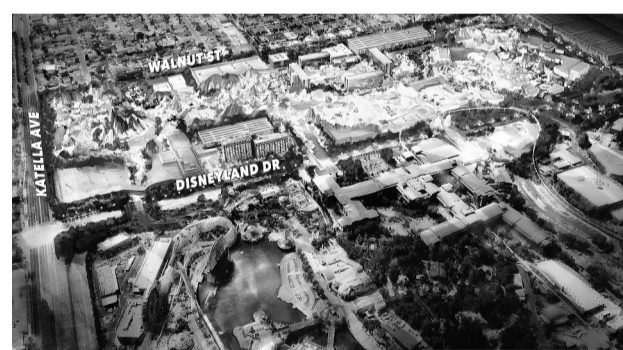
DisneylandForward's website touts the report as an "independent economic analysis." The company provided the Woods Center with data on, among other things, construction spending, worker wages and taxes.

But Brown cited proprietary and competitive information included in the study as reasons why a complete copy of it could not be provided to TimesOC.

In response to a TimesOC public records request, Cal State Fullerton also withheld the report, including the executive summary.

Anne Grogan, a records access officer at Cal State Fullerton, cited two provisions.

She claimed that disclosing the report was outweighed by the public's interest in keeping it secret. The study was also withheld on the grounds that



Courtesy of DisneylandForward

THE DISNEYLANDFORWARD summary is not specific about what exactly Disneyland seeks to build, but the company asks Anaheim to relax zoning rules and give Disney flexibility to construct new rides, hotels and stores.

state laws prohibit making records containing intellectual property, trade secret or copyright information public.

Karl Olson, a San Francisco-based attorney who specializes in the California Public Records Act, doesn't think the university's claims for withholding the report are valid.

"The CSU system, in general, has an abysmal record when it comes to transparency," he said. "The first claim they make is the so-called 'catch all' exemption, which basically admits they don't have any real exemptions but will invent that one, because they don't want to give up the report."

Olson added that it's very hard to make a trade secret claim and that Cal State Fullerton's "extremely terse

denial" of records doesn't establish that case.

"The government has a duty to make available any reasonably segregable portion of a record while redacting anything that might be exempt," he said, "but they're not supposed to just blanket deny the whole thing."

With the absence of the full report, Mendez is calling on council members to reconsider.

"This is a litmus test for a city council," she said. "We have council members in office right now who've made it a point to campaign on transparency and accountability. As residents, we expect them to prove their commitment now."

A mailer sent to Anaheim residents by Disney ahead of the vote touted DisneylandForward as an initiative that would strengthen city services by bringing \$202 million in additional tax revenue to the city in the first 10 years alone.

The mailer cited the Woods Center study for the claim, but no such statistic appears in the executive summary.

In addition to the projected revenue, DisneylandForward is pledging to invest \$30 million in affordable housing and \$8 million in park improvements among its community benefits.

Disney attached a postage-paid letter with the mailer for residents to ask Anaheim Mayor Ashleigh Aitken and council members to support its expansion plan.

The company told TimesOC the 10-year tax revenue figure was based on calculations from the study finding that every \$1 billion invested by Disney generates about \$11 million in tax revenue for Anaheim during a four-year construction period and \$15 million annually after construction.

"Disney is trying to rally residents to support their projects using numbers we can't fact-check," Ward said. "They need to disclose the report so that we can see where they got those numbers from."

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forum

MAILBAG



James Carbone

HUNTINGTON BEACH residents protest the proposal to form a parent/guardian book review committee at a Huntington Beach City Council meeting in October.

Whose 'agenda' is at work at the library?

About the parent/guardian book review committee, which will have the ultimate last word on what books can and cannot be added to the library book collection, Community and Library Services Commissioner Ceason Baker said, "Why are we not doing everything in power to protect and nurture our children, rather than allowing them to be exposed to harmful content because they are mere pawns in an agenda?" What harmful content? Content in books that do not meet her or the far-right council majority's community standards? What are these community standards and why do only the ultra conservative council majority, city attorney and 21-member committee chosen by council, get to decide? Vetted library review sources, established book publishers, the librarians themselves and parents who aren't on the committee will have no voice. Because the conservative council has more seats, they will also get to choose more committee members. So will the committee vote on what books can be ordered? It will be how it is now when our council votes, 4 against 3. The majority wants to privatize our library, but how will this work with this parent/guardian committee? The private company takes over all ordering. This entire debacle sets our city up for even more lawsuits.

So whose "agenda" are we really talking about?

The Huntington Beach Library is over 100 years old. The Central Library is about to turn 50. The book collection and loyal library staff have never been considered a problem until the MAGA council majority took their council seats. So once again, whose "agenda" is this, really?

Barbara Richardson
Huntington Beach

The H.B. City Council majority four continue to exact a toll in their war on our beloved, award-winning library. At the most recent council meeting, one of our longtime senior librarians publicly resigned, tired of being called a pedophile, pervert and groomer by those on the religious right. Sadly, several in the audience cheered loudly at her announcement. Shades of the Salem witch trials. This woman, with 25 years experience, is taking her expertise to another city where her skills will be appreciated.

The drain in our city government continues as skilled employees move to less chaotic pastures. First the majority four censor books, then they vote to issue a request for proposals to outsource/privatize our public library. They're assembling a 21-person committee to review books that can be bought for the library, and now skilled, experienced, longtime librarians are leaving. Friends of the Library volunteers who donate thousands of hours say they will not contribute those hours

See *Mailbag*, page A9

COLUMN | PATRICE APODACA



Eric Licas

DEMONSTRATORS protest a children's book review board and a proposal to outsource library management in Surf City.

Huntington Beach Library pros must not be usurped by City Council

The precise moment of birth for public libraries in the U.S. is open for debate.

Considerable credit is often given to Benjamin Franklin. Books were relatively scarce in Colonial America, so Franklin and other well-heeled contemporaries, seeking access to more titles, pooled their resources and founded a membership-funded library. After the Revolution, he



donated a collection of books to a Massachusetts town, leading to what some believe was the nation's first public library.

Others give that designation to the first totally tax-supported library, which was established in Peterborough, New Hampshire, in 1833, whereas the Darby Free Library in Pennsylvania, founded as a subscription library in 1743, claims to be the oldest U.S. library in con-

tinuous service.

However we choose to mark the foundational moment for public libraries, it's clear that from the earliest days in our nation's history, great value was placed on making a wide variety of books available to all comers. That core belief has served us well, even as public libraries have evolved and solidified their place as exemplars of our democratic ideals

See *Apodaca*, page A10

A WORD, PLEASE | JUNE CASAGRANDE

Coffee-shop prompt stirs ChatGPT to brew up bland copy

Recently I was hired to write a 200-word article based on an 800-word press release about a new coffee shop. I finished and turned it in, then it hit me: It's just a matter of time before the client who hired me realizes AI programs can write these things for free.

To size up my competition, I pasted the original

press release into ChatGPT and asked it to create its own 200-word article, then I compared our work.

ChatGPT bases its writing on lots and lots of online documents and databases, guessing what word should come next based on the words all those other articles used next. The result is a very slick, polished voice, along

with a ton of cliches and empty sentences. But ChatGPT's biggest weakness is that it has no idea what interests humans. What's more, it doesn't understand what words mean.

Compare our leads (note: I've changed some names and details because my work-for-hire doesn't belong to me). ChatGPT's

opening sentence: "Caffe Maximo, the brainchild of industry veterans John Doe and Jack Jones, has unveiled its newest jewel in the crown — a bright and modern coffee haven nestled in Redondo Beach."

A coffee shop is a "brainchild"? That's a bit of

See *Word*, page A9

COMMENTARY | HOLLY HAGLER AND CLAUDIA BONILLA KELLER

Empowering older adults in Orange County through nutrition

Recent data show that 29% of seniors in Orange County are experiencing food insecurity, which means they do not have enough food, especially for a healthy and active life. This number is drastically rising, partially because older adults are the fastest-growing demographic, creating a "silver tsunami" of residents reaching the age of 65 and older. This surge is fueled by the swell of seniors projected to represent nearly a quarter of the county's population in just a few decades. Inflation and the jump in grocery store prices by 25% since 2020 — with no sign of receding — are also contributing to this challenging scenario. April marks Senior Hunger Awareness Month, and the pressing need to address seniors' nutritional well-being demands sustained attention and action.

Amid this growing need, organizations like Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County and Meals on Wheels Orange County play a crucial role in ad-



James Carbone

ANTON DABHI, 88, picks up food from the Second Harvest Food Bank's "Granny's Market," a park-it-market at Villa Anaheim Senior Apartments in Anaheim.

dressing senior hunger. Sharing a common goal to provide nutritious food to this vulnerable population, these nonprofits meet seniors where they are and ensure they are able to access the vital nutrition

necessary for their health and vitality. In collaboration with its partners, Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County provides dignified, equitable and consistent access to nutritious food,

creating a foundation for community health. To address this need among older adults, Second Harvest has pioneered the Park-It Market program as

See *Nutrition*, page A9

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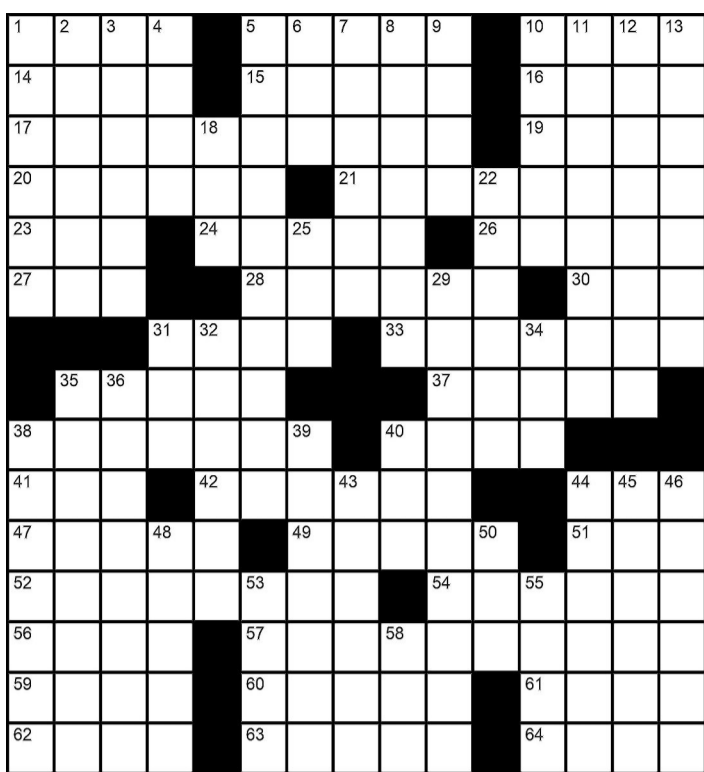
Patient Coordinator:
Bachelor's Degree in Any Major req. \$55,182/yr, F/T, Resume to Hye Sun Kim, Hyesun Kim, M.D., Inc., 62 Corporate Park STE 115, Irvine, CA 92606

THE DAILY COMMUTER PUZZLE

By Jacqueline E. Matthews

ACROSS

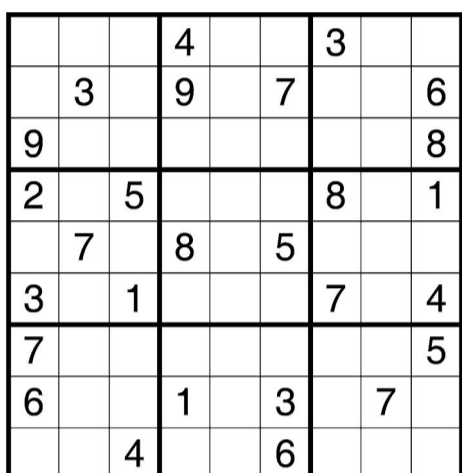
- 1 "Livin' La __ Loca"
- 5 Hold
- 10 Silent assents
- 14 __ of March
- 15 Feels sore
- 16 Unwrap
- 17 "That's how it goes": 3 wds.
- 19 Actor Arnaz
- 20 "Don't fire __ fired upon"
- 21 Helped to grow
- 23 Santa __ winds
- 24 Give a __ welcome
- 26 Chicago airport
- 27 Close to the ground
- 28 Mended again
- 30 "Butter" group
- 31 Certain hip-hop dancer
- 33 Tiny grain to plant
- 35 Fable feature
- 37 Dog variety
- 38 Florida swimmer
- 40 Kitchen amt.
- 41 Landmark 1990 law: Abbr.
- 42 Request: 2 wds.
- 44 Beauty __ the Beast
- 47 Nobel laureate Maria
- 49 Mistake
- 51 Modernizing prefix
- 52 Wiener schnitzel relative
- 54 Shake from side to side
- 56 Tehran's land
- 57 Lady who croons
- 59 Septic __
- 60 Bolivian capital
- 61 Musk of X
- 62 __ noche (tonight, in Spanish)
- 63 In __ words
- 64 Desire



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.



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

DOWN

- 1 Suitable for viewing
- 2 "No idea": 2 wds.
- 3 Remove talons from
- 4 Arthur of tennis
- 5 Potluck dishes
- 6 Knee supporter:
- 7 Safari animals
- 8 Says no
- 9 Flanders river
- 10 "Obviously": 2 wds.
- 11 In working order
- 12 Free of people
- 13 Most unkind

- 18 Sort of
- 22 Copier liquids
- 25 Marina del __, California
- 29 Firefox, e.g.: 2 wds.
- 31 Bikini half
- 32 1942 Philippines battle site
- 34 Withdrawal opposite: Abbr.
- 35 Some dessert wines
- 36 Tilted: 3 wds.
- 38 Savory British spread
- 39 Gets with difficulty: 2 wds.
- 40 The Raptors, on scoreboards
- 43 From Paris, e.g.
- 44 Actress Lansbury
- 45 Wrestling hold
- 46 " __ that sound nice?"
- 48 Instant decaf brand
- 50 Mob informant
- 53 Old name in gas
- 55 Got bigger
- 58 Test for a college sr.

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Essential tremor and Parkinson's disease are two of the most common movement disorders and primarily occur in people age 40 and older. These movement disorders cause involuntary, rhythmic shaking in the hands, head, voice, and in some cases, legs, and torso. These tremors typically worsen over time and can grow to be severe. These tremors can make writing, eating, drinking, and performing everyday activities extremely difficult, having a major impact on one's quality of life.

MemorialCare Orange Coast Medical Center is proud to be on the forefront of offering the ground-breaking, advanced treatment for people who suffer from essential tremor and Parkinson's tremors – MR-guided Focused Ultrasound. The treatment is available to Orange County residents and beyond thanks to the experience of Devin K. Binder, M.D., Ph.D., medical director of the MemorialCare Neuroscience Institute at Orange Coast Medical Center. Dr. Binder has performed more than 100 MR-guided Focused Ultrasound procedures, making him the single-most experienced neurosurgeon performing MR-guided Focused Ultrasound on the West Coast.

MR-guided Focused Ultrasound is a minimally invasive procedure that uses ultrasound waves to create a small lesion in the thalamus to prevent the misfiring cells from sending irregular electrical signals that cause essential tremor. During the procedure, an MRI is used to obtain detailed images of the patient's brain anatomy to guide and control the treatment, allowing the neurosurgeon to pinpoint, direct and continuously monitor the treatment area while not affecting the surrounding healthy tissue of the brain.

Benefits of MR-guided Focused Ultrasound are immediate tremor cessation and fast recovery time. The treatment requires no incisions and is performed on an outpatient basis so patients can resume normal activities within a few days. Research shows that tremor improvement is typically maintained for five years after treatment.



It is important to first consult with your physician or an MR-guided Focused Ultrasound program representative to determine whether this treatment is right for you. MR-guided Focused Ultrasound is FDA approved to be used on both the dominant and non-dominant hand of people with essential tremor. For those who do not qualify for MR-guided Focused Ultrasound, the Neuroscience Institute at Orange Coast Medical Center also offers Deep Brain Stimulation (DBS) to solve tremors in people with essential tremor and tremor-dominant Parkinson's disease. DBS also can help alleviate other Parkinson's related issues, such as rigidity, bradykinesia or difficulty walking.

MemorialCare Orange Coast Medical Center provides comprehensive, compassionate, and timely treatment for patients with tremor-dominant Parkinson's with some of the top neurologists and neurosurgeons in Orange County. The Neuroscience Institute at Orange Coast Medical Center also provides advanced care for neurological disorders, including essential tremor, Parkinson's disease, spine conditions, vestibular disorders and other related conditions. The Neuroscience Institute team provides exceptional care with patient navigation services and personalized care plans.

To learn more about MR-guided Focused Ultrasound, visit memorialcare.org/tremor or call (714) 378-5022.





Courtesy of Taco Bell

THREE AGUA Refrescas flavors are being tested at an Irvine Taco Bell. TimesOC reporter Sarah Mosqueda gave them a try.

Taco Bell is testing new drinks. I tested them too.

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

Taco Bell headquarters is located right here in Orange County, where Glen Bell's original Numero Uno store still stands after being moved to the headquarters' Irvine parking lot from Downey in 2015. It's also where new food products are developed and the reason why Orange County Taco Bell locations sometimes get to test new products before they roll out to the rest of the nation.

On April 11, Taco Bell launched a test line of Agua Refrescas, available in-store only at 2222 Barranca Pkwy, Irvine. This newest beverage test follows a recent test of Coffee Chillers and Churros Chillers (frozen coffee and sweet shakes), which tested

in December at locations in Mission Viejo and Irvine.

"We want to make our beverages just as iconic as our food," said Taylor Montgomery, chief marketing officer at Taco Bell.

Available in a 16-ounce cup for \$3.99, now through early May, the drinks are a cross between agua fresca and refresher drinks, both of which I enjoy.

To clarify, agua fresca is fresh juice, usually light and nonalcoholic, made by blending fresh fruit with sugar and water. Refreshers, on the other hand, are fresh fruit drinks that have been popularized by coffeehouse giants like Starbucks, which debuted them in the U.S. in 2012. Starbucks refreshers are available in flavors like Pineapple Passionfruit

Lemonade and contain green-coffee extract for caffeine without the bitter coffee taste. Taco Bell seems to be combining these two drinks in its Agua Refrescas flavors: Strawberry Passionfruit, Peach Mango and Dragonfruit Berry, which are mixed with fruit pieces and a green-tea base for the extra buzz.

"Our new Agua Refrescas ... will help us on our journey to make Taco Bell a beverage destination," said Montgomery.

It makes sense that Taco Bell would want to get into the cold beverage game. In 2023, Business Insider reported that cold drinks accounted for 75% of the beverage sales at Starbucks in the third quarter. In fact, the Starbucks Refreshers

saw double-digit growth.

Taco Bell is just one of the restaurant concepts from Yum! Brands, which also operates Pizza Hut, Kentucky Fried Chicken and the Habit Burger Grill, and already has one beverage that people go out of their way for. The fan-favorite Mountain Dew Baja Blast marked its 20th anniversary in January.

There is stiff drink competition in Orange County, especially after Oregon-based Dutch Brothers Coffee opened its first Orange County location in February this year to lengthy lines. I wondered how Taco Bell's drinks might stack against the local competition, so I also tested the Agua Refrescas myself.

Admittedly, I have not

been inside a Taco Bell in many years and was surprised to be greeted not by a cashier but by touchscreen kiosks that advertised the limited-time drinks on their large screens. I ordered all three and got sipping. First up was Peach Mango, which I predicted would be my favorite. I was wrong. It tasted more like a weak peach tea than an agua fresca, and the fruit flavor was a little too artificial. Strawberry Passionfruit was next, and it also had a light flavor. This one reminded me of a Vitaminwater, with just a faint hint of strawberry and very little sweetness. I couldn't detect any passion fruit. Dragonfruit Berry was easily the best, since it had the right balance of sweetness and

acidity. It tasted like a berry lemonade and is probably the only one of the three I would order again.

While the Agua Refrescas may seem like a healthier option than a soda, they do contain artificial colors, and the fruit pieces floating in the drinks are freeze-dried, which isn't uncommon for refresher drinks. Starbucks' popular pink drink uses freeze-dried strawberries, for example.

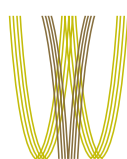
Overall, I didn't find them to be close enough to an agua fresca, so for now, if you are looking for a refreshing sweet drink at Taco Bell, I would recommend sticking to a Baja Blast.

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Who would've thought – 65 years later you'd still be running with a fun crowd?



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WORD

Continued from page A6

a stretch. "Brainchild" usually means something that arose from an innovative idea, and I'm pretty sure these guys didn't invent coffee shops. Also: "jewel in the crown"? That cliché only works when the reader knows what "crown" you're talking about. Then there's "a coffee haven," which is odd, and "nestled," which is shopworn and at the same time not quite accurate.

Here's my first sentence: "Redondo Beach is finally getting a taste of the 'farm-to-you' coffee beloved by L.A.'s most discriminating chefs and connoisseurs."

My thinking here, as a human being, is that when a truly high-end coffee joint comes to town, readers care more about the coffee than, say, "unveiling a jewel in a crown."

Because here's what you wouldn't know from reading ChatGPT's version: This coffee brand is among the best — a Michelin-starred chef serves it in his restaurants, as do a number of other chichi California eateries. But ChatGPT never mentions this coffee brand's impressive bonafides.

ChatGPT follows that first sentence with: "This marks the seventh location for the duo, who have been at the forefront of L.A.'s farm-first coffee movement

since their inception in 2006." This is hardly the type of information readers are dying to learn. And notice "their inception." Technically, this means Doe and Jones' inception, like when they were born — or possibly conceived. A logical fail for ChatGPT.

Now the AI program's third sentence: "With a steadfast commitment to quality and community, Caffe Maximo's expansion into Redondo Beach symbolizes its dedication to fostering local connections."

In a book I published in 2010, I spent a whole chapter explaining why writers should not do this, which I will summarize here in two syllables: Who cares? Such

a vacuous collection of words wastes the reader's time and, in a tight article, wastes precious space too.

My next sentences talk about that Michelin-starred restaurant cred, what Caffe Maximo means by "farm-to-you" and the impressive scores their coffees earn from expert tasters.

ChatGPT continued: "To celebrate each new venture, Caffe Maximo introduces an exclusive coffee blend, and the Redondo Beach Blend is no exception." My version cut straight to the custom blend, without wasting space explaining that every Caffe Maximo location gets one. And note that the blend itself doesn't make sense with the hackneyed

ChatGPT's biggest weakness is that it has no idea what interests humans. What's more, it doesn't understand what words mean.

"is no exception." It's the location (which ChatGPT oddly called a "venture") that's "no exception," not the blend itself.

ChatGPT wraps up with an avalanche of clichés: "all within a thoughtfully designed space that seamlessly blends classic and modern elements" and "as the doors of Caffe Maximo swing open, residents and visitors alike are invited to indulge in more than just coffee — it's an invitation to savor the essence of

community, one cup at a time."

The human beings I know would rather drink great coffee than "savor the essence of community." But I doubt that will matter when my client starts looking at freelancer budgets.

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

NUTRITION

Continued from page A6

a key component of its Senior Grocery Program. The Park-It Market program debuted in 2018 as a national first: a mobile walk-up market housed within a refrigerated trailer for seniors to select fresh produce, protein and dairy, free of charge and right from their doorstep at senior centers and senior apartment communities across the county. Second Harvest also recently released a "proof-of-concept" Park-It Market 2 trailer — lovingly dubbed "Granny's Market" in honor of the

It is important that seniors make every bite count and prioritize protein and fiber-rich foods like oatmeal, beans, nuts, fruits and vegetables.

mother whose family foundation's generous contribution helped to launch the vehicle — double-sided and equipped with shelving that allows seniors to grab the food that they want.

Meals on Wheels Orange County is committed to erasing hunger and loneliness for at-risk seniors through nutritious meals, therapeutic care, social connections and other services that help them maintain their independence and quality of life. Meals on Wheels OC is advancing the vision, overall strategic initiatives and priorities, and is a deeply committed advocate of senior health in Orange County. Nutritious recipes are planned by a registered dietician and distributed through Meals on Wheels' Lunch Café programs and Adult Day Health Care centers or the Meals on

Wheels' home-delivered program, thus meeting 100% of the daily nutritional value this vulnerable population needs.

Ensuring that low and fixed-income seniors receive food deliveries is just one aspect of senior nutrition. Equally crucial is the provision of nutritious foods essential for maintaining their health. It is important that seniors make every bite count and prioritize protein and fiber-rich foods like oatmeal, beans, nuts, fruits and vegetables. Appetite can also diminish with age, so it is important that seniors have three meals a day and drink lots of water to stay

hydrated.

In Orange County, where one in four older adults grapples with food insecurity, the looming "silver tsunami" and surging grocery prices underscore the critical role of organizations like Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County and Meals on Wheels Orange County. To access support or aid a senior in need, individuals can visit feedoc.org/need-food or call 211 or the Orange County Office on Aging toll free at (800) 510-2020.

Financial support is indispensable to sustain these essential programs, ensuring no senior goes

hungry or feels forgotten in our community. You can also give your time by volunteering for Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County or Meals on Wheels Orange County. Together, let's recognize Senior Hunger Awareness Month with a reaffirmed commitment to senior nutrition and well-being and to safeguarding the health and dignity of Orange County's cherished elders.

HOLLY HAGLER is the president and CEO of Meals on Wheels Orange County, and Claudia Bonilla Keller is the CEO of Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County.

MAILBAG

Continued from page A6

to a for-profit company, and the library will lose the hundreds of thousands of dollars contributed by FOTHBL each year.

This will not end well. The City Council needs to quit with the MAGA performance art and change course — fast.

Michele Burgess
Huntington Beach

The state's lawsuit against Huntington Beach

over its proposed voter ID requirement was another kick in the teeth to Surf City's reputation delivered by the City Council majority and our rogue City Atty. Michael Gates. While those who elected them may consider it a badge of honor to stand up to the state and county with their grievance performance art, it is nothing but grief to the rest of the community and will doubtless negatively impact our taxpayers financially. The authoritarian amateurs running our city are ignoring all other

issues to focus on their culture-war agenda. Our local government has become a joke, a sick joke. Just ask the top city management officials who have fled to neighboring cities where their talents and professionalism are appreciated.

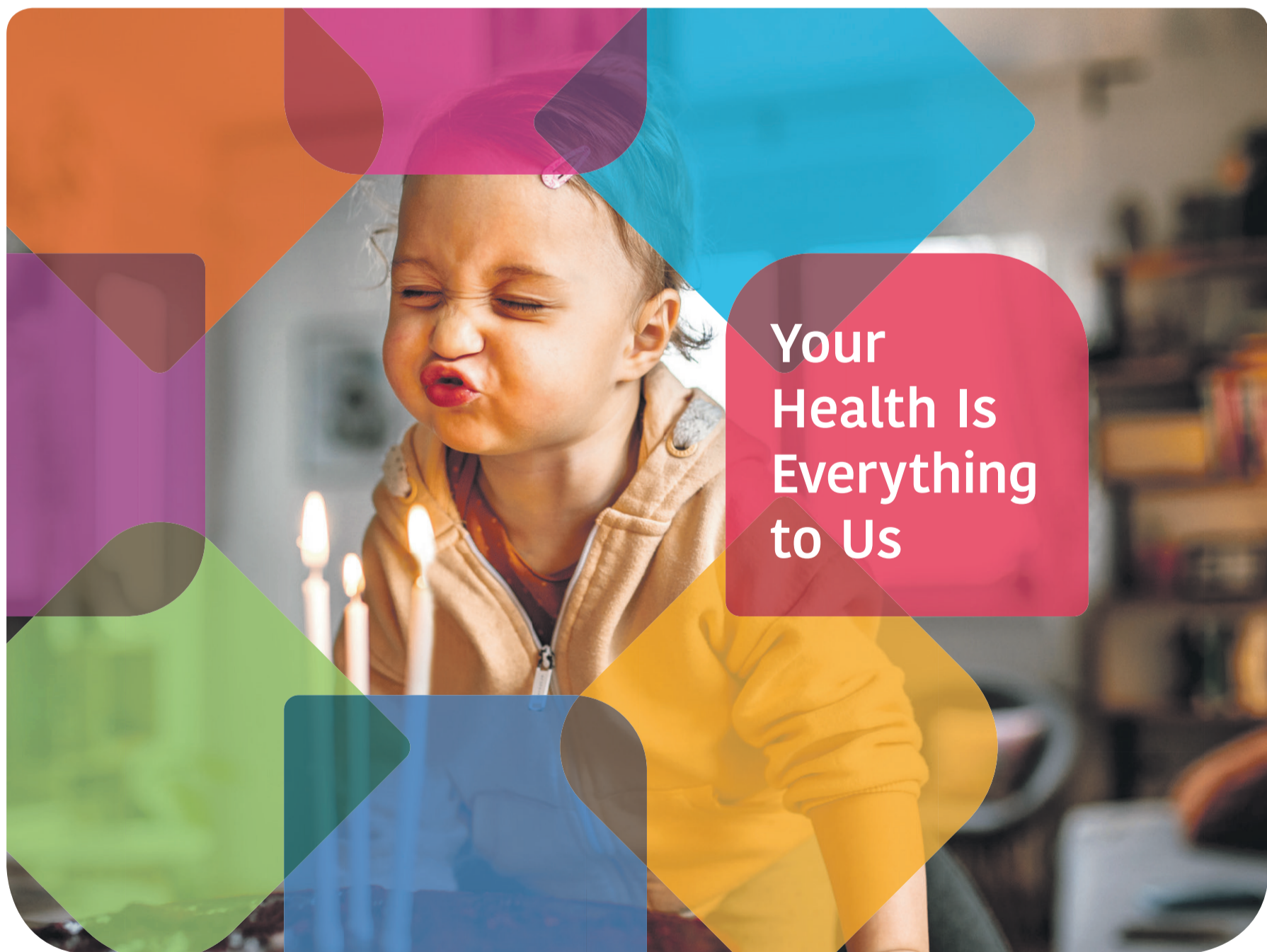
Our city is likely to suffer further losses in lawsuits and penalties before this reign of terror is over. In my 40 years of residence here, this is the worst I can recall.

Tim Geddes
Huntington Beach

CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU ANSWERS

V	I	D	A		C	A	R	R	Y		N	O	D	S
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SUPPORT

Continued from page A4

ing to Fairhaven campaign coordinator Cynthia Adair.

"It's a social support group to provide opportunities for social involvement for those who understand the journey surviving spouses are going through," she says of the free program.

"It's not a fun fact, but when somebody from a long-term relationship loses their spouse, they also lose a lot of their social circle. They no longer feel comfortable being a third wheel or the extra person," Adair adds. "Providing this community helps make it more comfortable for them."

While grief support groups may be offered to individuals immediately following a death, LIFT O.C. is for people who may be ready to begin getting back into the swing of things socially but may still be experiencing sadness, isolation or living on their own for the first time in decades



IRIS MCCRAY holds a picture she keeps on her cellphone of her husband, Robert, whom she lost in 2018 after nearly 50 years of marriage.

and navigating the responsibilities that accompany that newfound independence.

To that end, some LIFT offerings have an educational component, such as a cooking-for-one class de-

signed to get people back to making healthy meals at home, albeit on a smaller scale, or a talk from a police officer about how to avoid common scams.

Other events are purely social, whether attendees

Don Leach | Staff Photographer

are enjoying a historical walking tour, taking a moment for self care during a meditation class or experiencing the adventure of goat yoga.

"During that immediate grief, you're in survival

mode. But at the six-month to one-year point, people may begin to realize they need to start getting out of the house," Adair says. "This feels like a very safe way to do it because they're surrounded by people who understand what they're going through."

A group of about 20 LIFT members on Tuesday visited Tustin's Marconi Automotive Museum, where a collection of more than 100 muscle cars, racing cars, Lamborghinis, Ferraris, motorcycles and memorabilia has been curated in a third-generation family-owned business.

Some, like McCray, came with a few friends, but many flew solo. Among them was Garden Grove resident Carolyn Nelson, who 2½ years ago lost her husband Warren to cancer and who learned about the group through her dealings with Fairhaven Memorial.

"Somehow, I ended up on their list. So I went to the grief group and then the LIFT things," she says. "Now I do mostly social things."

Nelson met Warren in 1997, several years after the sudden loss of her first husband, Ed. The two were both widowed and met in a church small group, then quickly formed a friendship.

In the wake of her most recent loss, Nelson says she's taken comfort from Warren's children and grandchildren, who still count her as part of the family. But it's good to go to LIFT activities and be around others who've endured the same difficult journey.

"It gives you a purpose for an outing you know will be nice," she reckons. "And if you think you need to go off somewhere and cry in a corner, nobody's going to judge you."

McCray said for her, the activities connect her to a social network that keeps her calendar full.

"There's just so many things that we do," she says. "That's what gets you going."

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APODACA

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and robust centerpieces of civic life.

"I'll come back to this point, but first let's examine a little more historical context.

In our nation's younger days, men from elite families often saw it as their mission to bring education to the masses through the library movement, while wealthy women typically served as volunteers. Those elite underpinnings began to change, particularly after the 1876 founding of the American Library Assn., the first and largest professional library organization in the world.

Over the years, educational and professional standards for library workers were developed and systems were designed to improve operations. The first library school, at Columbia University, was

founded. Women began taking bigger roles. Libraries started appearing in smaller towns, rural destinations and harder-to-access areas. They transformed into indispensable community hubs.

Initially, much of this expansion was made possible by one man, industrialist Andrew Carnegie, who funded thousands of public libraries. But as the 20th century dawned, the philanthropic model was increasingly replaced by a public funding model, further enabling a corps of educated, passionate librarians to fan out across the country, improving access to books through the establishment of central libraries and small branches in previously underserved neighborhoods.

There were some darker aspects of this growth. Some libraries were segregated. And some were complicit in censorship.

By the 1950s, however, the ALA had taken a strong anti-censorship stand, and for the most part modern public libraries have striven to make their collections as broad and diverse as possible. In communities across the country, these institutions — funded primarily by the people, for the people — stand as stewards of free thought and expression.

What could be more American than that? That's a question I would like to put to four members of the Huntington Beach City Council, who appear intent on returning to a time when censorship and avoidance of diverse viewpoints often went unchecked.

These council members, who constitute a majority on the seven-member council, have led an effort that would result in bans or restrictions on certain books they deem objectionable, undoubtedly

those with LGBTQ+ or racial themes. They plan to establish a committee of political appointees that would have the final say on which titles are included in the city's public library collection, overriding decisions made by trained librarians and the desires of many city residents.

That's bad enough, but there's more. Now these council members say they are considering handing over operational control of the public library system to a private, for-profit company.

Apparently some months ago Huntington Beach was approached by its former mayor, Mike Posey, who now works for Library Systems & Services, which bills itself as the nation's only company focused on operating public libraries.

Library Systems has worked aggressively to win contracts to run public libraries across country, including in a few South-

ern California cities, in part by promising operational efficiencies. But controversy has followed it in some communities, where critics complain that the company's first loyalty is to its investors, and contend that it cuts costs by decimating staff and baring library shelves.

Notably, Fullerton decided to pass on a suggestion to turn library operations over to the company.

Huntington Beach's current mayor, Gracey Van Der Mark, who has spearheaded the effort to establish the library review committee, said the city should consider a proposal from Library Systems because of potential cost savings.

But many city residents see this as yet another attempt by Van Der Mark and other council members to wrest control over the public library and its staff because of their personal objections to some

types of books.

Outsourcing government operations to the private sector can be appropriate in certain circumstances. But in the case of the Huntington Beach public library, alarmed residents can only shake their heads in dismay at yet another attempt to fix something that isn't broken — a well-run, beloved institution that brings value to the community it serves.

It's long past time for the Huntington Beach City Council to listen to the fervent pleas of their constituents, put their backward-looking agenda and extreme ideologies aside, and end the assault on the public library. History will be watching.

PATRICE APODACA is a former Los Angeles Times staff writer and is coauthor of "A Boy Named Courage: A Surgeon's Memoir of Apartheid." She lives in Newport Beach.

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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.