



## O.C. journalist's website keeps spooky season going all year long

BY GABRIEL SAN ROMÁN

For horror enthusiast Jessica Peralta, a particularly hectic weekend in September proved that Halloween is harder to kill than Michael Myers.

As editor and founder of the "Halloween Every Night" website, she covered the Horrible Imaginings Film Festival when it returned in-person at the Frida Cinema in downtown Santa Ana and offered an expanded slew of screenings and panel discussions. That same Labor Day weekend, Peralta darted off to Disneyland for Halloween Time, which welcomed guests and media back for its longest season yet after a pandemic hiatus last year.

Commuting between the two events signaled that things seemed to be going back to normal.

"I sense this enormous amount of enthusiasm," Peralta said. "There's a lot of really great haunts going on and they're all on their game. They just want to get out, scare and have fun."

Before starting "Halloween Every Night," Peralta says her own penchant for all things horror may have started as early as the womb.

"My mom likes to say that

**"I sense this enormous amount of enthusiasm. There's a lot of really great haunts going on and they're all on their game. They just want to get out, scare and have fun."**

— Jessica Peralta

when she was pregnant with me she was reading Stephen King's 'Salem's Lot,' " Peralta said. "I don't know if that had any impact."

What did make for a memorable impression was "A Nightmare on Elm Street." As a young girl, Peralta recalls watching the golden era 1984 slasher film that her aunt had on VHS and finding a humorous anti-hero in Freddy Krueger.

Aside from horror, Peralta also had a budding interest in journalism.

"I always had an affinity for

writing," she said. "It came easier for me."

Peralta graduated from Cal State Fullerton with a journalism degree and landed a job with the Orange County Register in 2001. "Later on, I started working for Squeeze OC, a magazine owned by the Register, and we did a lot of different types of entertainment stories," she said. "I did a zombie issue and started covering Knott's Scary Farm."

Taking the beat a step further, Peralta filed a first-person dispatch from Halloween Haunt as a scare actor in a maze, a role she reprised for several years.

But the flurry of frightful events — and the opportunity to write about them — ended after Halloween leaving her with a bit of a horror hangover every year.

"Honestly, the month of October was so great, but then I would get depressed on Nov. 1st," Peralta said. "I wanted to keep it going, and I knew that other people were like me."

In 2014, she decided to take her twin passions the distance by founding "Halloween Every Night," a multimedia website dedicated to year-round horror happenings in Southern Cali-

See *Spooky*, page R4

**JESSICA PERALTA**, an Orange County journalist and founder of the Halloween Every Night website, stands with actor zombies from "The Night of the Living Dead" at Maverick Theater in Fullerton on Oct. 23.

Raul Roa | Staff Photographer

## Orange County on pace for most homeless deaths in its history, again

This year's count, which is currently at least 321, will likely exceed the 330 people who died in O.C. last year.

BY BEN BRAZIL

More homeless people will likely have died this year in Orange County than any other.

According to coroner's data, at least 321 homeless people have died this year. The final death count will most likely exceed the 330 deaths from last year, which was the highest total in Orange County history according to the coroner's office. Now, the county enters the colder months of the year, which homeless advocate Tim Houchen said are always the hardest for people living on the street.

The high death count shows how the last two years during the pandemic have been the hardest for Orange County's homeless. In 2019, just over 200 homeless people died.

"It's no surprise that people are continuing to die on the streets at record numbers," said Brooke Weitzman, an attorney and homeless advocate. "We have an aging unhoused population, we have more seniors than ever flowing into homelessness, we have, of course, a global pandemic. That has some impact, both in terms of people who may have had their health impacted by COVID, but also in terms of available resources."

Many of the deaths on the coroner's report were caused by drug overdoses, with 106 of them involving the powerful synthetic drug fentanyl. Eighteen of the deaths were caused by COVID-19. Others died from traffic injuries, suicides, homicides and other health issues. Nearly 80 of the cases are still pending a cause of death. The oldest pending death is from June 21.

The answer to homelessness, the rise in deaths and cure for the drug issues is clear to homeless advocates: house the homeless.

"It really doesn't take much to understand that if you're sleeping on the street, you're not taking a shower, you're being vis-

ited by a number of people like the police telling you to move along pretty much on a daily basis ... between the simultaneous boredom and the stress, it's a virtual prescription for drugs and self-medication," said Father Dennis Kriz, a local homeless advocate and pastor of a Fullerton church.

Removing the stress by putting a roof over somebody's head will help solve the drug issue, said Kriz, who provides

See *Homeless*, page R6

## 'No plan' to replace homeless nonprofit

An attorney for Mary's Kitchen criticizes Orange's strategy for when the shelter closes.

BY BEN BRAZIL

An attorney representing Mary's Kitchen believes the city of Orange's plan to transition away from the nonprofit is grossly inadequate and will leave homeless people without vital services.

The nonprofit has been fighting to stay open since the city sent Mary's Kitchen a letter in June terminating its lease three years early. Mary's Kitchen has been operating in Orange since the mid-1980s and has been at its current location, 517 W. Struck Ave., since 1994.

A nonprofit driven by donations and volunteers, hundreds have come to rely on the various services that Mary's Kitchen offers, which include three meals, six days a week,

See *Kitchen*, page R5

## 'La Maestra' at Santa Ana's Crear Studio teaches important lessons

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

In September 2014, 43 Mexican students disappeared in Guerrero state on their way to a protest in Iguala. The students were studying at an all-male teacher-training college in the town of Ayotzinapa. In the days that followed their disappearance, corruption seemed responsible, and their deaths highly probable.

The story of the Ayotzinapa 43, as they became known, has haunted artist and educator, Lisa Alvarez.

"Once the students disappeared I just became obsessed with the case for all sorts of reasons, but I think primarily because I was a teacher and they were students," said Alvarez, who has taught at Irvine Valley College for more than 20 years. "They were students studying at a rural school in Mexico, studying to be teachers, and they were part of a school system that existed since the Mexican Revolution to educate teachers in the poorest and remotest parts of Mexico. That's who those students were."

The art Alvarez created out of both grief and anger for the Ayotzinapa 43 is on display at Santa Ana's Crear Studio as a part of the exhibition, "La Maestra," a mixed-media show that "reflects on loss, resistance and the role of students and educators in times of violence and change."

Using an underskirt she found at a Lutheran thrift store, Alvarez constructed a garment of newspaper clippings and photos of the student victims. Each informational flier outlined in red creates a ruffle on the skirt that carries the weight of the tragedy it bares witness to.

When she created the garment in 2014, she donned the skirt and walked the streets of Downtown Santa Ana at the city's annual *Noche de Altares* event.

"I really did not think what I created until I hit the street that first night," Alvarez said. "Especially because the incident was so fresh. People knew immediately, especially that year, what it was."

Alvarez became a folkloric figure of sorts, a walking ghost story that stopped people dead in their tracks. She sometimes



Painted the palm of her hand red, and when she raised it up to onlookers, it held disarming and powerful symbolism.

"I am a big fan of using the body to make a powerful witness in a public place," Alvarez said. Alvarez wore the skirt in a

student march to the Mexican Consulate that year and in the

See *Crear*, page R2

**FROM LEFT:** Local artists Lisa Alvarez and Carla Zarate Suarez visit La Maestra exhibition on opening day, Oct. 15.

Courtesy of Sarah Rafael Garcia

# Brea police now outfitted with body cameras

BY GABRIEL SAN ROMÁN

Starting this week, Brea Police Department officers have new devices to carry with them while on patrol: body-worn cameras.

In addition, in-car cameras and a digital evidence-management system bring the force up to date as more than a dozen law enforcement agencies in Orange County before it have adopted similar reforms in the name of increasing transparency.

Earlier this month, the Orange County Sheriff's Department began phasing in its own body camera program for the numerous cities it patrols.

Brea police solicited several companies last year before deciding that Motorola Solutions' WatchGuard products best fit the needs of its force, which now numbers 61 sworn officers.

On May 4, 2021, Brea City

Council unanimously approved a \$993,000 contract with Motorola Solutions over five years. That same month Adam Hawley was appointed police chief after serving on an interim basis and championed the technological upgrade.

"This new system will allow [for] a holistic view of our performance," Hawley said at the May 4 council meeting. "We in the police department are often our own harshest critics, and we're striving to use these tools to do our job even better than we are today."

Prior to adopting body cameras, Brea police used digital audio recorders to document encounters in the field since 1973. The department looked into the new technology in 2016 but found cloud-based storage to be too expensive at the time.

But the times — and policies

— are changing.

State law requires law enforcement agencies to publicly release body camera footage of critical incidents within 45 days. The Orange County district attorney's office routinely releases video evidence from such devices when presenting completed investigations into police shooting and in-custody death cases.

"In today's environment, prosecutors and defense attorneys have come to expect law enforcement to provide video evidence in nearly all cases," read a February 2021 Brea staff report. "The public expects law enforcement to be transparent and provide evidence."

With Motorola Solutions, the smaller-sized Brea Police Department found an affordable price from a manufacturer considered to be reputable.

The department issued 70

body cameras, including to jailers, police service and parking control officers who interact with the public.

Brea police hope to sidestep issues that have saddled other police departments in O.C. that adopted body cameras earlier on. Anaheim first outfitted its officers with such devices in 2014, but battery life became a problem as body cameras were turned on by some officers on the scene of critical use-of-force incidents. The department upgraded to a model with longer-lasting batteries.

With WatchGuard, Brea police issued two changeable batteries and a charger to every officer with a body camera in the hopes of avoiding any such lapses.

"This was one of the selling points of this product for us, as battery life has historically been

an issue," Lt. Chris Harvey said. "Each car also has a charging station, and there are charging and transfer docks throughout the station. Our officers have been carrying them for about two weeks, and so far no reports of them running out of battery mid-call."

In the interest of transparency, Harvey also stated that a policy manual covering body-worn cameras is completed and will be published online soon.

"The parameters of usage are covered extensively in policy, but if I could boil it down to one phrase, we expect the cameras to be running for the entirety of every call," he said. "Having them off should be a rare exception that must be justified and/or documented."

gabriel.sanroman@latimes.com  
Twitter: @gsanroman2

# Irvine wins \$1 million to put toward climate change programs

BY BEN BRAZIL

After taking part in a statewide competition, Irvine has been awarded \$1-million worth of funding to help achieve its ambitious goal to have a zero-carbon economy by 2030.

The competition, the Cool City Challenge, was started by the Empowerment Institute, an international consulting and training organization specializing in empowering cities to meet their carbon reduction goals. As part of this initiative, three California cities were chosen to receive \$1 million each to roll out their climate programs.

Los Angeles and Petaluma are the other winners named this week. The cities will use the funding to try to develop the most innovative methods to achieve carbon-neutrality. More than 40 cities competed in the Cool City Challenge.

"I'm so impressed with the city's commitment to climate solutions and response to this call to action," Irvine Mayor Farrah Khan said. "Without the support of Irvine residents,

A LARGE crowd gathers during a climate change protest in Irvine in 2019.



Raul Roa  
Staff  
Photographer

we would not have exceeded our goal of 200 volunteers and been awarded this competitive grant. This community support, coupled with our work to develop a comprehensive Climate Action and Adaptation Plan, gives the city of Irvine a strong lead in the fight against climate change. I can't wait to see what our community does next to help reach our carbon neutrality by 2030 goal."

Irvine was named a final-

ist late last month after it recruited more than 200 volunteers to serve as Cool Block leaders, who will work with a team in their neighborhoods to discuss and implement plans for energy efficiency, water conservation, emergency preparedness and social justice. Neighbors will commit to making certain changes to reduce their carbon footprint and will report back to the team so community members will hold each other account-

able.

Team members will be able to input their sustainability choices in a website portal, such as changing out light bulbs, and then their reduced carbon footprint will be measured for each action. Irvine has also partnered with more than 25 community organizations to help reach their goal.

The first phase that the city needed to complete before taking part in the Cool City Challenge was approv-

ing an aggressive climate resolution in early August. With the unanimous decision by the City Council, Irvine became the first city in Orange County, and the third in the state, to make a pledge of carbon neutrality.

David Gershon, chief executive of the Empowerment Institute, said in a news release that he created the Cool City Challenge because "cities emit 70% of the planet's carbon emissions and citizens represent 70% of those emissions through their daily lifestyle choices. A partnership between cities and citizens is clearly needed for success."

He continued: "The latest climate science tells us we must move carbon reduction targets forward to 2030 from 2050 to avoid irreversible ecological tipping points. The Cool City Challenge is designed to do just that."

Sona Coffee, Irvine's environmental programs administrator, said in a previous interview that the next phase of the challenge for the city is designing its climate strategy. She said it could take about 18 months

to finish the plan. The Cool City Challenge gives cities two years to finish the climate strategy.

As California begins exploring ways to become carbon neutral by 2035, cities are faced with quickly adopting their own climate action plans to help the state achieve its goal.

A few other Orange County cities are working on curbing greenhouse gas emissions. Santa Ana approved a sweeping climate resolution last month, committing to 100% clean and renewable energy usage by 2045.

The issue has become all the more crucial following the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's alarming report calling climate change a "code red for humanity" that is already being felt across the world and will only continue to accelerate.

A spokesman for the program said the Cool City Challenge will expand next year in the state and nationally. In 2023, the challenge will go international.

benjamin.brazil@latimes.com  
Twitter: @benbrazil



SRG  
SENIOR  
LIVING

## Ultimately, it's your experience that matters.

To be sure, we're proud of our more than 30 years of experience in senior living. But, to us, what really matters is your experience at our community.

We do everything with that idea clearly in mind.

So, go ahead, enjoy yourself with great social opportunities and amenities. Savor fine dining every day.

And feel assured that assisted living services are always available if needed. We invite you to experience The Regency at our upcoming event.

### Lunch & Learn

Wednesday, November 10<sup>th</sup> • 11:30am

Join us for an informative presentation on senior living and the exceptional services & safeguards offered.

Afterwards, take a tour of our beautiful community and enjoy a lunch prepared by our culinary team.

Seating is limited. To RSVP, please call 949.427.9143.



## The Regency

CARF-ACCREDITED INDEPENDENT & ASSISTED LIVING

24441 Calle Sonora • Laguna Woods

TheRegencySeniorLiving.com • 949.427.9143

DISCOVER EXCEPTIONAL SENIOR LIVING

EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITY |  |  |  | RCFE#306005350

## CREAR

Continued from page R1

streets of Santa Ana each year after. She said she even wore it once at IVC.

"I did wear it in class one day, making a spectacle of myself on campus," Alvarez said. "But I want to say that is what performance art does. Instead of people going to a gallery, you take the art to where the people are."

With the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, Alvarez decided to display the garment so the tradition could continue. She reached out to Sarah Rafael García, gallery director at Crear Studio and a former student of Alvarez.

"Lisa had contacted me to ask about how she would go about archiving her garment because she just didn't see herself going into crowds after the pandemic but still felt very strongly about the representation of the Ayotzinapa 43 students," García said.

García remembers Alvarez as her own *maestra* and the impression she made. "We all remember the first teacher who impacted our lives, mine was Lisa Alvarez," García said. "She was my first Mexican American teacher at community college."

(Full disclosure: Alvarez was my *maestra* as well, for a semester of creative writing at IVC. She wasn't my first Mexican American teacher; she was my second. I had Mrs. Barajas for eighth-grade science and had to wait until I took a post grad class for fun to get another Mexican American teacher.)

García also tapped educator Juliana Rico for the show.

"A few years ago, I met Juliana Rico guiding young photographers to document the streets of Santa Ana," García said.

Rico has taught photography for nearly 10 years at Cal State Fullerton, Chaffey College, Santa Ana College, Golden West College, and most recently at Cal Poly Pomona. Rico has curated eight Santa Ana-based photographers to feature in the exhibition. They are all students Rico has men-



Courtesy of Lalo Gonzalez

"KILLING THE FUTURE" (2016) by Lalo Gonzalez, one of eight Santa Ana-based photographers featured in the exhibition.

tored, and their work reflects social movements and celebrations through documentary photography.

García said both Alvarez and Rico remind her how educators teach more than lessons.

"They make artists, relevant role models and historians — their social practice deserves to be honored in loss and triumph," García said.

For the showing of the skirt, Alvarez made restorations, as she does each year.

"Every year I repair it. It really is made of newspaper that is painted and sewn together," Alvarez said. "I take all the young men off and sew them all on again. And I think part of that repair and restoration is part of the project of thinking and remembering what an enormous kind of atrocity this was, to handle each one."

Alvarez has also added to the garment.

"This year for the purposes of its appearance in the gallery, because it is suspended and that way people can see it in a different way, I added a full new underskirt of this year's news. So if you lift up the panels, you will see what is happening in the world today," Alvarez said. "I like that sort of message, that the stories go on, the news goes on and there is always more."

Since Alvarez won't be walking the street of Santa Ana this year, she plans to pop-up on Saturday during

Santa Ana's *Viva La Vida* event.

"I am going to take my trusty Singer sewing machine to the gallery, and I have been saving newspapers," she said. "I hope to help people come into the gallery and walk out with some kind of garment or memento ... my working plan is to make face masks so they can walk out with a story from recent news on their face."

Today, we know the story of the Ayotzinapa 43 ended in tragedy due to alleged criminal conspiracies that included the military, the government and organized crime. The students allegedly were taken into custody by municipal police officers who handed them over to the drug cartels. The remains of only three students have been found, and there is little accountability for those responsible or closure for the families of the victims.

For Alvarez, there are lessons there too.

"Every generation, it seems to me, has to save the world for themselves and the future. I think that is what those students were trying to do in that tragic moment."

"La Maestra" runs through Nov. 15 during exhibition hours Thursdays and Fridays 4 to 7 p.m., Saturdays noon to 4 p.m. and by appointment all other days.

sarah.mosqueda  
@latimes.com  
Twitter: @SarahNMos



Christine and Jack

**WE ARE CLOSING OUR  
RETAIL JEWELRY STORE!**

Going Out of  
Business Sale!

OUR ENTIRE INVENTORY  
will be sold at savings up to



**70% OFF!**



Plus, take an **EXTRA 10% OFF\***

**EVERYTHING MUST BE SOLD**

**including FURNITURE, FIXTURES & EQUIPMENT!**



21771 Lake Forest Dr., Ste. 109 • Lake Forest  
Tuesday - Saturday 10 am - 5:30 pm

*\*Not valid with other offers or prior purchases.  
Some exclusions apply.*

*Due to the nature of this sale and anticipated crowds,  
we cannot offer repair services during this event.*

Go to our website:  
[thejewelryboxlf.com](http://thejewelryboxlf.com)  
and Enter For a  
Chance To Win a  
**\$500  
SHOPPING  
SPREE!**

# Rodeo 39 Public Market thanks community as tenants reflect on one-year anniversary

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

On Saturday, Oct. 23, Rodeo 39 Public Market marked its one-year anniversary in Stanton with a daylong celebration that included live entertainment, free food giveaways, a scavenger hunt and an address from Stanton Mayor David Shawver.

"I am honored to be here on the one-year anniversary of my favorite place, Rodeo 39," Shawver said.

He went on to thank the tenants for choosing to open up shop at the Village Center shopping plaza, which a couple of years before had nothing going on besides mostly shuttered storefronts and the Department of Motor Vehicles office.

"All you owners that took a chance with us, we want to thank you for being here," Shawver said. "We really appreciate all of the support from you and our neighboring communities over the last year, coming here and making this a great success."

Since opening last fall, the 40,000-square-foot dining and retail destination has been a success, flourishing where other food hall concepts have faltered.

"I think this is what Stanton needed," said Lisa Mancarella, general manager at Rodeo Bar and Bearded Tang Brewing. "It really brought different cultures that probably wouldn't have normally come together, together under one roof. Different food, different ages, different walks of life."

The diverse offerings are part of what has made Rodeo 39 popular to multiple demographics.

Kra Z Kai's Laotian Barbeque, for example, is one of Orange County's few Laotian spots and virtually the only one specializing in barbecue.

"I would get tons of messages from our people saying how proud they are, calling me a legend because they see that I am on a journey to expose Laotian cuisine. Something that has not been done before," said Musky Bilavarm, owner/president at Kra Z Kai's Laotian Barbeque, "There is only a handful of Lao restaurant out there in the U.S., and I can say that Kra Z Kai's bbq is making a lot of noise being at



Photos by Kevin Chang | Staff Photographer

**KRA Z KAI'S** Laotian Barbeque owner Musky Bilavarm, center, shows employee Kennedy Willard, left, how to slice pork ribs as general manager Brandon Dudomsouk prepares an order at Rodeo 39 Public Market in Stanton.

Rodeo 39."

Rodeo 39 also brought Bearded Tang Brewing to the community. Bearded Tang is Stanton's first brewery and an award-winning one at that. Helmed by head brewer, Jon Chiusano, the brewery that makes beer on site at Rodeo 39 took home a gold medal at this year's Great American Beer Festival in the category of Coffee Stout or Porter.

"Everybody is impressed that there is something like this here and it is pulling more people into this area," said Kyle Coltrain, a "beertender" at Bearded Tang. "This isn't just a food court, it is a legit brewery."

Many of the original tenants at Rodeo 39 are still there, despite weathering shutdowns and navigating changing pandemic restrictions during the past year.

"It has been a roller coaster, a lot of extreme lows and extreme highs," said Nolan Perez, co-owner at Shootz, which specializes in Hawaiian inspired food for the soul. "But it has been mostly highs."

Shootz has fared so well since opening last year, it is now ex-



**BEERTENDER KYLE COLTRAIN** waits for the suds to rise after pouring a blue raspberry seltzer at Bearded Tang Brewing.

panding into a larger location within Rodeo 39.

"From day one we have received a lot of love from the start," Perez said. "It has honestly been overwhelming and because of it, we are able to move."

Shootz will take over the area formerly occupied by Hook & Anchor, with more seating and a bar

serving Soju cocktails.

The community the tenants at Rodeo 39 created helped them survive a tough year for restaurants in general. When restaurants were only permitted to do to-go orders, alcohol could only be sold with food. The food vendors helped the bar and brewery stay open.

"I felt like we were fortunate enough to have the food here because for a while you couldn't purchase anything without a food receipt," Coltrain said.

Mancarella said everyone rallied when it came time to reopen too.

"It was a challenge to get everybody on the same page at first with all the tenants," Mancarella said. "But then it was like, OK, we are all going to do this together, we are all going to open up at 10 a.m. ... Everybody was getting back in the groove."

PhoHolic is a newer tenant that has found success with its pho concept, serving the traditional Vietnamese soup in large stainless steel bowls along with a half-sheet pan of accoutrement.

PhoHolic is the number one tenant in terms of sales, which is impressive considering it is a stone's throw from plenty of competitors in Little Saigon.

Besides food and drink, Rodeo 39 also has retail and entertainment to keep guests busy even after they eat.

Stores like My Flowers, the Nail Boss, Skin Design Tattoo, which is created and designed by Robert Pho, draw customers while Joystix arcade features classic games like Street Fighter 2, Mortal Kombat, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, NBA Jam, Super Mario Bros and Donkey Kong.

Rodeo 39 Public Market has been so successful there are plans to replicate the concept in Fullerton and San Juan Capistrano.

New tenants are joining the party too, like Buenos Migos, a modern, Latin-inspired fast-casual concept opening next month that will serve specialties like birria street dogs and ube-dipped churros.

For now tenants are looking forward to another year of success and growth, with each other and the Stanton community.

"We love all the tenants here, and they love us, it is cool to see everybody every morning," said Coltrain,

"You get a bunch of regulars too. You get people coming back and that always tells me that we are doing a good job."

sarahmosqueda  
@latimesoc  
Twitter: @SarahNMos

RCFE: #306005908  
\*Terms & Conditions Apply

**Westmont of Cypress**  
inspired retirement living™

**Independent & Assisted Living • Memory Care**  
**BRAND NEW LUXURY SENIOR LIVING**  
**Opening Soon!**

Westmont of Cypress, the **newest luxury senior living** community in North Orange County, is here to offer you the **lifestyle and attention you desire** in a luxurious setting designed for you.

**Resort-style living** is nothing without inspiring activities to match. In our **brand new community**, you can rest assured every day will bring something exciting.

**Ask about our Founder's Club!**  
**SAVINGS UP TO \$7,200!\***

\*Proof of vaccinations or negative COVID test within 72 hrs of visiting required.

**CALL TODAY TO SCHEDULE YOUR TOUR!**  
**(714) 252-7144**

4889 Katella Ave  
Cypress, CA 90720  
[www.westmontofcypress.com](http://www.westmontofcypress.com)



Raul Roa | Staff Photographer

**JESSICA PERALTA'S** website chronicles horror culture year round in Southern California.

## SPOOKY

Continued from page R1

fornia and beyond. At the onset, Peralta shouldered much of the workload, dubbing herself cheekily as "predator-in-chief" and "ghost writer." Like any new journalistic endeavor, she built up press contacts and wrote articles that got the site's blood flowing.

The timing proved fortuitous as the horror culture and industry only expanded in the past decade.

Knott's Berry Farm's Halloween Haunt transformation into a labyrinth of macabre mazes and scare actors lurking amid the fog clogged freeways with more revelers on their way to the event than ever. Midsummer Scream, an annual expo, began in 2016 at the Long Beach Convention Center and now bills itself as the world's largest Halloween and horror show of its kind. In 2019, the Creep it Real expo set up shop in Orange County for the first time.

And "Halloween Every Night" was there to cover all horror happenings, big and small.

When the coronavirus pandemic canceled conventional gatherings last year and left neighborhood sidewalks largely bereft of trick-or-treaters, Peralta covered how the communi-

ty pivoted — from drive-through tunnel of terror car washes filled with scare monsters (and lots of suds) to the Maverick Theater's immersive, socially distanced and outdoor adaptation of "Night of the Living Dead" in Fullerton.

"It wasn't a normal season, but honestly we kept pretty busy," Peralta said. "We still went to quite a few events. I really loved the innovation and creativity that people came up with to make these events happen. It was a different way to experience Halloween."

Getting into the act itself, "Halloween Every Night" produced an award-winning graphic illustration of a fleeing woman keeping 6 feet apart from a masked maniac with bloody blade in hand — and put it on a T-shirt.

As the community evolved, the site continued to grow as Peralta's passion project when she wasn't handling duties as editor of Parenting OC Magazine and filing freelance pieces for other outlets.

"We do have quite a few contributors now," she said. "We have writers, video editors and graphic illustrators. We have a lot of young contributors so we try to teach them journalism. It's all about fun with the focus of journalism as the root of it."

Shawn Price, her partner, leaned on his own journalism chops to serve as managing editor. He shoots a lot of the event coverage footage that appears in videos.

Peralta prides her site on the trade experience it wields. Since going online, "Halloween Every Night," has notched 25 O.C. Press Club awards for everything from illustration and graphic design to multimedia and specialty journalism.

She's looking to expand her platform in any way possible. For now, that includes plans for a future podcast. In the meantime, the site continues to profile the unique personalities that populate the horror scene and a lot of the small businesses that operate from that shared sense of love for the culture.

Come the day after Halloween, there's definitely no need for any spooky sadness, not while "Halloween Every Night" is around to keep the spirit of the season alive.

"You can hop right in and there will be plenty of content," said Peralta of her site. "We do try to appeal to everybody. We just want to share this site with as many people as we can."

gabriel.sanroman  
@latimesoc  
Twitter: @gsanroman2



Photos courtesy of the Inn at the Mission San Juan Capistrano

**YSIDORA RESTAURANT & Lounge Bar** is hosting a Día de Los Muertos celebration on Monday.

# San Juan's Ysidora Restaurant hosts a dinner to die for

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

If you're looking for a dinner to die for, look no further than the Inn at San Juan Capistrano Day of the Dead Dinner Celebration at Ysidora Restaurant and Lounge.

The property's Spanish-inspired restaurant is hosting a Día de Los Muertos celebration on Monday. Guests will gather in the courtyard at communal tables decorated with skulls, candles and festive trimmings under the historic olive trees.

The event will also feature live music, tapas, and a specially curated meal from Executive Chef Aaron Obregon.

Obregon hails from Mexico City and began his culinary career in Los Angeles before becoming chef de partie of BIKO in Mexico City. Obregon is an experienced vegan chef and traveled to Spain to study Spanish culture and cuisine before landing at the Inn at the Mission San Juan Capistrano to helm the properties two culinary concepts, Ysidora, and coffee house, El Café Real.

The dinner will be served family-style in a communal-seating dinner experience, with dishes like *quesadillas de huitlacoche*, made with Mexican mushroom and *queso Oaxaca*, *tamales con rajitas* and *Costilla en recado negro* short rib tomahawk served with charred *chile adobo*.

Guests will also be invited to write down the names of loved ones who have passed on to add to two grand altars that will be set up in the courtyard, a way to remember and celebrate their lives.



**CARPACCIO DE RES** at Ysidora Restaurant & Lounge at the Inn at San Juan Capistrano.

Live music will begin at 6 p.m. and go until 9 p.m., while dinner will be served at 7 p.m. Tickets for adults start at \$55 per person, with additional wine or tequila pairings available for \$39. Tickets for chil-

See *Ysidora*, page R6

## KITCHEN

Continued from page R1

to anyone who seeks them out. Clothing, showers and laundry facilities are available, and the nonprofit receives mail for hundreds of people.

The city contends that the nonprofit has become a magnet for crime and doesn't fit into a continuum of care approach to solving homelessness, identified as a "comprehensive regional" strategy. Brooke Weitzman, the attorney representing Mary's Kitchen, has maintained that the city and police seem to be unfairly blaming Mary's Kitchen for crimes that are being committed on the street where the nonprofit is located, rather than solely the calls for service within the nonprofit's walls.

The city and nonprofit have been engaging in legal mediation for the last few weeks under the guidance of U.S. District Judge David O. Carter. The two parties were meeting Wednesday to discuss the city's proposed plan to transition away from Mary's Kitchen and the nonprofit's legal response to it. Weitzman said Mary's Kitchen has informed the city they are actively seeking a new home and would agree to move within 18 months.

"In truth, the plan submitted by the city is no plan at all," said Weitzman's court filing, which was submitted on Monday. "It forces more than 300 unsheltered persons to travel to other cities in search of replacement services with no consideration for their disabilities, or the time involved in going from city to city to meet basic needs, all of which are now available in one location at Mary's Kitchen.

"Because the city's plan disperses people to other cities for the same services now provided in one location at Mary's Kitchen, many of [Mary's Kitchen's] clients will likely be unable to navigate the travel involved to access services now available in one location. As it stands now,

[Mary's Kitchen's] clients can do their laundry, take a shower, use the bathroom, pick up mail and medications, and see medical personnel all in one place. They are not forced to choose between missing meals while they travel an hour to another location to wash their clothes, or to other cities to pick up their mail."

In a court filing last week, the city described its plan for providing transition services as Mary's Kitchen shuts down by partnering with the county and local nonprofits to provide food, medical support, mail services, showers, laundry facilities and clothing during the transition. "The city is prepared with its transition plan to completely take over the services when Mary's Kitchen vacates the property and incorporate Mary's Kitchen's clients into the continuum of care to actually assist them with improving their quality of life," the document says.

The city's plan seems to center around transitioning clients of Mary's Kitchen into a few surrounding shelters — HomeAid Orange County, Be Well Orange County, Buena Park Navigation Center, Placentia Navigation Center and Salvation Army Adult Rehabilitation Center. The city claims that most people can be transitioned into a shelter within two weeks, so it will be offering support services for a minimum of 30 days.

City staff will have an informational booth near Mary's Kitchen from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday to Saturday for the first two weeks of the plan, and from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday to Thursday for the last two weeks. The staff members will provide fliers to people, document their names and contact information and direct them to the appropriate services. If a homeless person wants to enter a shelter, the city says in the filing that staff will connect them with the city police department's Homeless Engagement, Assistance and Resource Team, or H.E.A.R.T., which will work with the lo-

cal shelters.

It's unclear how many homeless people will seek out the city's help with housing. During a city-led navigation day at Mary's Kitchen in late August, most homeless people didn't attend the event, electing to stay within the walls of Mary's Kitchen.

Starla Acosta, who has been coming to Mary's Kitchen for about five years, said it's because of "lack of trust" with the city.

Considering the plan appears to be dependent on transitioning people to shelters, it may leave out people who don't want to be in shelter settings in close proximity to many other people. Weitzman specifically pointed out in a phone interview this week that domestic violence survivors and veterans can avoid shelters due to trauma. The American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California filed a lawsuit last year against the shelters alleging sexual harassment and inhumane conditions. Others may avoid shelters in Orange County because of COVID-19 outbreaks.

Weitzman said the shelters the city will refer homeless people to don't have enough room, and many of them have requirements that exclude certain individuals.

"The plan seems to be dependent upon the fact that somehow in zero to 14 days, some city staff person at a kiosk at the site could get everyone into services," Weitzman said.

Her court filing addresses each of the proposed shelters and explains their limitations in placing clients of Mary's Kitchen. HomeAid is a small shelter that accepts families with children, Be Well Orange County is a medical facility that accepts people in crisis with health insurance and the Salvation Army Rehabilitation Center is a religious work rehabilitation program that has a number of requirements for admittance, including that its clients be between 21 to 65 years old, possess a valid picture ID, a Social Security

See *Kitchen*, page R6



You're invited

## Come and Learn About Your Medicare Options

Please join me for a free special event to find answers to your Medicare questions. We'll talk about which benefits are important to you and explore your Anthem Blue Cross Medicare Advantage plan options.

AltaMed

1325 N Anaheim Blvd  
Anaheim, CA 92801

11/08/21, 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM

11/10/21, 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM

11/17/21, 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM

AltaMed

4010 E Chapman Ave  
Orange, CA 92869

11/04/21, 5:00 PM - 6:00 PM

11/11/21, 5:00 PM - 6:00 PM







LAUREN MULLIS

949-226-2930, TTY: 711

CA Lic. # 4085493 Authorized Agent

LAUREN.MULLIS@ANTHEM.COM

## Here's what you can find out by attending the event

-  The differences between Original Medicare and Medicare Advantage plans
-  Covered at-home benefits you receive, like telehealth and mail-order prescriptions
-  How much your plan might cost and how it compares to other plans
-  Whether your current doctors and prescriptions are covered
-  Which option is best for you based on your specific health situation
-  How the Medicare process works for those turning 65 and new to Medicare

Discover the Benefit of Blue.™

Hay disponibles servicios de traducción; póngase en contacto con el plan de salud o su agente. 我們提供翻譯服務; 請聯絡您的醫療保健計劃或代理人。 For accommodations of persons with special needs at meetings, call 1-888-211-9817 (TTY: 711). Eligible for a free drawing, gift, or prizes with no obligation to enroll. This policy has exclusions, limitations, and terms under which the policy may be continued in force or discontinued. For costs and complete details of coverage, please contact your agent or the health plan. Anthem Blue Cross is the trade name of Blue Cross of California. Anthem Blue Cross and Anthem Blue Cross Life and Health Insurance Company are independent licensees of the Blue Cross Association. Anthem is a registered trademark of Anthem Insurance Companies, Inc.

Y0114\_22\_3000402\_I\_C\_0002 10/01/2021

1034244MUSENMUB\_0002

## YSIDORA

Continued from page R5

dren 12 and under start at \$19 and reservations can be made on Open Table or by calling (949) 503-5720.

In addition to the Day of the Dead dinner celebration, the Inn at San Juan Capistrano will also host a Trick or Treat event in the courtyard of their sister concept, El Café Real, on Sunday from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Little ones can collect candy and adults can enjoy a tapas menu with items like short rib sliders, macaroni and cheese croquettes and special *la colombe* craft drink specials available for purchase. A free, family-friendly movie will also be shown in the

courtyard, and no reservations are required.

Ysidora Restaurant and Lounge opened at the Inn at San Juan Capistrano in 2020 and is named for the Mission's historic matriarch, Ysidora Forster.

The property is also home to an olive grove, which hosts a Nuvo Olive Oil Tasting each second Thursday for the month featuring Chef Obregon's signature "Exploding Olive," blood orange olive oil cake, balsamic vinegar cocktails and EVOO and balsamic-based gelato and sorbet. Upcoming dates are Nov. 11 and Dec. 9, and the tastings are priced at \$20 per person.

sarah.mosqueda  
@latimes.com  
Twitter: @SarahNMos



**EXECUTIVE CHEF**  
Aaron Obregon began his culinary career in Los Angeles before becoming chef de partie of BIKO in Mexico City.

Courtesy of the Inn at the Mission San Juan Capistrano

## KITCHEN

Continued from page R5

card and the ability to work eight hours a day and pass a screening process, Weitzman's court filing says. The Placentia shelter has had few beds available in the past month, "and it is likely the same at the Buena Park shelter," the filing reads.

The city says in its filing that it will also provide a list of local food pantries and will have a food truck on the site of Mary's Kitchen from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. with offerings from Second Harvest Food Bank, Abound Food Care and the Hunger Alliance. It will provide "grab-n-go nutritious food items," the city says.

However, the food truck may be suspended if the demand for it decreases, or if having the food prepared on the truck becomes wasteful. Then, gift cards will be given out to local restaurants. The one example the city provided is Subway.

Weitzman said many of the food offerings on the flier are not in Orange and is concerned with gift cards being given out to undetermined restaurants for homeless people who don't have vehicles.

"Exactly the type of nutri-

tional deficit that Mary's Kitchen seeks to avoid to improve people's health," Weitzman said of the fast food restaurant Subway. "And exactly the type of having to shuffle around from place to place that Mary's Kitchen seeks to avoid by having the services on one site."

Weitzman is also concerned that one of the food providers, Second Harvest, has agreed to provide 600 bags of food over a two-week period. Mary's Kitchen provides about 300 meals a day, Weitzman said.

Weitzman is also left wondering what homeless people will do for food following the weeks-long food offerings.

A representative for Second Harvest said the meal bags will include fruits, nuts, single-serve peanut butter, protein bars, whole wheat crackers, tuna and other items that don't require refrigeration or heating.

Orange city spokesman Paul Sitkoff said over the phone that the meal bags will not have hot foods, unlike Mary's Kitchen. Sitkoff also said that homeless people will be able to take three bags if they need it.

Sitkoff also said that the city has it planned out that it will be receiving enough

food from the three nonprofits to last a minimum of 30 days.

"We're not going to limit," he said. "If somebody needs three, they'll get three, if somebody wants two, they'll get two."

The city says in its filing that it will be partnering with the county to provide onsite medical assistance for physical, mental and behavioral services up to three times per week during the transition. In her court filing, Weitzman contends that the county has not agreed to do this. When asked to clarify, the county did not provide a response by press time.

Under the transition plan, homeless people will receive a voucher to a local thrift store for clothing, and they can also visit a "pop up" clothing distribution at a local church. The city says in the filing that it will be collecting and distributing mail during the transition period, with a designated pick-up hour from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. It's unclear what the homeless should do for mail delivery following the transition period. The city says the homeless "will be given an informational flier and staff will explain the options to transition to a new address for mail receipt."

The city also says it plans

to rent a three-stall shower and bathroom, which will be available between 9:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m., and it will purchase vouchers for laundry services at Light-house Laundromat, which Weitzman criticized for being a 40-minute walk away from Mary's Kitchen.

In her court filing, Weitzman says that the city's mail plan would likely cause people to miss paychecks, benefits payments and medications that they currently receive at Mary's Kitchen and criticized the city's recommendation that the homeless move their mailing address to another homeless service provider that can take hours to get to. The city also says that those who enroll in the county's continuum of care system will receive a mailing address, but Weitzman's court filing said the county confirmed that it does not "act as a mail repository for anyone enrolled in the program."

Weitzman also takes umbrage with the city's proposed clothing voucher.

"The city references a voucher from some unknown location by an unidentified organization and its affiliates," the court filing says. "The vague plan becomes very hard to accurately assess."

When asked what store the vouchers would be for, what people could get with the voucher and how many vouchers a person would receive, Sitkoff did not immediately have answers.

The city also says that it plans to partner with another service provider on the Mary's Kitchen property if the nonprofit leaves.

When asked whether that's a guarantee from the city that there will be another homeless service provider at the Mary's Kitchen site, Sitkoff responded: "What I would say is that's looking too far forward. Right now, we are concentrating on serving the people in the local area that used to be served by Mary's Kitchen and getting through the transition period. And then we'll have more information on what may or may not be done with that parcel on a future date."

When asked how much money the city is planning on spending on its transition plan, Sitkoff responded: "There is city money, I don't have the figures in front of me, but the fact is that we will be using whatever resources we need to use in order to get these people through the transition and into the continuum of care."

The police department's H.E.A.R.T. team will be continuing outreach efforts after the transition period.

Many cities in Orange County are considering or have already chosen to use teams of medical workers to respond to homeless people and mental health-related calls for service. Many have criticized police responses to mental health and homeless-related calls because officers may lack the expertise to deescalate tense situations. Often, the sight of a law enforcement officer can aggravate a person suffering with mental health issues.

"The real underlying problem is that people cannot have to travel hours to each item, a person cannot possibly go to a doctor's appointment, take a two-hour bus to get their laundry, take a two-hour bus to get their mail, take a two-hour bus to get their meal and hope to survive and come up with all the money for all those buses," Weitzman said. "... Someone needs to shower and do their laundry and receive their mail and get their meals all at one place, and that's why Mary's Kitchen is critical and why it saves lives."

benjamin.brazil@latimes.com  
Twitter: @benbrazil

## HOMELESS

Continued from page R1

monthly reports on homeless deaths for the Voice of OC.

Weitzman said that an abundance of research shows that people struggling with substance abuse are not able to address their issues until they have a home. She said the current structure in the county takes far too long to help homeless people struggling with substance abuse disorders.

"If we're going to get ahead of this thing, we need to take drastic action quickly to increase the available housing," Weitzman said. "Whether that's converting empty motels and hotels or approving more projects for development, there's any number of paths we can take to get there. But the system that we have relied upon in the past of kind of slowly developing a congregate shelter in a city once every couple of years, hoping that maybe people will pass through it to get to housing, it isn't working. It isn't enough."

Weitzman also said that cities should be opening resources like Mary's Kitchen, a nonprofit in Orange that provides a number of services to hundreds of homeless people, including three meals, six days a week. The city has been trying to shut down the nonprofit for the last few months, but Mary's Kitchen has been fighting the effort in court. Weitzman is representing the nonprofit.

Advocates have been concerned about a rise in homeless deaths since the early months of the pandemic. Kriz and other activists held car rallies to call on Orange County to do more for its homeless residents. During the pandemic, the county focused on rolling out Project Roomkey, a statewide program that temporarily placed the homeless in hotel rooms, and Project Homekey, another state initiative that entails purchasing and rehabilitating hotels, motels, vacant apartments and other buildings to house the homeless.

Homeless advocates likened the hotels and shelters to being run like prisons.

Houchen said homeless people reported feeling



File Photo

**CASE WORKERS** talk to homeless men in Costa Mesa during the 2019 Point in Time count.

"isolated" and "confined" staying in Project Roomkey hotels. Kriz called the program "voluntary incarceration" due to the quarantine restrictions placed on homeless people.

Weitzman said Project Homekey has so far not served enough people, with just 132 rooms provided by the Stanton hotel and motel it purchased. The county had almost 7,000 homeless people during the 2019 Point in Time count, which was the most recent. Weitzman said there has probably been a 20% to 30% increase in those numbers over the last few years with the economic downturn from the pandemic.

"Given the amount of state and federal money flowing into that program, we have to ask, why is it only in one city?" Weitzman said. "Why didn't Orange County jump on the opportunity to get sites in every city that had an available building?"

Kriz echoed Weitzman's sentiments about Homekey.

"It's nothing near what is needed," Kriz said.

Kriz said that even if a person living on the street were willing to take part in one of the county programs, it was difficult for them to be placed. The people who were largely able to take advantage of those programs were already in shelters, he said.

"So if you're outdoors at the beginning of COVID, that's where you were, that's where you are, and that's where a lot of people died," Kriz said.

Douglas Becht, acting di-

rector of the county's Office of Care Coordination, described in an emailed comment all that the county has done for the homeless during the pandemic. In addition to Roomkey and Homekey, the county also started a Project Toolbelt program, which was used to transfer Project Roomkey participants to next step housing options. Becht also said that the county is working with public housing authorities to hand out more than 1,000 housing vouchers.

Weitzman said the voucher number is also low considering how many homeless people are in the county. She also said a voucher doesn't ensure that somebody will be easily housed. Individuals have to find a landlord who will accept the voucher, which is becoming increasingly difficult in Orange County.

"It is becoming harder and harder to find rentals in Orange County," Weitzman said. "The rental market has a very low vacancy right now, at least in the lower end."

Becht also mentioned the county's opening of the Yale homeless shelter in Santa Ana earlier this year.

"The County of Orange continues to work with state and local public health services on the implementation of COVID-19 guidance and protocols for emergency shelters including but not limited to following social distance guidance for sleeping and communal areas, cleaning protocols, installing physical barriers and providing Food and Drug Administration

approved personal protective equipment for staff and program participants," Becht said. "In addition, COVID-19 testing and vaccines are available for all program participants and staff, and will be available on an ongoing basis. The goal is to promote vaccinations among this community and to ensure precautions are taken to safeguard against the spread of COVID-19."

Houchen said many of the homeless die on the street because they don't want to go to a shelter. Several homeless shelters have opened in the last couple of years in Orange County in response to a landmark lawsuit filed in 2018 by Weitzman's firm, Elder Law and Disability Rights (ELDR) Center, in an attempt to prevent the county from clearing a homeless encampment near the Santa Ana River.

Government officials and others tend to call these kinds of homeless people "service resistant." But, as Houchen points out, there's good reason for them to resist going to shelters in Orange County. Homeless shelters in the county have faced COVID-19 outbreaks and a lawsuit for sexual harassment and inhumane conditions.

Houchen said that products and services are generally tailored to the desires of consumers, except in the case of the homeless, who are regularly presented with substandard services. Then when they reject these services, they are termed "service resistant," Houchen said.

Houchen said the shelters need to be more trauma-informed. According to the National Coalition for the Homeless, this emphasizes "understanding, compassion and responding to the effects of all types of trauma."

"We need to reform our shelters because nobody wants to go to them," Houchen said. "... Once we start providing services and facilities that are acceptable to these folks, then we can expect them to take advantage."

Houchen mentioned that when he was homeless he disliked staying in congregate shelters in the winter because it would almost guarantee catching an illness.

"Having personally lived in shelters before, I could tell you when I was sitting there in the middle of winter at the armory, and there's just people all around you, just within inches of you, and it seemed like half the people in there are coughing and sneezing," Houchen said. "You have to wonder, what's flying around the air in here? This was before there was COVID."

Even if homeless individuals are hoping to enter a shelter, it can be difficult. Weitzman said you can't walk into a shelter in Orange County, you have to be referred.

She said many cities use police for referrals, which can be a barrier for homeless people who view law enforcement as antagonistic.

"The more barriers that we create in our system to people getting access, the more we're going to see people unable to gain access," Weitzman said.

Another potential factor to the homeless death count could be the closure earlier this year of the county's Courtyard shelter in Santa Ana, which was home to more than 400 people. While the shelter was heavily criticized for its living conditions, it was Orange County's only walk-in shelter. The county opened its Yale shelter, which has more services but requires referrals and is more restrictive.

Santa Ana also closed its homeless shelter, the Link, earlier this year. It is supposed to be replaced by the city's Carnegie Avenue shelter, which hasn't yet opened. Possibly in re-

sponse to the lack of shelter in the city, dozens of homeless people gathered in the parking lot of a Mexican cultural center during the pandemic.

"Santa Ana never should have closed its shelter without having a replacement online," Kriz said.

Kriz and Houchen believe more homeless people have died than are included in the coroner's data. In past years, Houchen added names to the coroner's list of homeless people who died that he independently verified. Kriz said in the past he held a memorial service for a homeless person that wasn't included on the list. "Certainly the number is higher than what is listed," Kriz said.

As the pandemic continues, Houchen said one of the major issues he's focusing on is the lack of information the coroner's office provides when a homeless person dies. He said he's followed up on cases that were pending for more than a year without updates.

Weitzman said the county should be tracking important information, like how many contacts a deceased homeless person had with the healthcare system or with law enforcement. She said the county should be tracking this important data on each of the 300-plus homeless people who died in order to fix the gaps in the system.

"They need to supply us with the information but they don't," Houchen said. "They just give us very little information about folks out there on the streets. If they would give us more, then we might be able to be more proactive in saving lives ... This problem should have been stamped out before COVID, or at least there should have been some really good signs of progress. In my time, I've learned to take progress in small increments. But there's never been any huge progress, as far as I can see, to eliminate or lower those numbers on the street."

"We haven't learned anything from the past. Whether it's COVID-related or not, there's not enough care. Whether it be in a shelter or on the street, we're not giving them the options that would be best for their health."

benjamin.brazil@latimes.com  
Twitter: @benbrazil