

# Daily Pilot

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2020 // Now including Coastline Pilot and Huntington Beach Independent // dailypilot.com

## Orange County obliterates coronavirus record

BY LUKE MONEY,  
RONG-GONG LIN II

Orange County reported its highest daily number of coronavirus cases over the weekend, the latest record to fall amid the most brutal barrage from a disease that is now infecting, hospitalizing and killing Californians at levels never seen before.

The 4,606 new coronavirus infections announced Sunday shattered the county's previous one-day high of 3,445, according to data compiled by The Times.

There have been 3,000-plus new daily cases logged county-wide only five times throughout the entire pandemic — all since Dec. 13.

Over the last week, Orange

See **Record**, page A3



Christina House | Los Angeles Times

**OVER THE** last week, Orange County has seen roughly 693 new coronavirus cases per 100,000 residents, the 14th-highest county rate in the state, Times' data show. Above: Triage tents are set up at UC Irvine Medical Center.

Healthcare agency reports a single-day high of 4,060 cases on Sunday, as officials ask people to not gather.

BY LILLY NGUYEN

Cases in Orange County have continued to push past previous records as county health officials plead with residents to refrain from gathering this Christmas and New Year's.

On Sunday, the Orange County Health Care Agency reported 4,060 new daily cases, breaking records set just last week.

On Monday, the county health agency reported 3,753. Tuesday's numbers fell further to 2,233.

Hospitalizations are now up to 1,806 with 390 patients currently in intensive care units.

Just two deaths were recorded, both residents not currently living in a care facility. Data on Tuesday

show that adult bed capacity in intensive care units across the county are up to an unadjusted 7.5%.

The adjusted number of beds available is 0%.

This mirrors the rest of Southern California, which the state defines as Imperial, Inyo, Los Angeles, Mono, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara and Ventura counties. The region bottomed out on Thursday.

Orange County is deploying mobile field hospitals as the county continues to respond to an uptick in hospitalizations. County officials said one such

See **Orange**, page A3



Blaine Ohigashi | Angels Baseball LP

**ANGELS BROADCASTER** Victor Rojas, his wife and the couple's two teenagers run Big Fly Gear, a boutique apparel company, out of their Texas home.

## The voice of the Angels sells Dodgers championship T-shirts

BY BILL SHAIKIN

The holiday shopping season is on, and with it the hunt for merchandise to commemorate the Dodgers' first World Series championship since 1988.

One T-shirt is particularly eye-catching, with its homages to Vin Scully, the Dodgers' classic uniform, and the hexagonal Dodger Stadium scoreboard.

Who sells that shirt? The voice of the Angels.

The "It's Time for World Champions Baseball!" shirt is the newest item in the collection of Big Fly Gear, a boutique apparel company

run by Angels broadcaster Victor Rojas and his family.

Rojas, his wife, and the couple's two teenagers run the business out of their Texas home. He collaborates in designs, stuffs T-shirts into packages for shipping, sends handwritten notes and makes telephone calls to thank customers. He just might be the person on the other end of your email question.

"Some people don't believe it's me when I reply to emails," he said.

Some people did not believe, either, when Rojas revealed last month he had interviewed to become the Angels' general manager. Some might not have taken him seriously,

but he believes Angels owner Arte Moreno, President John Carpino and senior advisor Bill Stoneman did.

"The interview went well," said Stoneman, the GM of the Angels' 2002 championship team. "He had a lot of competition, but he came across very well. His thoughts were good. He understands the baseball side of things pretty well. He's got a great background for it."

As Rojas manned the microphone last summer, a positive spin became increasingly difficult to find. The Angels stumbled to their

See **Voice**, page A3

## H.B. City Council members spar over mask usage

Mayor Pro Tem Tito Ortiz and Erik Peterson did not wear face coverings at Monday night's meeting.

BY MATT SZABO

Tempers flared at Monday night's Huntington Beach City Council meeting, as a clear divide has been established on the dais on the issue of mask usage during the coronavirus pandemic.

Mayor Pro Tem Tito Ortiz and City Councilman Dan Kalmick, each of whom were elected in November, were at the heart of the dispute.

Following a COVID-19 update by City Manager Oliver Chi and Huntington Beach Fire Department Chief Scott Haberle, Kalmick addressed the council. He noted that two of the seven members, Ortiz and Erik Peterson, were not wearing masks.

"We have to lead by example," Kalmick said. "I'd just like to register my formal disappointment in council members Ortiz and Peterson ignoring the mayor's letter asking them to wear masks as this meeting. I feel that it puts us at risk, and I'm just very disappointed that that's the position that you're taking."

Ortiz, who also did not wear a mask at his swearing-in ceremony earlier this month, responded by accusing Kalmick of taking off his mask at a Veterans Day event last month that both attended.

"As soon as the cameras turned off, you took your mask off amongst a bunch of older veterans that were there," Ortiz said.

Kalmick immediately denied Ortiz's claim during the meeting and again on Tuesday.

"There was video footage and many, many other folks there that can attest that I wear my mask all the time," Kalmick said in a text message. "I do so for both the safety of myself and others and because I'm not a hypocrite."

During the meeting, Mayor Kim Carr was passionate about the need to wear masks.

"This is not a 'pandemic,'" Carr said, using a word that Ortiz used during his speech two weeks earlier.

"This is very real, and it's up to us as Huntington Beach residents to protect one another ... I'm sorry if I sound a bit exasperated, but it is absolutely emotional for me that we cannot get people just to do something simple as to wear a mask."

### SHORT-TERM RENTALS APPROVED FOR REGULATION

The City Council unanimously approved short-term rentals in Surf City, as long as the unit is owner-occupied as a "hosted

See **Mask**, page A2

## Orange County bishop tests positive for the coronavirus

BY ALEX WIGGLESWORTH

The Roman Catholic bishop of Orange County has tested positive for the coronavirus, church authorities announced last week.

Bishop Kevin Vann, 69, has mild symptoms and is isolating at his home, the Diocese of Orange said in a statement. Initial contact tracing suggests that Vann contracted the virus from a member of his support team, the statement said.

Vann has canceled all appearances and won't resume his normal activities until he's cleared by a doctor, the church said.

The announcement came as Orange County, like most of the state, continued to record an unprecedented surge in new coronavirus cases and related hospitalizations.

There were 1,806 coronavirus patients in county hospitals on Tuesday. A month before, there were 270 patients.

The rapid rise prompted the



Kevin Chang | Staff Photographer

**BISHOP KEVIN VANN** is shown with Christ Cathedral in Garden Grove behind him. Vann has tested positive for the coronavirus, church authorities announced last week. Vann, 69, is isolating at his home.

county public health department to issue an order that forbids hospital emergency rooms from redirecting ambulances to

other medical facilities.

The order — the first of its kind in the region — went into effect last week after 20 of the

county's 25 emergency medical centers became so overwhelmed

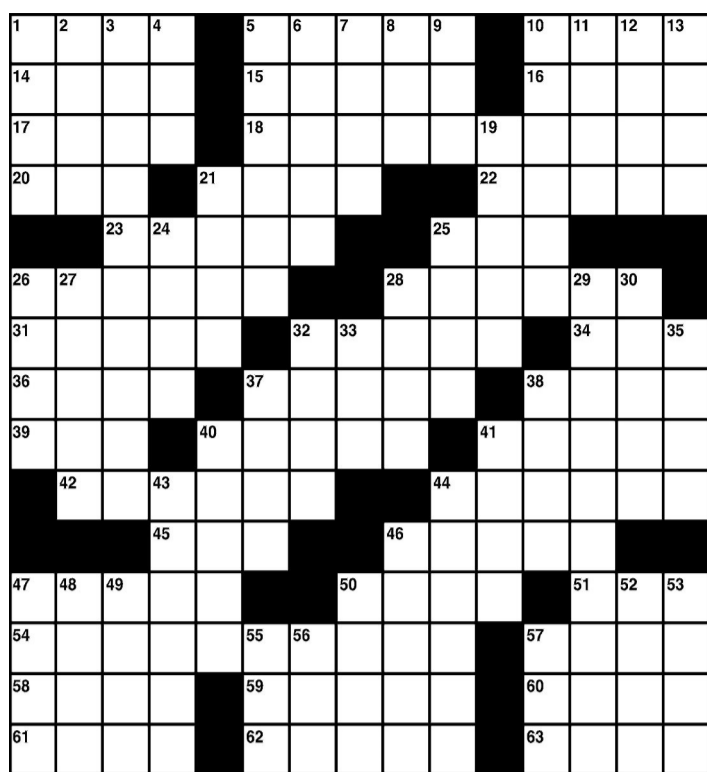
See **Bishop**, page A2

**THE DAILY COMMUTER PUZZLE**

By Jacqueline E. Mathews

- ACROSS** 1 Clutch  
5 Hidden supply  
10 Get ready for surgery, briefly  
14 Actress Anderson  
15 Edgar \_ Poe  
16 In a \_; furious  
17 As strong \_ ox  
18 Toys "R" Us merchandise  
20 Last calendar pg.  
21 Washerful  
22 Uneasy feeling  
23 Close friend  
25 Damone or Tayback  
26 Black-and-blue mark  
28 Outspoken; forthright  
31 Merits  
32 Aerosol  
34 TV's "Car 54, Where \_ You?"  
36 Doe's mate  
37 Walk off with  
38 Donkey's comment  
39 Facial twitch  
40 Benny Goodman's music  
41 Postpone; put on hold  
42 \_ stew; creamy white soup  
44 Path less traveled  
45 Hippie's home  
46 \_ aback; surprised  
47 Boring  
50 Snout  
51 MLK's wife  
54 Subdues  
57 One-liner, e.g.  
58 European capital city  
59 On the \_; free to roam  
60 "Eand on that farm there was \_ EIEIO"  
61 Individuals  
62 "\_ touch"; museum sign  
63 Fitness centers

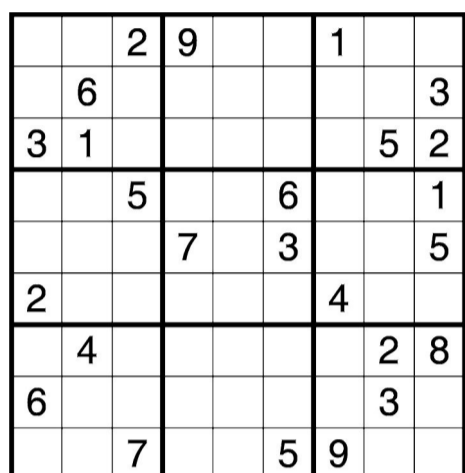
**DOWN**



**SUDOKU**

By The Mepham 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](http://sudoku.org.uk).



**For answers to the crossword and Sudoku puzzles, see page A3.**

- 1 Pleased  
2 Stood up  
3 Error  
4 Neat as a \_  
5 Gangster AI  
6 Calm, as another's fears  
7 Not naked  
8 Barn breakfast

- 9 Suffix for depend or differ  
10 Charles, William or George  
11 \_ out; pealed  
12 Potato salad ingredients  
13 Pain in the neck  
19 \_ as an ape

- 21 Team defeat  
24 Jewelry store purchase  
25 Lab bottle  
26 \_ man; wedding party member  
27 1-to-10 or 3:5  
28 Pull along with effort  
29 Exact duplicate  
30 Refrain opener  
32 \_-fry; wok dish  
33 Bic product  
35 Black\_ peas  
37 Scandinavian nation: abbr.  
38 Uncovered  
40 55-cent item  
41 Tricycle rider  
43 Rejects with disdain  
44 \_ hound; long-eared dog  
46 Human trunk  
47 Bum  
48 JennAir appliance  
49 In this place  
50 Element whose symbol is Ne  
52 \_ milk; nonfat beverage  
53 Beer containers  
55 Aged  
56 Wine and dine  
57 Coughing spell

Tribune Media Services

**Chapman University president self-isolating at home after testing positive for coronavirus**

BY SARA CARDINE

As Chapman University students crammed for exams last week before the end of fall semester, President Daniele Struppa announced he was self-isolating at home after testing positive last Wednesday for the coronavirus.

"I want to share the news that today I tested positive for COVID-19," Struppa began in a Dec. 16 message to staff, faculty and students. "I am feeling tired and am resting at home, but overall, my symptoms are not extreme and currently limited to a slight fever and cough."

Struppa, 65, said he likely caught the virus from his 16-year-old daughter, who'd tested positive on Monday, the same day he himself began experiencing symptoms.

Given the timing of everything, Struppa estimated his window of contagion likely began sometime around Dec. 12.

"Since the stay-at-home order, my contact with the community has been very limited," he continued. "I am working with our contact tracing team to ensure

we identify any possible exposure so we can limit the possible spread."

Early in the pandemic, Chapman University officials established a line of succession in the event senior staff members should fall ill or become incapacitated, Struppa said in the announcement. The move was made to ensure the institution would "continue to function smoothly during this period."

In a follow-up video made Thursday, the president thanked students, staff and faculty for their overwhelming comments and correspondences conveying their support. He said his daughter's best friend had also been stricken by coronavirus and, since her parents were out of town, was staying with them.

"We now have three corona people in this house — it's definitely the house of corona," he said.

According to an online dashboard intended to track the number of confirmed coronavirus cases on campus, as of Tuesday, a total of 44 infected individuals were identified, including five students living

on campus, 33 students living off campus, four staff members and two faculty members.

A resident of Newport Beach, Struppa is married to Orange County Board of Education member Lisa Sparks. In July, the board approved a recommendation to reopen county public schools without mask and social-distancing mandates, with Sparks voting in favor of the measure.

Lawyers representing the county school board in August filed a lawsuit with the state Supreme Court challenging Gov. Gavin Newsom's authority to issue health orders during an emergency, but the court ultimately refused to hear the matter.

Struppa said he planned to self-isolate and work remotely from home in the coming weeks.

"Thank you for your affection and for your prayers," he said in his Thursday's video message, recorded in his bedroom-turned-office. "I look forward to seeing you all again pretty soon."

sara.cardine@latimes.com  
Twitter: @SaraCardine

**MASK**

Continued from page A1

stay."

Short-term rentals had technically previously been prohibited, though hundreds were being rented throughout the city. According to a staff report, Chapter 5.120, which will be added to the Huntington Beach Municipal Code, has a purpose of protecting the character of residential neighborhoods, maintaining the long-term rental housing stock and ensuring the collection and payment of Transient Occupancy Taxes.

Unhosted short-term rentals in Sunset Beach will be allowed.

**THIRD BLOCK OF MAIN STREET TO REOPEN**

The City Council voted 4-3 to keep the second block of Main Street closed to traffic but to reopen the third block as soon as possible with modifications.

Peterson's motion, which would leave the second block closed through at least the end of February, was also supported by Ortiz, Carr and Councilwoman Natalie Moser. Council members Barbara



**THE SECOND** and third blocks of Main Street have been closed to vehicular traffic since last summer.

Scott Smeltzer  
Staff  
Photographer

Delgleize, Mike Posey and Kalmick voted no.

The original agenda item would have kept the second and third blocks closed through Labor Day 2021.

The second and third blocks of Main Street were closed last summer to encourage outdoor dining, though some business owners in the third block have expressed displeasure at the setup.

The second block closure will be reexamined at the Feb. 15 City Council meeting.

**H.B. JOINS ORANGE COUNTY POWER AUTHORITY**

The City Council voted 5-2 to join the Orange County Power Authority, a Community Choice Energy program.

Huntington Beach will be one of the initial cities to be involved in the program, which has been spearheaded by the city of Irvine. The CCE is a public energy program that would buy different types of energy for residents and businesses.

Other cities that have agreed to join the OCPA include Fullerton, Buena Park and Lake Forest.

Peterson and Ortiz, who were absent from an emergency meeting on the subject on Dec. 11, each voted no on the item.

"I just don't think we need to compete with the private market," Peterson said. "That's not our job. Our job's to clear the way, so that capitalism works."

matthew.szabo@latimes.com  
Twitter: @mjszabo

**BISHOP**

Continued from page A1

with COVID-19 patients that they began diverting ambulances to other facilities in Orange County.

As a result, ambulances were having difficulty finding a hospital that would take patients.

Earlier last week, county officials announced they would deploy mobile field hospitals to relieve some of the stress on the region's healthcare system.

"Every day we break the record of the number of people who have been infected," Dr. Clayton Chau, Orange County's health officer and Health Care Agency director, told the county Board of Supervisors on Dec. 15.


So I'm pleading with the community: Please, please do not gather, and make sure you follow the public health guidance, because our hospitals are now bombarded."

Times staff writers Hayley Smith, Luke Money and Rong-Gong Lin II contributed to this report.

dailypilot@latimes.com  
Twitter: @TheDailyPilot

Join us for our  
**CHRISTMAS EVE**  
service online  
Thursday, Dec. 24th at 4 p.m.

Visit [StJamesNewport.org](http://StJamesNewport.org) or our YouTube channel, [youtube.com/StJamesNewport](https://youtube.com/StJamesNewport) to watch the service.



**ST. JAMES EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

Inclusivity  
Technology  
Doing Good

Celebrate with choir, orchestra, a children's Nativity scene, and a special appearance by Santa Claus!

The Rev. Canon Cindy Evans Voorhees  
3209 Via Lido, Newport Beach, CA 92663-3973  
949.675.0210 ♦ [www.StJamesNewport.org](http://www.StJamesNewport.org)  
Regular services are online at 10 a.m. every Sunday.

**WE'RE OPEN**  **Outlets**  
FOR HOLIDAY SHOPPING *at San Clemente*



60+ Brands You Love  
World's Tallest Tree  
Safe Holiday Festivities  
Local Restaurants Open for Takeout  
Curbside Pickup Available  
Gift Cards and More!

Visit [ShopOSC.com](http://ShopOSC.com) for holiday hours.

    
@OUTLETSSC



# A CANCER PATIENT NEEDED CRITICAL CARE, BUT DUE TO THE SURGE IN COVID-19, SHE DIED WITHOUT IT

BY GUSTAVO ARELLANO

The last words Kim Folsom told her husband over the phone Dec. 7, as she lay in the emergency room of Hi-Desert Medical Center in Joshua Tree, were terrifyingly simple. "I'm scared."

They were the last words that Billy, a retired mechanic for the city of Costa Mesa who was in the parking lot of the small hospital, ever expected his wife to say.

Kim called Billy just as he had returned from their home with some of her clothes. She was a former nurse with a radiant smile and matronly toughness that could calm down angry drunks at the biker bars she and Billy loved to visit. A three-year bout with pancreatic cancer hadn't diminished her spirit or resolve.

But now, as Billy prepared for a last, desperate dash to save his wife's life, the two faced a sobering reality.

The coronavirus surge was going to kill her.

And she didn't even have COVID-19.

She had woken up in a pool of blood earlier that day, so Billy had rushed her to Hi-Desert. The facility didn't have the equipment to take care of Kim, he said. So the attending doctor began to call hospitals across the Inland Empire to see if Kim could be transferred to them.

None could accept her. They were swamped with COVID-19 cases.

Everywhere, too full.

"The nurses were extremely distraught, and I've never seen them that way," Billy told me five days later. "The doctor was getting frustrated."

That's when Billy volunteered to take Kim in his truck, strap on some off-road lights, and speed down California Route 62 toward Interstate 10. The plan: "get pulled over by police so we could get an escort" to the nearest hospital.

But that Hail Mary never came to pass. Shortly after their phone conversation, Kim's health quickly deteriorated. She died at age 60, in the arms of Billy and her son.

Soon after, Billy went on Face-



Photo courtesy of the Folsom family

**BILLY AND KIM FOLSOM** bought a house in Joshua Tree three years ago, around the time she received her cancer diagnosis, so they could fight it together in an area they loved.

book, where he had kept friends apprised of what was going on, to post: "She's gone."

Nearly 12 hours had passed since the Folsoms had arrived at the emergency room.

The pandemic had already hit the couple hard. Sixteen of their friends had died of COVID-19, including four of five members of a New Orleans blues group. Billy lost all of his gigs as a concert photographer in February.

They hadn't seen their grandchildren for months, and a UC Irvine clinical trial Kim had enrolled in for an experimental drug was canceled during the surge in June.

Now, the long-feared cratering of Southern California's health-care system due to the coronavirus is here — and it's killing people like Kim, says Billy. He bears no ill will toward the Hi-Desert staff, whom he described "to a person [as] sympathetic, compassionate and very kind to us. ... They did all they could."

Instead, Billy lays Kim's ordeal squarely on "maskholes."

"We're never going to know if she could've been saved," said the 68-year-old, his blue eyes weary yet steely. "There was a

surge because people didn't wear masks. Those who don't wear it can deny it all they want, but that's the way it is.

"So, yeah, I'm angry," he concluded. "Not just for my wife. For all of us."

A representative for the Desert Care Network, which oversees Hi-Desert Medical Center, told me they "won't be able to provide" a comment with regard to Kim Folsom's death.

The ICU bed availability in Southern California currently stands at 0%; Riverside County, whose hospitals are closer to Joshua Tree than those in San Bernardino County, just set a record for deaths reported in one day with 42.

Reports of ambulances waiting up to six hours to unload patients are becoming commonplace. In San Bernardino County, ambulances aren't responding to all 911 calls. They simply can't.

Dr. Mark Ghaly, California's secretary of health and human services, said he's "concerned" about stories like that of the Folsoms and worries that similar scenarios will increase as long as the surge continues.

"We know once ICUs become too overwhelmed, then the hos-

pital wards will have similar issues, and then the emergency rooms," he said. "When hospitals become overwhelmed, it's not just COVID patients that might not receive care, but other emergency issues."

I met Billy on a crisp, windy Saturday morning at his home, located up the road from the entrance to Joshua Tree National Park. He and Kim bought it three years ago, around the time she received her cancer diagnosis, so they could fight it together in an area they loved.

"Look outside my window," Billy said from his living room, decorated with multiple guitars he had built. "Kim loved to sit here. There's life all over the place."

As if on cue, hummingbirds began to flit around one feeder, while pigeons swooped in to nibble from another. An antelope squirrel scurried across the windowsill to grab some peanuts Billy had left. The ritual was repeated throughout the two-hour interview; at one point, when Billy was deep into a point and had forgotten to replenish the treat pile, the squirrel knocked over a trinket.

He and Kim had instituted "germ control" long before the coronavirus on account of her cancer: hand sanitizer on the bar, disinfecting wipes around the house. They hunkered down along with Kim's son and expected the United States to easily beat the pandemic.

But as weeks turned into months, and Kim's condition worsened, all Billy could do was turn increasingly angry. The former Republican (he quit the GOP after the 2016 election of Donald Trump) had to unfriend longtime friends because they derided any lockdown orders, or simply labeled the coronavirus as fake news.

"They're intelligent people. They're not stupid," he said. "But I call them fake patriots. They'll say, 'I'll die for my country against tyranny, but I won't wear a mask for my fellow human being.' Well, you don't have a country without caring for others."

Kim, on the other hand, "was just worried. She knew what her nurse friends were going through."

They traveled out of their home solely for doctor's appointments and cruises through the desert. It was only in the last week of Kim's life that the two truly experienced how society had changed during their quarantine.

On Dec. 2, Billy took Kim to Hi-Desert Medical Center for a blood transfusion after she felt woozy. While they checked in, a man barged in without a mask "insisting it was his right to do so."

Once he tried to shove past a security guard, Billy — whose shoulder-length hair and impressive Van Dyke beard make him look like a Hunter S. Thompson heavy — shot him a stare, and the man harrumphed off.

The following day, the Folsoms went to Kim's oncologist at Hoag Hospital in Newport Beach. Billy had business in San Clemente, so he decided to pass by some old haunts along the coast. "All the bars were packed," he said. "No one was wearing a mask. No one socially distanced. No one cared."

Billy is now more fatigued than angry at a society where people still don't believe the danger of disease "whose tentacles are now everywhere." He had to pick up Kim's body the morning after she passed because more dead were on the way. A request for her original birth certificate will take six to eight weeks instead of just one.

"And I don't even know when I'm going to get Kim's ashes," Billy said.

He walked me out to show off a large camper he had bought this year in the hopes of traveling with Kim. Now, he wants to rent it out so others can enjoy it.

I asked him what he wanted people to take from Kim's death. His eyes watered, but his voice was firm.

"I hope they learn," he said, "that her last days were chaos."

**GUSTAVO ARELLANO** is a columnist for the Los Angeles Times.

## You are unique and so is your taste in wine

*bold spices*

*smooth tannins*

*chocolate*

*black cherries*

**6 bottles for \$39.95**  
Valued over \$120

Take the quiz and receive delicious wines curated to your palate.

Los Angeles Times  
**WINE CLUB**  
BY FIRSTLEAF

Get your wines at  
**LATimes.Wine/Cork**

**FREE SHIPPING  
TO YOUR DOOR**