

Officials go to bat against street vendors

Angels president warns Anaheim, O.C. officials of potential health hazards served up by hot dog sellers outside stadium.

BY GABRIEL SAN ROMÁN

The fragrant smell of bacon-wrapped hot dogs sizzling on push cart grills wafted toward Angel fans on their way out of an April ballgame at the start of the season.

About 40 street hot dog vendors, or "hotdogueros," set up around the parking lot of Angel Stadium in Anaheim during the opening weekend series against the Boston Red Sox to greet them.

For Angels executives, it wasn't a welcome sight.

The city-owned parking lot became just another frustrating front in Anaheim's years-long crackdown on unpermitted street food vendors two months after the Los Angeles City Council voted to eliminate its "no-vending zones," including outside of Dodger Stadium.

Angels Baseball President John Carpino sounded the alarm to Anaheim and county of Orange officials about the potential price of inaction against street hot dog vendors in an April 8 email obtained by TimesOC.

"Due to the lack of oversight,

See **Vendors**, page A4

Higher wages set for Disney workers

Union members ratify contract raising pay to \$24 an hour, moving theme park away from minimum-wage history.

BY GABRIEL SAN ROMÁN

Ellie Gonzalez remembered what it felt like to be a Disney worker in 2018 when the company paid her \$11 an hour, the state's minimum wage at the time.

She commuted to her custodial job at Disney California Adventure one day on fumes but didn't chance stopping at a filling station due to a lack of funds.

The gambit didn't pay off. Gonzalez's car ran out of gas and she missed out on a day's wages.

"It was hard making ends meet back then," Gonzalez said. "That's why I got so motivated to be more involved with my union."

She became a shop steward with SEIU-USWW and helped negotiate a proposed contract for 14,000 cast members, as Disney

See **Wages**, page A4



Photos by Don Leach | Staff Photographer

DR. JUSTIN WEST, right, started the KCNT1 Epilepsy Foundation to help kids like his son Andrew, 7, center, who plays with his grandparents Jan and John West in his Newport Beach home. Andrew's rare form of epilepsy first appeared with seizures when he was 4 months old.

'This is real': Family aims to ensure rare disease funding

Doctors' nonprofit KCNT1 Epilepsy Foundation seeks treatments and cures for kids like son Andrew, 7.

BY MATT SZABO

Lisa Collea is a doctor who often sleeps with her 7-year-old son, Andrew, in bed with her at their Newport Beach home.

The ophthalmologist sees appealing things in her dreams.

"Every morning I wake up, and sometimes I had a dream that he talked, or I had a dream that he walked," she said. "And then I wake up and I look over at him and it's like, 'Oh my God, this is real.'"

Andrew, the youngest of Collea and Dr. Justin West's three children, has done neither of those things yet.

He started having seizures when he was 4 months old. Soon after, he was diagnosed with a rare disease, KCNT1-related epilepsy, caused by mutations in the KCNT1 gene. The family watched, horrified, as he regressed.



See **Rare**, page A10 **ANDREW WEST** reads a picture book as home nurse Peggy Koustik watches in the background.

Housing, services remain top goals in battle



Allen J. Schaben | Los Angeles Times

HOMELESS PEOPLE were evicted in 2017 by Orange County Sheriff's Department as well as Anaheim, Orange and Fountain Valley police officers who swept through an encampment between Warner Avenue and Edinger Avenue along the Santa Ana River trail.

Orange County is generally in line with recent court decisions and new directions from the state in response to large encampments of homeless people, county Supervisor Katrina Foley says.

BY ERIC LICAS

Advocates for the unhoused and some lawmakers in Orange County say communities can't arrest their way out of the homelessness crisis, even after a grand jury decision last month gave municipalities more authority to clear out encampments and an order from California's governor encouraged them to do so.

In a decision published June 28, the U.S. Supreme Court sided with the city of Grant's Pass, Ore., ruling local governments are allowed to enforce anti-camping laws and remove people from makeshift homes set up on pub-

lic property whether or not shelter beds are available.

The decision has been interpreted as a reversal of a 2018 ruling in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, which previously held that clearing out encampments and then citing people forced to vacate without providing some alternative place to stay amounted to cruel and unusual punishment.

Then, on July 25, Gov. Gavin Newsom issued an executive order encouraging, but not requiring, local governments to "prioritize efforts to address en-

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Activists question buffer to stabilize rail line

BY GABRIEL SAN ROMÁN

Transportation officials and environmental groups remain at odds over how to save San Clemente's beaches and the vital rail corridor that curls along its coastline.

In April, the Orange County Transportation Authority considered a sand buffer as part of its preliminary plans to hard armor the train tracks with a seawall of stones to protect them from the pulse of crashing waves.

But the plan to cover large boulders, known as riprap, with sand hasn't quieted concerns over further armoring San Clemente's beaches.

After a listening session in June, environmental groups signed onto a joint letter that called on OCTA to conduct a full environmental impact report and submit a coastal development permit before adding anymore seawalls to the city's beaches.

"Proper environmental review under [the California Environmental Quality Act] and the California Coastal Act will ensure that OCTA selects the least environmentally damaging alternative, mitigates impacts and provides for meaningful public input," the letter read. "All viable alternatives to shoreline armoring must be carefully examined, including nature-based alternatives, rail relocation or retirement and train speed management."

The letter dated July 16 was signed by representa-



Allen J. Schaben | Los Angeles Times

RIPRAP AND train tracks next to La Casa Pacifica (previously owned by former President Richard Nixon) in San Clemente.

tives of nine organizations, including the Surfrider Foundation, Capo Cares, and Save Our Beaches San Clemente.

"It's important to point out that we are still amid the planning process for addressing an urgent need to protect what is a critical link in Southern California's rail system," said Eric Carpenter, a spokesperson for OCTA. "What OCTA has developed to this point is at a conceptual level and we do not have any specific proj-

ect proposals."

Situated between eroding beaches and buckling bluffs, passenger train services have been interrupted five times in the past four years, most recently after a landslide in January collapsed the Mariposa Point beach trail bridge and sent debris hurling down towards the train tracks.

OCTA owns the 7-mile segment of the Lossan corridor, which also transports freight from San Luis Obispo to San Diego. The

agency is currently studying short-term and long-term proposals to secure the train tracks from future suspensions of service.

State Sen. Catherine Blakespear, whose district encompasses south O.C. and northern San Diego County, has been vocal about OCTA needing to get on board with relocating the tracks inland as opposed to spending money on "protect in place" strategies.

In response to hard ar-

moring proposals in San Clemente, the Surfrider Foundation's legal counsel sent a standalone letter to the California Coastal Commission with concerns over potential violations of state law.

It demanded that OCTA and the Southern California Regional Rail Authority comply with the state's Environmental Quality Act and Coastal Act by completing an environmental impact report.

"OCTA is committed, as

is the case with any infrastructure project whether it's rail, freeways or streets, to following all necessary environmental requirements," Carpenter said. "Once the concepts are more fully developed, the scope of any proposed projects will dictate the environmental process we are required to follow."

The agency is expected to update to its board of directors on future plans for the rail line later this month.

Both OCTA and the rail authority stood accused by the Surfrider Foundation of evading environmental reviews in the past under the cover of emergency riprap permits, which led to impeded access to San Onofre State Beach.

If allowed to do so again, the letter argued, hard armoring without environmental review would imperil San Clemente State Beach, even though the beach isn't considered a "hot spot" for erosion.

"The public will lose one of the most popular beaches and last easily accessible stretch of scenic undeveloped coastline in Southern California," the letter warned.

In hoping to avoid any such outcomes, the Surfrider Foundation letter concluded by drawing a line in the beach sand.

"The public is not willing to sacrifice our beaches for the train."

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TIP volunteers answer the call for emotional first aid

BY ANDREW TURNER

First responders spring into action when tragedy strikes, and often a group of dedicated volunteers is prepared to help out when and wherever necessary.

Authorities frequently call upon the Trauma Intervention Program when such events occur, and its on-call reinforcements fill a critical gap in providing emotional first aid and tending to the needs of victims and witnesses in the aftermath of traumatic incidents, allowing public safety officials to focus on their own tasks.

A national organization, the Orange County chapter of TIP was formed in 1995. The division now serves 25 cities and multiple locations under the county's jurisdiction, 15 hospitals and numerous law enforcement agencies.

MaryEllen Lowrey, the executive director of the local chapter, said they currently work with a team of just over 100 volunteers. A rigorous training program prepares the understudies to bridge the gap for the traumatized en route to the next level of care.

The two-week training equips the volunteers with the tools to say the right thing. They also learn directly from fire, police and medical personnel about how to work with them, Lowrey explained.

"There's role-playing because we want them to get it right in the class," Lowrey said. "We don't want any mistakes made out in the field."

After completing the training, new volunteers go through three months of field training, accompanying a veteran of the program to calls for service. The diversity of volunteers is wide-ranging, with the age range spanning from 18 to 80, Lowrey added.



OnScene.tv

FIRST RESPONDERS called in TIP volunteers to assist after the tragic shooting at Cook's Corner in Trabuco Canyon on the night of Aug. 23, 2023.

Caelan Lee, 21, studies criminology, law and society at UC Irvine. Lee hopes to have a career in law enforcement. She said she joined TIP, in part, to learn how to communicate and empathize with victims of crime or traumatic incidents.

Last August, Lee took the lead on TIP's response to the mass shooting at Cook's Corner in Trabuco Canyon, which left three dead and six others wounded. She notified the dispatcher that she lived close to the scene. Having participated in the program for only a year and a half at that point, Lee recalled a "work mode" setting in.

"I think a big part of that is in our training, it's very ingrained in us that when we go onto scenes like this and we're helping people, it's not our tragedy," Lee said. "It's theirs. We're there to help them and to help first responders."

About two dozen TIP volunteers responded to

Cook's Corner, Lee recalled. She said they were split up between the crime scene at the biker bar, while others worked on logistical matters.

"More than half of us were at the actual scene of the incident," Lee said. "Some other people were sent to the sheriff's department substation to help organize transport and getting hotels and stuff like that for some of the witnesses whose cars were part of the crime scene, so they had no transportation and they couldn't get home."

Orange County Under-sheriff Jeff Hallock said he has appreciated having TIP as a resource since his time as a patrol officer. The volunteers not only free up authorities to do their job, but they extend their services to the first responders. Hallock has referred to TIP as "part of the first responder system."

"They're there to provide that emotional first aid to victims and to family

members that are suffering, oftentimes a loss, or quite frankly, the worst day of their life," Hallock said. "What they also do sometimes at the end of a call is maybe tap a first responder on the shoulder ... and make sure they're OK, or maybe just engage in a conversation with them. ..."

"It's sometimes kind of an afterthought because their primary focus is on those family members or the victim's friends and folks that are around that scene, but I think oftentimes we forget about the first responders, and TIP also provides that resource in terms of on-scene, and they're available for follow-up and conversation after a particular incident."

Newport Beach Fire Chief Jeff Boyles said it can be cathartic for people to have an opportunity to tell their story, adding that TIP volunteers assist in that manner, too.

Regarding incidents for which a request for TIP vol-



Susan Hoffman

MARVELLEN LOWREY is the executive director of the Trauma Intervention Program of Orange County.

unteers was made, Boyles looked back on a fatal DUI crash on Newport Coast Drive on Dec. 8, 2020.

"The kids were all alive in the back with two dead parents in the front, and we were kind of like, 'What do we do with this?'" said Boyles, who responded to the call himself.

"We have a crunched car, we got to do CPR on one of them, we've got to transport and get them to the hospital," Boyles continued, "so we called TIP to come out and kind of help the kids, along with [the police department]. ... There were like three or four TIP members that showed up. This is a really challenging, difficult situation. ... It was awful."

The helicopter crash near the Lido Peninsula that killed Officer Nicholas Vella in February 2022 also came to mind for Boyles.

"There's just so many traumatized eyewitnesses," Boyles said. "TIP just sort of shows up, and they have an ability to walk around and just talk to people and try to figure out who is traumatized. A lot of people just want to tell their story."

The Trauma Intervention

Program of Orange County saw its volunteers put in more than 60,000 hours for on-call and related response activities in 2023. Volunteers supported 7,150 clients, spent 5,378 hours responding to incidents at the scene and conducted 1,842 phone calls with clients, including follow-up efforts.

"Empathy is climbing down into that pit with that person and feeling their pain," Lowrey said. "Not trying to talk them out of their pain, not trying to cheer them up, but let their pain exist. People need that in crisis. They need to be acknowledged. They need to be heard. They need to have their feelings validated."

"That's where a TIP volunteer does what family members can't do [and] law enforcement can't do, not because they don't want to, but because either they don't have the time or they don't have the training. We call what we do emotional first aid, but it's uncommon sense. It's not what would come naturally."

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'Clue' cosplayers show they are game

A costume contest ahead of a staging of the play brings out true characters in Costa Mesa.

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

Mrs. White gripped a gaudy, gold candlestick. Col. Mustard wielded a comically large lead pipe. Mrs. Peacock raised a martini glass.

The "Clue" costume contest at the Julianne and George Argyros Plaza at Segerstrom Center for the Arts in Costa Mesa gave the showgoers attending the July 24 staging of the Broadway play of the same name the chance to really get into character.

"I didn't do it," said Steve Capenos as Col. Mustard, twitching a campy gray mustache from side to side. His khaki uniform mimicked the style of the board game character, often portrayed as a retired British military officer wearing a pith helmet.

Capenos was joined by his wife, Anna Capenos, who was dressed as Miss Scarlet in a red strapless dress and long black evening gloves. It was she who persuaded him to join the contest, he said.

"This fabulous lady here inspired me when we got tickets to come see 'Clue,' and so we are here to win the contest, collect our prize and blackmail whoever loses," joked Capenos.

Capenos' costume was detailed, but he admitted it all came together quite hastily.

"I had a vision, and I threw it all together in 30 minutes after I got home from work," he said.

Audience members were invited to register ahead of time to compete in the costume contest that included individual and group categories. Taking place on the plaza's outdoor stage before that night's performance, the first 100 guests dressed in costume were awarded a free Claim Jumper Steakhouse & Bar appetizer voucher for the location across the street at South Coast Plaza. Other prizes given out included Clue merchandise and the Clue board game itself. The musical was staged July 23 through July 28.

Cosplayers brought their own creativity and flair to each of the characters.

Artist Ranitra Coleman,



Photos by Don Leach | Staff Photographer

A GROUP OF women who competed together pose for a first-place photo during the Clue costume contest in honor of Broadway's show "Clue" at the Julianne and George Argyros Plaza at the Segerstrom Center. The event was one of several outdoor events scheduled for the plaza this summer.



RANITRA COLEMAN, dressed in her interpretation of the character Miss Scarlet, holds the Clue board game.

known on social media for retro fashion as @missgolden_lady, also came dressed as Miss Scarlet, incorporating what she called historically accurate details.

"My costume is inspired by the original production of 'Clue' ... and I thought I would give Miss Scarlet a little bit of pizzazz," Coleman said.

Coleman's interpretation of Miss Scarlet included a red velvet dress topped with an elegant black cape and a large white flower

pinned in her hair.

Dylan Lujano said he dressed as Professor Plum after finding a beautiful deep violet blazer at a Hollywood thrift store.

"I love the movie and I love the game and I was thinking about what character I could emulate that would be fun," said Lujano. "I had the pants and the shoes but everything else is vintage from Iguana Vintage, and it fit me perfectly."

Lujano said he loves all the "Clue" characters and



STEVE CAPENOS dressed as Col. Mustard, pretends to hold a wry conversation while smoking a toy pipe.

had a hard time deciding which one to dress as.

"I was definitely even thinking of doing one of the females characters and changing it up to do a male version of Miss Scarlet or male version of Mrs. Peacock," Lujano said.

That was the approach Veronica Cook took for her interpretation of Mr. Green, which she imagined as a 1950s housewife.

"I like to gender bend costumes and characters a lot, and I personally like Mr. Green and '50s style,"

Cook said.

Cook wore an emerald green dress with a classic silhouette complete with a full skirt. Her accessories included a green hat, gloves, cat eye glasses and stockings with a seam up the back. All the details cemented her win in the Mr. Green category.

MORE SUMMER ACTIVITIES PLANNED

The Clue character costume contest was just one of the outdoor events scheduled at the Julianne

and George Argyros Plaza this summer. On Aug. 5, the final installment of Segerstrom Center for the Arts' Movie Mondays series will screen 1985's "Back to the Future," starring Michael J. Fox as Marty McFly and Christopher Lloyd as time-traveling scientist Doc Brown. The event is free and moviegoers are encouraged to come in costume for activities before the screening and a food truck meet-up.

On Aug. 6, guests can return to the Plaza for Tuesday Night Dance where they can learn flamenco dancing from bilingual flamenco choreographer Claudia de la Cruz. Festive frocks will be appropriate for Tuesday night classes through the month of August that will cover traditional flamenco to electric rumba flamenco fusion. Classes are free with a downloadable Plaza Pass, which can be found at scfta.org.

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HOUSING

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campments." Among its guidelines, the order instructs state, county and city authorities to:

- identify campsites posing an imminent threat to health, safety or infrastructure;
- provide 48 hours notice to people living there if possible;
- involve caseworkers in the cleanup process to try and connect people with emergency housing and other services;
- store displaced people's belongings for up to 60 days

Those directions are mostly consistent with the way authorities in Orange County already respond to large encampments of homeless people, county Supervisor Katrina Foley told the Daily Pilot during an interview Wednesday. Foley said the executive order may help prevent people who are forced to leave encampments near Caltrans-owned freeways or railroad tracks from simply crossing a fence to set up tents on state property. But it's unlikely to result in dramatic changes to local policy.

"I don't think it's going to make a difference, honestly," the supervisor said of Newsom's order. "We're going to do the same thing we've been doing, which is send out caseworkers, send out social workers, try to get people into shelter, into recuperative care, reconnected with family members, all of the things we're doing to get people under a roof."



File Photo

CITY NET VOLUNTEER and licensed vocational nurse Angie Munoz, left, and case lead Jennifer Munoz speak with homeless men on Placentia Avenue during the first day of Orange County's 2019 Point In Time Count in Costa Mesa.

She added that the county, Costa Mesa, Anaheim and city of Orange are still bound to the terms of a settlement from a separate case decided in favor of the nonprofit Orange County Catholic Worker in 2018. That ruling by Judge David O. Carter halted the mass displacement and citation of people living in sprawling tent communities along the Santa Ana Riverbed in the absence of adequate shelter.

It also pushed local governments to create more supportive housing and expand services, largely guiding the development of Orange County's method toward fighting homelessness, said Foley and Brooke Weitzman, an attorney who represented the plaintiff in that case.

"The O.C. cities know better because they've tried," Weitzman said. "They've tried to arrest their way out of the problem. They've had examples of others doing the wrong

thing and have seen that it doesn't work."

FOCUS REMAINS ON HOUSING AND SERVICES

Newport Beach implemented an anti-camping ordinance last summer. And although officials are not aware of any large encampments in the city, their new law has been effective in reducing the number of people seen camping in public, Newport Beach spokesman John Pope said.

"I think it's worked because we've put a lot into support services, in place well prior to the Supreme Court decision," Pope said. "As a product of Martin v. Boise, years ago cities really had to step up in terms of services."

The city has an arrangement with the Costa Mesa Bridge Shelter, restoring 25 beds for people living on the street in Newport Beach. It has also contracted with Be Well to run a mobile mental health and wellness team that con-



File Photo

THIS AREA in Costa Mesa's 72-bed permanent bridge shelter, opened in 2021, can hold four beds per partition. This is the first homeless shelter designed and furnished by IKEA.

ducts outreach to homeless people.

The Newport Beach City Council is considering whether any changes to its anti-camping ordinance might be necessary, in light of recent events. Representatives of Fountain Valley said they are also reviewing that city's policies and procedures regarding encampments.

"It really wasn't the governor's office that had influence on Newport Beach's actions," Pope said. "It was really the Grant's Pass decision."

Securing a place to stay for people displaced from campsites will remain a "top priority" for officials in Huntington Beach, spokeswoman Jessica Cuchilla said. But the availability of shelter in the city has been tight, with the 174-bed Nav-

igation Center run by Mercy House near Beach Boulevard and Slater Avenue at 92% capacity as of late July.

Meanwhile, in response to the governor's order, Huntington Beach expressed criticism toward the state's leadership. The conservative majority sitting on its City Council issued a statement accusing lawmakers in Sacramento of a "lack of seriousness toward enforcing existing laws and cleaning up communities."

"In spite of the state's heavy and wasteful spend of taxpayer dollars, and with the state's lax approach to enforcing the state's existing laws, homelessness has only grown over the years under Gov. Newsom," the Huntington Beach officials said in their

statement.

CRISIS CONTINUES TO OUTPACE SOLUTIONS

Homelessness remains a highly visible issue in many Southern California communities. And, according to recent data, seniors, veterans and transitional-age youth roughly between the ages of 18 and 24 represent a growing portion of the unhoused population. But that doesn't mean the strategy of prioritizing housing and services adopted in Orange County and elsewhere hasn't been working, according to Weitzman.

"Governments, at least locally, have seen a lot of these programs' success," she said. "... But we're also at a moment where we're seeing really unprecedented

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VENDORS

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the possibility of a guest getting severely sick or even dying due to food poisoning is of great concern to us, and hopefully to you as well," Carpino wrote. "You are the city and county officials which can create and enforce the necessary legislation to keep our residents safe."

Carpino outlined three major concerns regarding street food vendors in his plea to Anaheim City Manager Jim Vanderpool and then-county chief executive Frank Kim.

He claimed that vendors hampered people with disabilities from having easy access to their cars, caused complaints from fans over food poisoning and obstructed public safety with loud portable speakers.

Leading into opening weekend, a call for shifts went out to the city's code enforcement officers with stadium assignments slated for 8 p.m., after the completion of city-wide sweeps.

On Friday night, officers were asked to impound equipment. On Saturday night, they would work with county health officers taking the lead on confiscations.

But only one officer volunteered, according to city documents.

By Sunday's game, hot dog vendors showed up in full force, which prompted Carpino's urgent email.

"It is important that our guests know that the vendors and more importantly the food they are selling on stadium property is not approved or regulated by County Health Department or city of Anaheim," said Marie Garvey, spokesperson for Angels Baseball.

Since 2018, cities like Anaheim have had limited enforcement options at their disposal after Gov. Jerry Brown signed legislation decriminalizing street food vending.

Following the pandemic, more entrepreneurs have tried their hand at carne asada capitalism with unpermitted taco stands.

Outside of the Honda Center and Angel Stadium in Anaheim, hotdogueros bank on crowds craving their Sonora-style hot dogs after concerts and ballgames.

In response to complaints from Angel executives, city officials have reorganized their approach to hot dog vendors outside of the stadium with the staff that they have. Code enforcement began with a much more visual presence in the parking lot, but found that vendors would just wheel around to another part of the stadium.

"We now give them an option to leave or risk seeing their equipment be impounded," said Mike Lyster, an Anaheim spokesman. "That has actually had a more pronounced impact."

While still an ongoing issue, Lyster claimed the presence of street hot dog vendors outside of Angels games is less than before due to the city's efforts.

Both street food vendors and concession stands at Angels games are subject to food-borne illness com-

plaints and county health inspections.

The Orange County Health Care Agency, whose officers team with Anaheim code enforcement, broadly warns that salmonella, shigella, vibrio, norovirus and other germs can transmit from commercial food sources, cause serious illness and even potentially death.

"The risk posed by street food vendors is similar to other commercial food vendors," said Ellen Guevara, a spokeswoman for the O.C. Health Care Agency. "Public health assessment and permitting assures that the vendor has adequate resources and training to keep their customers safe."

Permitted concession stands inside the stadium routinely pass inspections, according to publicly available documents online.

But in June, a nacho stand at Angel Stadium was inspected following a food poisoning complaint from two fans alleging that they got sick after eating "Nacho Mama" nachos.

According to documents obtained by TimesOC, a pound of guacamole, two pounds of pico de gallo and 15 packets of sour cream were tossed out after they were found to have been stored above the recommended 41-degree temperature.

The nacho stand corrected the issue and passed re-inspection the next day.

While Anaheim still looks to play hardball against hotdogueros, L.A. officials have changed their approach.

After the Los Angeles City Council lifted a ban on street vending in "no-vending zones" in February, the city also settled a lawsuit on July 19 that cleared a path for street vendors to reach customers in high-traffic areas without fear of citations or fines while also significantly cutting permitting costs for them.

By contrast, Anaheim City Council granted code enforcement officers greater authority to impound street vendor equipment throughout the city and at its own high-traffic "no vending zones," like Angel Stadium, where vendors are prohibited from operating two hours before or after events.

Even still, the city put out a request for proposals that closed on July 29 in hopes of contracting support staff for its code officers.

Fontana hired a private contractor for \$600,000 to help crack down on street food vendors as an early pioneer of the approach.

A potential contract in Anaheim is expected to go before council members sometime in the fall after the Angels wrap up another season.

Willdan is one company that has submitted a proposal. In December 2023, former Anaheim Mayor Curt Pringle lobbied on their behalf in seeking meetings with key city staff.

Pringle noted that Al Brady, a former Anaheim code enforcement supervisor, would lead the proposed effort.

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Mark J. Terrill | AP

OUTSIDE OF THE Honda Center and Angel Stadium in Anaheim, hotdogueros bank on crowds craving their Sonora-style hot dogs after concerts and ballgames.

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WAGES

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calls its workers.

Alongside a majority of her fellow union members, Gonzalez voted on Monday to approve an agreement that raised wages from \$19.90 an hour to \$24 an hour, a boost she called "life changing," especially as she's expecting twins.

"Before these wage increases, I was very adamant about not having children," Gonzalez said. "Now that we have won this contract, I feel like I'll be able to make ends meet. I'll be able to pay my bills and provide the best possible life for my two babies."

The Master Services Council, a coalition of four major Disney unions, hailed the contract as having delivered the "biggest wage increases ever."

At the end of its three-year term in 2026, wages will climb to \$26 an hour for the Disneyland Resort's ride operators, custodians,



WORKERS MARKED Disneyland's 69th birthday with a July 17 rally for higher wages.

ticket takers, cashiers and candy makers.

"We are pleased that our cast members approved the new agreements, which, along with all we offer as part of our employment experience, demonstrate how much we value and respect them and our profound commitment to their overall well-being," said Jessica Good, a Disneyland Resort spokesperson.

After years of court battles, a pandemic, contract fights, record inflation and even a strike authorization vote, the contract marks how Disney labor unions have transformed their workplace away from the minimum-wage employer it used to be.

The push began in 2017, when the Coalition of Resort Labor Unions (CRLU) commissioned a survey on the living conditions of its



Photos by Allen J. Schaben | Los Angeles Times

UNION MEMBERS march on Harbor Boulevard for a new contract they approved Monday.

workers that informed the "Working for the Mouse" report released the following year.

"Apparently, the report that we did was the first time the unions had all done something collec-

tively," said Peter Dreier, an Occidental College professor and co-author of the study. "Before that, Disney used a divide and conquer strategy to try to pit the different unions against each other."

The report revealed that 73% of surveyed workers did not make enough to cover basic expenses. Its statistics on housing insecurity, food insecurity and

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Courtesy of Anaheim Packing District

A PERFECT BITE from Pique-Nique at the Anaheim Packing House is one of the treats to be offered at World Taste.

World Taste to offer a bite of culinary diversity

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

IF YOU GO

Advance tickets, at \$55 per person, and a full list of participating establishments at World Taste can be found at anaheimpackingdistrict.com.

The Anaheim Packing District, which celebrated its 10th anniversary this year, is welcoming guests back to its fifth annual World Taste event.

Designed to connect the community together through food, World Taste celebrates the diverse culinary artisans within the Anaheim Packing District with globally inspired bites and entertainment. Taking place on Tuesday from 5 until 9 p.m., ticket holders will get the chance to sample eight tastes from participating Packing District establishments.

"For us food is the new canvas. These food halls have evolved into large places of gathering," said Shaheen Sadeghi, the owner of Anaheim Packing District. "We love the fact that this is a completely international selection of culinary arts."

Guests can look forward to bites like samosa chaat, a crispy turnover stuffed with potato and peas from Indian street food restaurant ADYA, and spicy shrimp wontons from modern Chinese concept 18 Folds. Black Sheep Grilled Cheese Bar will offer a mozzycrismo melt, a unique take on a Monte Cristo sandwich sprinkled with powdered sugar, and longime favorite and original tenant The Kroft will serve birria egg rolls with consomé dipping sauce.

Diners with a sweet tooth can visit soul food concept Georgia's for beignets and honey or cheese and charcuterie bar Pique-Nique for "a perfect bite" of French brie on a baguette topped with fresh strawberry and drizzled in wild honey and wash it down with a strawberry lemonade from Boba and tea shop Mini Monster.

The event will reach across the Anaheim Packing District campus, which includes four historic landmarks, including MAKE, a former 1917 marmalade factory, and the adjacent 2-acre Farmers Park.

The World Taste event will also give diners a chance to sample the Anaheim Packing District's newest restaurant, En Familia Steakhouse. The modern Mexican kitchen, which will serve weekend brunch and dinner daily, is located at 338 S. Anaheim Blvd. in

the north area of the district. For World Taste, En Familia will offer a Wagyu carne asada taco served in a handmade corn tortilla topped with onion, cilantro and house-made salsas.

Other Mexican delights will include a choice of carnitas or cauliflower taco from Urbana Mexican Gastronomy and spicy elote bites with lime crème fraiche from Pali Wine Co. White elephant will serve Thai food options like a mini pad Thai chicken bowl and mango sticky rice, and ZeroZero39 Pizzeria will serve Roman-style pizza slices.

The district as a whole contains 30 unique food and beverage artisans, and Sadeghi said the cultural diversity of those tenants has always been intentional.

"For this project we were really looking for a diversity of the different cultures and geographic areas around the country," he said. "So it's a clear sample of food of Asia, India, Latin, Middle Eastern, street food, southern food, etc. Anaheim has a wonderful diversity of cultures. The project, including Farmers Park, which we developed, serves as the place of gathering for these cultures and their families."

Sadeghi said he views the Packing District as a place for local residents to gather and feel a part of something bigger while also connecting with their heritage, whatever it may be.

"We are strong believers of the fact that communities today want to do things within their own neighborhoods. These projects really become the fabric of the community, a place of their own," Sadeghi said. "For many of these cultures, eating together as a family and as a generation is very important. The Packing House serves the community and creates opportunity for this to happen."

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Dr. David I. Lee is a nationally recognized fellowship-trained urologist who specializes in prostate cancer surgery.



Courtesy of the Anaheim Packing District

SAMOSA CHAAT from ADYA at the Anaheim Packing District.

WAGES

Continued from page A4

depressed wages served to propel a "Fight for \$15" living-wage ballot measure.

Anaheim voters passed Measure L, as the law is known, in 2018. For years, it languished in court until Disney ended its legal fight against a class-action lawsuit over the wage law last year when the state supreme court declined to hear its appeal.

Ahead of contract negotiations, Disney raised wages to \$19.90 an hour under the law.

"Initially, the company tried to take credit for the living-wage law," said Rafael Rendon, a custodial worker at Disney's California Adventure and a SEIU-USWW shop steward. "They argued that they had already given recent raises to some employees, but those were raises from Measure L and Anaheim voters."

Frustrated by the lack of progress at the negotiating



Allen J. Schaben | Los Angeles Times

A GROUP OF Disney workers march down a street while shouting and holding picket signs during a July 17 demonstration seeking higher wages they later won in a new contract.

table, 99% of union members who voted on July 19 authorized an unfair labor practice strike, especially after labor charges were filed against Disney over

union buttons being banned at work.

Days after the strike vote, Disney and the union coalition reached a tentative agreement, which was ultimately approved. Wages for workers covered under its terms now exceed the state's \$16 an hour minimum wage by 40%.

Union negotiators did

make a concession where workers hired after the contract vote will make less than \$24 an hour for their first year on the job.

"New hires will be paid at 90% of the base wage," Rendon said. "While we were able to secure higher wages, the company did ask for that provision. That's the trade-off."

The reduced wage pans out to \$21.60 an hour. After a year, new hires will get the regular raises prescribed by the contract.

Last year, Disney came to an agreement to raise wages for 8,500 food-and-beverage cast members represented by Workers United Local 50, the single biggest union at the Disneyland Resort.

Under that contract, pay is set to increase to \$23 an hour on Sept. 1, meaning a majority of Disney's 35,000-strong workforce will make above the state's minimum wage.

"Now you can say that Disney is a good place to work," Dreier said. "It wasn't six years ago when

we did that report."

After the Master Services Council contract, Disney has positioned itself as offering "industry leading wages."

The contract also secured seniority-based pay, which has been a contentious issue in past negotiations with the company offering bonuses instead.

In two years, Gonzales will have completed a decade of employment with Disney, which will entitle her to a 50-cent raise. After 20 years, the added pay will equal \$2 an hour.

She now sees a future for herself working for Disney.

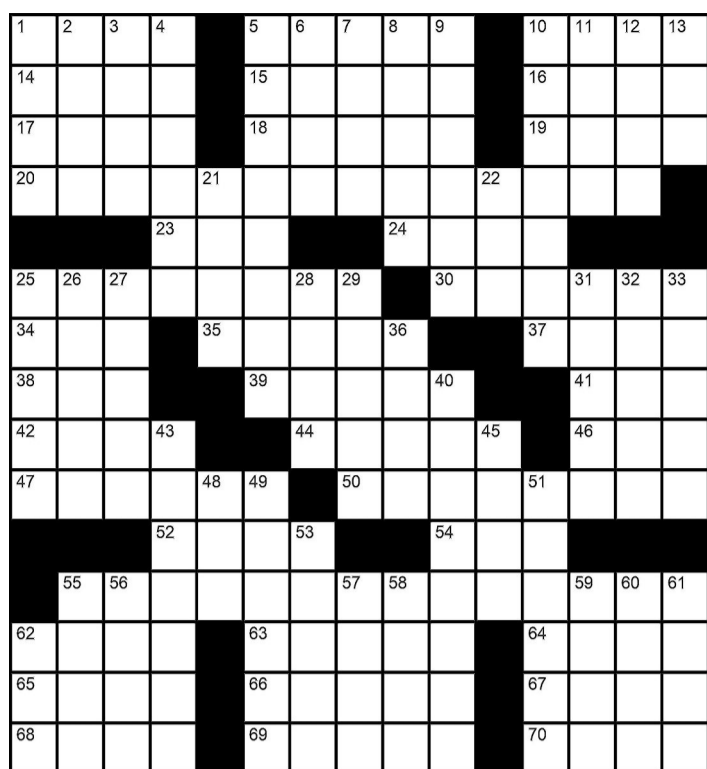
"It's been a long battle and it feels like it's never quite over," Gonzalez said. "But I'm still proud of the work that I've done over these past years and the progress we've made. I look forward to seeing what more we can do for working class people here in Orange County."

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THE DAILY COMMUTER PUZZLE

By Stella Zawistowski

- ACROSS**
 1 After-workout feeling
 5 German cars
 10 Heroic story
 14 Regrets
 15 Send in a payment
 16 Nick and _ Charles
 17 "The Little Mermaid" prince
 18 Greasy dirt
 19 Chicken shelter
 20 Sixteenth President: 2 wds.
 23 Writing tool
 24 Rock band's trip
 25 Conference speaker
 30 Singer Britney
 34 A long time _
 35 "Baloney!"
 37 Silky undergarment
 38 Cleveland player, for short
 39 Dug for gold
 41 Imitate
 42 At any time
 44 Another time
 46 Dudes
 47 USDA grade
 50 In scoring position: 2 wds.
 52 Qatar's capital
 54 Doctor's group: Abbr.
 55 Fully functional: 3 wds.
 62 Brazilian berry
 63 Soft down
 64 Temperamental performer
 65 Fruit's outside
 66 Came up
 67 Like 2, 4, or 6
 68 Auto racer
 69 Take a bite of
 70 Office furniture

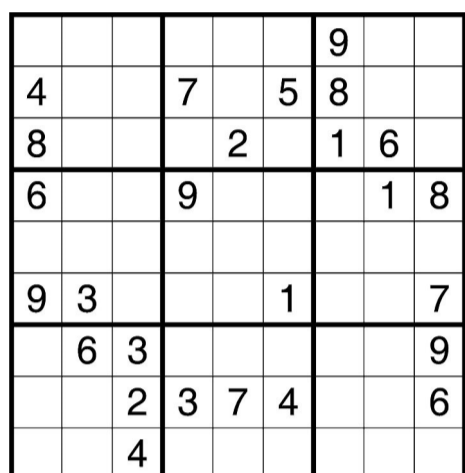


- DOWN**
 1 Field of study
 2 Sidewalk's edge
 3 Designated
 4 Get loose
 5 Living being
 6 Hair-curling treatment
 7 Actor Jannings
 8 Upper or lower bound
 9 Dictation takers
 10 Bonus performances
 11 Billiards
 12 Remove wrinkles from
 13 Baseball hat
 21 Assistance
 22 Coffee holder
 25 Tempos

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 A8.

- successor
 4 Get loose
 5 Living being
 6 Hair-curling treatment
 7 Actor Jannings
 8 Upper or lower bound
 9 Dictation takers

- 10 Bonus performances
 11 Billiards
 12 Remove wrinkles from
 13 Baseball hat
 21 Assistance
 22 Coffee holder
 25 Tempos

- 26 Tequila ingredient
 27 Work of fiction
 28 Branch of Islam
 29 Argentine dance
 31 "Memorable" San Antonio landmark
 32 Mature
 33 Pay out
 36 Stop from suckling
 40 Be at odds
 43 Cabernet, e.g.: 2 wds.
 45 "Finding _" (Pixar film)
 48 Dove's sound
 49 Menacing statement
 51 Asked for the ID of
 53 Director Kurosawa
 55 Gross
 56 Perform perfectly
 57 Wedding vows: 2 wds.
 58 Home in a tree
 59 Plunge
 60 Pre-holiday nights
 61 Military level
 62 Query

Tribune Media Services

MAILBAG



Carol Crane

FIRST-GRADE TEACHER Caryn Broesamle discusses "The Great Kapok Tree" with students using Thinking Maps.

Praising NMUSD's summer program achievements

As the president of the Newport-Mesa Unified School District (NMUSD) Board, I am delighted to share the outstanding successes of our summer learning and enrichment programs. In addition to the variety of expanded learning opportunities we offer throughout the school year, our summer programs are designed to keep our students engaged and

active when school is out of session. This year, more than 2,000 elementary students and more than 700 secondary students participated in NMUSD's summer programs.

Our students have made remarkable academic strides, reinforcing their knowledge, and gaining new skills that will serve them well in the coming school year. Socially, these programs have provided a

vibrant environment for learning, exploring, making new friends, and having fun. As I visited Lincoln Elementary and Mariners elementary last week, it was inspiring witnessing the level of engagement in every classroom.

As president, I am thankful for our partners in education, that include

See **Mailbag**, page A8

A WORD, PLEASE | JUNE CASAGRANDE

The pretense-pretex distinction, if there is one

Decades after I began writing about language, there are still words I avoid out of fear I'll use them wrong. And worse: Some of these are terms I've learned, written about, then promptly forgotten. Top of the list: pretext



and pretense. These words are so similar, in meaning and in form, that it's hard to know how they differ, if at all.

If I want to say that someone sold me a bad car, would I say they were operating under the pretext that it wasn't junk? Or

under the pretense?

According to the Associated Press Stylebook, "pretext" is the way to go in this situation: "A pretext is something that is put forward to conceal a truth: He was discharged for tardiness, but the reason given was only a pretext

See **Word**, page A10

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[memorialcare.org/weightloss](https://www.memorialcare.org/weightloss)

New squares come to Triangle Square

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

NYC meets O.C. with the opening of Prince Street Pizza's first Orange County location. The New York pizza brand opened at Triangle Square in Costa Mesa last week to a line of nearly 500 hungry pizza fans.

"We are so happy to finally be open in the O.C.," said Prince Street Pizza chief executive Lawrence Longo.

Prince Street Pizza owners Dom Morano and his father, Frank Morano, made the Prince Street Pizza name in New York City when it opened in 2012, serving what were dubbed "SoHo slices." In 2020, Prince Street expanded to Los Angeles, opening a shop on Sunset Boulevard and now has locations in downtown L.A., Studio City, Pasadena, Venice and Malibu as well as in Nevada, Toronto and Miami.

Longo, who is also the founder of the Off The Menu dining app and an operating partner of Irv's Burgers, Bar Next Door and



Ira Edelman

PRINCE ST. PIZZA offers multiple pizza styles, like Sicilian-style squares with a fluffy crust. It has opened a location at Costa Mesa's Triangle Square.

Sparky's Sports Bar, said the the opening of Prince Street Pizza, Costa Mesa — the shop's 12th location nationwide — on July 22 was among the most anticipated for the pizza brand. The grand opening in-

cluded free pizza slices and exclusive collaboration merchandise from local clothing company Violent Gentlemen Hockey Club.

"The Costa Mesa customers were, I want to say, aggressive and excited

about us opening there," Longo with a laugh. "We gave out over 600 free slices to everybody."

Longo said Orange County has many good options when it comes to 'za.

"O.C. has unbelievable pizza," he said.

But Prince Street Pizza's signature SoHo squares, which are actually Sicilian-style square pies topped with sauces made from Morano family recipes, are just different.

"All of our pasta sauces are made in house, and I say 'pasta sauces' because, truly, that's what they are," said Longo. "They are fully cooked sauces."

The pizza dough is made using a water filtration process intended to simulate the water in New York, to make sure diners get the same experience on the West Coast as they would eating at the original late night NYC slice and soda shop.

Besides thick, fluffy squares, Prince Street also offers round, thin Neapolitan-style pizzas. Both styles of pies are available whole or by the slice. Original pizzas on the menu include the Green Machine with nut-free pesto sauce, shredded mozzarella and ricotta and the Naughty Pie, made with spicy vodka sauce spiked with prosciutto

and topped with pepperoni, mozzarella, ricotta and Zab's Hot Honey. Earlier this summer Prince Street announced it would open its first drive-thru pop-up on Aug. 8 at the historic former Arby's space in Hollywood, where the pizza brand will debut a new menu item: mozzarella sticks.

Longo said the location at Triangle Square checked many of the boxes the team looks for when scouting a new location.

"It is the first place you see when getting off the freeway," said Longo. "It is one of those places that has night life, there is a real neighborhood, and there is a ton of parking."

Longo also said they are hoping to expand further in Orange County.

"We couldn't be happier with the support we are getting in Costa Mesa," said Longo. "We are actively looking for an awesome next location in the O.C."

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HOUSING

Continued from page A3

ed numbers of people losing their housing, especially older adults with disabilities, with the cost of housing continuing to skyrocket with limited protections."

Weitzman said that since 2018, local governments and organizations have become far more efficient at coordinating the web of support programs available to people experiencing homelessness. Applications for supportive housing that used to take five to 10 years to sort out can now be processed in one or two. She pointed to Project Homekey and its followup, Project Home Safe, as examples of agencies effec-

tively collaborating to rapidly get a large number of people off the street and into housing.

"Cities and counties are saying, 'We've done all this work, we've gotten all these people into housing,' and then residents are saying, 'Why are there more people outside?'" Weitzman said. "And the answer is because they're different people. Because there are more people outside. That doesn't negate that, had these governments not done all the work they had done to create all these pathways to housing, there would be even more people outside."

ENCAMPMENT RESIDENTS MAY STILL BE PROTECTED

Although the Grant's

Pass decision upends the Martin vs. Boise ruling, people living in encampments still have some potential legal recourse against sweeps, according to Weitzman.

For example, the 4th Amendment's protection against unlawful search and seizure as well as elements of the Americans with Disabilities Act are part of the basis of lawsuits her office has filed in the San Bernardino County.

"I don't read it as an open season to arrest every one," Weitzman said. "And the truth is, many counties have tried that and it doesn't work. If that's what it said, there simply isn't space in jail to arrest all the people living on the street."

BILLIONS SPENT ON SHELTER, SERVICES AND SWEEPS

Newsom's order claims his administration has invested roughly \$24 billion to address homelessness across the state. That includes \$3.3 billion poured into Project Homekey. Since 2021, at least \$60 million in Homekey funding has been awarded for supportive housing projects in Orange County.

The state has also spent \$1 billion to fund California's Encampment Resolution Funding, a program local governments can apply for to cover projects related to the relocation and sheltering of people living in encampments. No individual city in Orange County has received ERF money, but in 2022 the county was



Eric Licas

A STUDIO APARTMENT at Clara Vista in Stanton, which was converted from a motel under Project Homekey.

awarded \$3.6 million from the program to relocate about 60 people who had set up a makeshift community in Talbert Park along the Santa Ana River be-

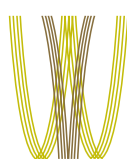
tween Costa Mesa and Huntington Beach.

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RARE

Continued from page A1

Andrew still needs assistance 24 hours a day, and the family has both a live-in nanny and a home nurse at the ready. Grandparents John and Jan West, a doctor and nurse respectively, also live in town and serve as invaluable resources.

"Andrew can't walk, he can't talk, he can't really communicate," Collea said. "I can tell sometimes that he's hungry or if he's tired, just by different sounds that he's making. But he needs full assistance with bathing, changing, eating. He can't stand up on his own, so we have to carry him everywhere."

The goal, she said, is for her to get back some of the baby that she lost.

That's where the family sees the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM) coming in.

Justin West, a plastic surgeon, co-founded the nonprofit KCNT1 Epilepsy Foundation in 2019 to help his own family and others affected by this rare disease. Sarah Drislane, the nonprofit's executive director, said there are several other KCNT1 patients in Orange County, among the roughly 3,000 kids nationwide affected by the disease.

West works with researchers and industry leaders to identify and evaluate potential therapeutics.

"Drug companies know that we have stem cell lines," West said. "We've created opportunities for them to come in. We're giving them the ingredients. And then the companies can look at that and say, 'We want to develop a

small molecule or create a new pill.' It gives all these companies an asset they can experiment with, that each of them individually don't have to pay for and waste the time developing.

"We're basically handing them the ingredients, so they can go make a cake."

CIRM was created in 2004 when Californians voted in favor of Proposition 71, the California Stem Cell Research and Cures Initiative. In 2020, voters approved another \$5.5 billion of funding.

But West is concerned that the San Francisco-based agency could begin deprioritizing funding for rare diseases in favor of more common ones like cancer.

"One in 10 people have a rare disease, and 95% of those rare diseases don't have a single treatment," he said. "It's hard to wrap your head around the idea, as a parent and as a physician, around the concept that you're going to defund those who have nothing in favor of those who have lots of options and much better lives."

Dr. Abba Creasey, CIRM vice president of therapeutics development, confirmed in an interview that the agency is currently going through strategic allocation framework right now, which will be shared with the Independent Citizens' Oversight Committee board at a meeting on Sept. 26.

But, she said, the notion that CIRM would no longer fund rare disease grants is "not likely."

"I reassure you that CIRM is still committed to working on rare diseases and identifying potential new therapies," she said, adding that it has funded several different grants in sickle cell disease treatment, two of

which are already in the clinical trial stage and moving forward.

As of May, the ICOC had approved a total of \$404 million for rare diseases and \$178 million for ultra-rare diseases over the years, according to figures provided by CIRM. Those numbers combined represent slightly more than half — 52% — of the clinical trial portfolio.

"This is total guessing — it may go down to 45% instead of [52%], something along those lines," Creasey said. "We just want to make sure that we have made adjustments to balance, but also to make those folks who are expecting therapies for common diseases, more prevalent diseases in the state. If the science is able to stand behind it, CIRM will not discriminate against common diseases versus rare diseases. We welcome both."

Collea noted that last month, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration announced a rare disease innovation hub. The bipartisan Congressional Epilepsy Caucus was launched in February 2023 in the House of Representatives, and in February 2024 in the U.S. Senate.

"It's the wrong time for CIRM to back out," Collea said. "The time is for CIRM to be all-in."

The KCNT1 Epilepsy Foundation wants to make sure efforts remain diligent in advocating for rare disease patients and their families, who typically don't receive funding from big pharmaceutical companies. The Wests are hopeful for a gene therapy in their case.

Meanwhile, life goes on, but there is no manual for having a child who lives with a rare disease.



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

ANDREW WEST, 7, swings in his backyard with parents Dr. Lisa Collea and Dr. Justin West, at their Newport Beach home.

His mom and dad worry about the effect of Andrew's ongoing complications on their two older children. Carolyn is 10 and Colin is 8; both currently see therapists.

Colin recently wrote a poem at school about his brother, which Collea shared. Like his mother, he dreams of a

better future.

"I dream about my brother talking to me," Colin's poem reads as it comes to an end. "I try to be happy. I hope he will get better. I am Colin."

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WORD

Continued from page A6

for general incompetence. A pretense is a false show, a more overt act intended to conceal personal feelings: My profuse compliments were all pretense."

No wonder I was confused. That's a teensy difference. A pretext conceals a truth. A pretense conceals feelings. They're both deceptions used as an excuse to say or do something disingenuous.

But AP style is really just for editors and people

looking for a rulebook to conform to. If you want rules that apply to the language in every context, you need a dictionary. And here, in this world of rules for everyone, the pretense-pretext distinction is all but wiped out.

Under the entry for "pretense" in Merriam-Webster's online dictionary, the fourth definition is "pretext" — meaning the two words can be synonymous. Under its entry for "pretext," there's no definition summed up as "pretense," but if you click on "synonyms," you land at a the-

saurus page that lists "pretense" as one of the top words you can use instead.

Of course, the words are interchangeable only if you're using the "deception" meaning of "pretense." It can also mean ostentatiousness or pomposity, like when you call a conceited or arrogant person pretentious. You can't use "pretext" if you mean that.

Often when words are similar in form and meaning, you can trace their history to learn that one sprouted from the other — perhaps starting as a mis-

spelling or new pronunciation — like the way "harken" begat "hearken" and "hark."

"Pretext" and "pretense," however, evolved on parallel tracks for as far back as my etymology reference guides record.

"Pretense" first popped up in Middle English in the 16th century, apparently evolving from the Latin "pretension," which was rooted in words meaning to "stretch in front," "put forward" or "allege." Around the same time, "pretext" started to appear in English, but it probably

grew from a different Latin word, "praetextus," which itself was rooted in a word meaning "to weave."

Today, the meanings are very similar and, therefore, hard to choose between. So it's good to know that "on the pretext of" and "on the pretense of" are both acceptable.

And what about "false pretenses"? Since a pretense is itself a deception, you'd think that "false" would be redundant. But in fact, it's a formal term for a crime. According to a Cornell Law School database, someone commits the

crime known as false pretenses "when they obtain title to the victim's property through misrepresentations with the intent to defraud."

Next time I'm struggling to choose between "pretense" and "pretext," I'll try to remember the mnemonic that "tense" suggests a feeling. But based on my track record, I doubt I'll retain this pretense-pretext lesson for long.

JUNE CASAGRANDE can be reached at JuneTCN@aol.com.

Healing Harmonies: A Nurse-Led Volunteer Group Brings Healing Power of Music to Cancer, ICU Patients After Hours

In times of illness, isolation and anxiety, MemorialCare Orange Coast Medical Center understands that emotional and mental well-being is just as important as physical treatment. In an inspiring initiative, two dedicated nurses, Rosie Obligacion and Chris Wright, have launched "Healing Harmonies," a unique volunteer-based musical program designed to provide comfort and solace through live music. This heartfelt endeavor, driven by Rosie and Chris's compassion and love for music, has been embraced and supported by Orange Coast Medical Center.

Rosie and Chris, full-time overnight nurses in the intensive care unit, spend their nights caring for critically ill patients. However, their commitment to their patients doesn't end after their 12-hour nursing shift. At dawn, they clock out and put on their volunteer shirts, transforming into the musical volunteer duo "Healing Harmonies," spreading cheer through heartfelt performances.

"Sometimes hospitals can be so alienating, and I want to show them that we care," says Chris Wright. "We're not just here to get a paycheck. We want to be a source of light in their loneliness. We are here for the patients who never smile, and once we play for them, that changes; we get that smile, and they sing along."

The musical experience is unforgettable. Their soothing melodies uplift spirits and heal souls, creating a harmonious atmosphere during challenging times. Combining captivating vocals and soothing guitar melodies, they visit various units within the hospital, kindly inquiring if any patients would like to experience the uplifting music. Patients are offered a selection of songs from different genres, allowing them to choose their favorites.

"We started 'Healing Harmonies' at Orange Coast Medical Center because we want to promote a holistic healing approach for our patients," says Rosie Obligacion. "Our patients may be deeply afraid, in psychological pain, or physical pain, and instead of giving them strong pain medication or a sedative, we try and sing to them first. It helps them calm down enough to relax, sleep, and ultimately, heal."



"Healing Harmonies" nurse performers, Rosie Obligacion and Chris Wright, with the help of hospital security guard, Jesus Bega, bring light to a patient's stay singing 'Here Comes the Sun.'

For one 26-year-old, having "Healing Harmonies" sing to her while she was at the hospital has been a source of light during a difficult time. A security guard at the hospital, Jesus Bega, was so moved by Rosie and Chris, that he also decided to join in on the performance that day.

"Sometimes being at the hospital can be boring and sad, because I want to be at home with my family," says 26-year-old Anayeli Cruz. "This made me feel like there is hope. They sang, 'Here Comes the Sun,' and I thought the guitar was coming from the stereo — it was so amazing."

MemorialCare Orange Coast Medical Center proudly supports Rosie and Chris's volunteer efforts through "Healing Harmonies," highlighting the profound impact of compassionate care. This volunteer-based program blends medical expertise with the healing power of music, enhancing the well-being of patients during their most vulnerable moments. Rosie and Chris's commitment to their patients proves that the most powerful medicine often comes from the heart of our health care workers.



MemorialCare
Orange Coast Medical Center