

TimesOC

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Project works to restore charred land

The Irvine Ranch Conservancy is 'starting from scratch' after the Silverado fire ravaged thousands of acres.

BY BEN BRAZIL

After the Silverado fire ravaged thousands of acres and chased 80,000 residents from their homes, Matilde De Santiago looked on at the charred remains of a two-year restoration project.

De Santiago had headed the effort for the Irvine Ranch Conservancy, planting native greenery and restoring habitat along the view deck at the Sinks — what is known as Orange County's "mini-Grand Canyon."

The massive blaze consumed the plants along with the view deck.

"It's devastating," De Santiago said. "It hurts because I worked on that project for about two years and now have to start from scratch. I mean completely from scratch. The deck is not there. The plants are not there."

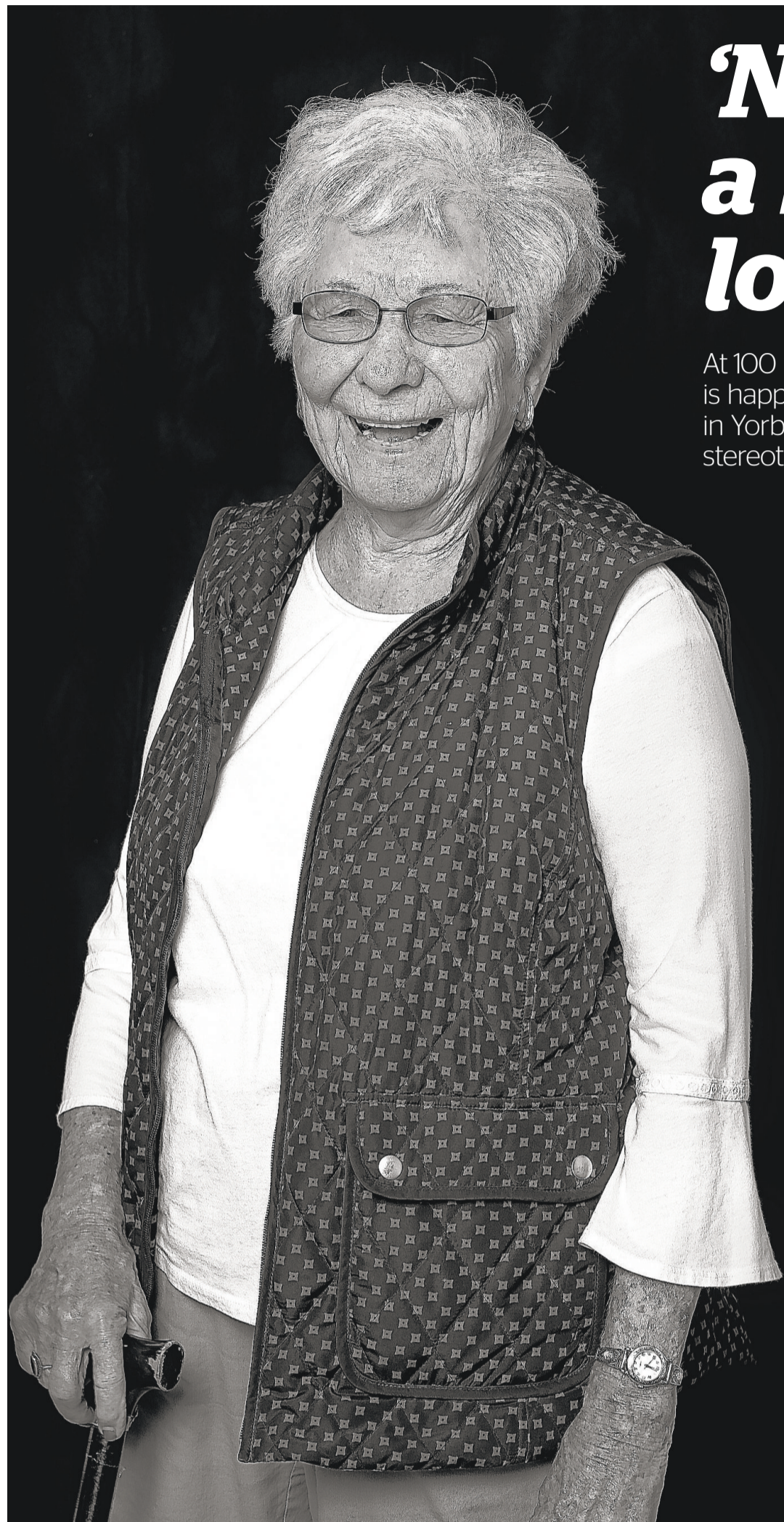
De Santiago, project coordinator with the Irvine Ranch Conservancy, said that about 10 other restoration projects have faced setbacks due to the fire.

Now about a month after the fire, the conservancy is focusing on restoration projects in two areas of OC Parks' Limestone Canyon in Silverado — Bee Flat Canyon and Agua Chinon. The conservancy has been working to restore these two areas for years, though they were both affected by the fires.

De Santiago said the conservancy will begin planting about 200 oak trees in Bee Flat Canyon this week and another 100 will be planted in Agua Chinon at a later time. Other seedlings will be planted in a meadow near Limestone Canyon Road.

"It set us back, especially in Agua Chinon," De Santiago said. "There are some oaks there, but you drive through there and it's

See **Project**, page R6



'Not a bit lonely'

At 100 years old, Jo Hamann is happy to live on her own in Yorba Linda, breaking the stereotypes of senior living.

BY LORI BASHEDA

Jo Hamann is 100 years old and still happily lives on her own. She attributes her longevity and independence to "sturdy peasant stock."

On behalf of those of us who might not be lucky enough to come from the same stock, I asked about her habits to see if I could unearth some clues to a long and, most importantly healthy, life.

Here's what she told me. Breakfast is cold cereal and half a banana.

Lunch is something light, like maybe liverwurst and crackers, but always involves a piece of dark chocolate.

Dinner includes a glass of red wine and is often followed by something sweet: a cookie or biscotti.

And for those concerned about cutting back on coffee consumption, take heart: Jo drinks four to six cups every morning with the newspaper. Afternoons are spent doing word puzzles, reading paperback fiction or getting on her computer to check emails or play solitaire. Evenings she settles into her recliner to watch "Jeopardy!" and "Wheel of Fortune" before switching to PBS.

She recalls fondly her earlier, busier life; how after she retired from her secretary job she and her husband Les got an RV and traveled all over America and

See **Hamann**, page R5

LEFT: The portrait of Jo Hamann included in SCAN's "stAGES: 100 over 100" photo series.

Photo by Robert Duron

After a busy wildfire season, O.C.-based National Guard helicopter battalion to deploy

BY DANIEL LANGHORNE

As flames raced toward a Napa County home where an 82-year-old man sheltered during the Glass Fire, Lt. Col. Daniel Goldsmith of the California National Guard dropped water from his UH-60M Black Hawk onto torching trees.

Goldsmith's crew and two other aircraft defended the home for more than 30 minutes and were able to save it and the man inside. It was one major wildfire among four Goldsmith has helped fight this year.

Goldsmith and his Los Alamitos-based unit, 1st Assault Helicopter Battalion, 140th Aviation Regiment, were slated to deploy to the Middle East for up to nine months in early 2021. As of Nov. 5, the 1-140th's deployment was

scaled back from the entire battalion to about 75 soldiers. Goldsmith is among the contingent planning to stay home.

The Orange County-based aviation unit is on the frontline of a balancing act facing the California National Guard — supporting the U.S. military's readiness to fight while assisting firefighter and law enforcement during public safety crises.

Army aviators are answering the call, but the challenge of filling these dual roles is very real amid another record-breaking wildfire season.

"The increasing demand for state emergency response is making it more challenging for the California Army National Guard to train personnel and maintain equipment for federal overseas deployment missions," Goldsmith



CALIFORNIA ARMY NATIONAL Guard Lt. Col. Daniel Goldsmith is a Blackhawk helicopter pilot at the Joint Forces Training Base in Los Alamitos. He has been aiding in putting out major wildfires across the state and will deploy to the Middle East with his unit in early 2021.

Raul Roa
Staff Photographer

said.

This will be the battalion's fourth overseas deployment since Sept. 11, 2001, Goldsmith said. As the commanding officer of the 1-140th, he's responsible for the fleet of 18 UH-60M Black Hawks and more than 400 soldiers based at Los Alamitos Army Air Field.

Aviators with the battalion had conducted 709 flight hours on California wildfires by late October, which is more than any year in the last 20 years with the exception of 2017. And with dry, windy months still ahead, that record could be broken, Goldsmith said.

Wildfires aren't the only incidents that have seen help from the Los Alamitos-based helicopter battalion.

In June, the California National Guard activated 8,000 service members in response to civil un-

See **Guard**, page R6

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Amid an increasing O.C. homeless population, Santa Ana fights with county over jail releases

BY MEGHANN M. CUNIFF

Aided by snacks, an iPhone and a friend with a taxi, Vaskin Koshkerian works to be the first stop for newly released jail inmates in Orange County.

He's parked his RV outside the Central Jail Complex most nights a week for several years, helping thousands of people released onto the streets of Santa Ana. Some need only a quick call to a roommate or a cup of coffee; others have nothing but jail clothes and no way to get back to the park where they usually sleep. Lately, that's given Koshkerian a front-row view of the human consequences behind Orange County's legal fight over homelessness, as the city of Santa Ana accuses the county of unfairly burdening it with unhoused people from outside the city.

"The city and the county fighting? The poor people are getting screwed," Koshkerian, a volunteer with the homeless advocacy group Micah's Way, said while on duty one recent November night. "Let's figure out how to help the people instead of screwing the people."

The current battle is part of a wider court saga that began in early 2018 with a 1,500-person homeless camp along the river near Angel Stadium of Anaheim.

U.S. District Judge David O. Carter oversaw the disbursement of the camp as part of a lawsuit that's led to new shelters and homeless services throughout the county, and the judge continues to monitor service expansions through eight settlements with the county and 17 cities.

Carter's efforts are receiving heightened attention as he presides over a similar lawsuit against the city and county of Los Angeles, and politicians have cited his success in Orange County while advocating for a similar approach in L.A.

But the ongoing legal fight that's centered across the street from Koshkerian's RV shows the situation in Orange County is still rife with conflict, and it highlights a persistent debate over what to do with a growing homeless population and how the county's 34 cities should or shouldn't cooperate. It's already changed jail operations, with the sheriff's department halting most pre-dawn releases.

At its core, the fight is about Santa Ana's longstanding complaint that the city shoulders too much of the county's homeless crisis. The jail is in the middle of it, with the city blaming the county for releasing



VASKIN KOSHKERIAN of the volunteer group Micah's Way stands outside his RV near the Central Jail Complex in Santa Ana on Nov. 18. Koshkerian works to be a resource for newly released inmates, offering a phone, coffee, snacks and information.

people with no way to get back to the cities where they were picked up. Attorneys in October said the county's practice "until recently" was to release inmates at midnight "when transportation options were scarce and service providers were closed, rather than during daytime hours."

"This practice no doubt further increased the likelihood that releases would remain on the streets of Santa Ana rather than returning to the cities in which they were previously living," according to the lawsuit.

Orange County sheriff's Sgt. Dennis Breckner told TimesOC the jail started in January releasing most inmates at 7 a.m. "or later so that services are more readily available." He said he and his colleagues work with county behavioral health specialists and community groups "to make services available in the jail lobby which can provide post-custody treatment."

"We also now provide released inmates with necessary medications post-release, some of which is designed to help fight opioid addiction," Breckner said in an email. "All of this is designed to increase the health, safety and well-being of those released."

But the dispute goes beyond the jail: Santa Ana attorneys said in an Aug. 31 filing that the county's pandemic-related reduction of shelter space and heightening of shelter admissions standards "has exasperated the influx ... and shone an

even brighter light on the inequities arising from the county's practices."

The county also "has caved to pressure from wealthier and whiter communities," Santa Ana attorneys argue, by rejecting shelters in Irvine, Huntington Beach and Laguna Niguel in 2018 and instead authorizing a 425-bed shelter in Santa Ana.

The county's homeless population increased 43% between 2017 and 2019, or 4,792 to 6,860, with Santa Ana's share jumping to 26% from 20%.

Attorney Brooke Weitzman said the problems highlight the consequences of disbursing the Anaheim river encampment instead of focusing on bringing services to those living there and trying to eventually get them into housing.

Weitzman and attorney Carol Sobel sued to stop the closure of the Anaheim riverbed encampment in 2018, but it eventually closed under Carter's supervision, with approximately 700 temporarily moving into motels paid for by the county.

But housing wasn't in place for everyone when the motel stays ended, so many people are back living outside but with no centralized location, which Weitzman said has complicated efforts to help them.

"There are a lot more people from the riverbed in housing than there would have been if they kept doing nothing, but there also are a lot more people scattered around and still homeless," said Weitzman,

who works with Koshkerian on outreach and information.

The riverbed lawsuit settlements detail the shelter facilities each settling city is to build to allow for enforcement of anti-camping ordinances under the 2018 U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeal ruling in *Martin v. Boise*, which says people can't be cited for sleeping outside if no alternative shelter is offered.

Santa Ana opened a 200-bed shelter in November 2018, and the county is preparing to open the 425-bed shelter in Santa Ana to replace an open-air bus terminal shelter that's been in place since 2016. Other shelters have opened in Tustin, Anaheim, Placentia and Fullerton, and Buena Park opened one in June through a partnership with 11 nearby cities. Los Angeles County's Whittier and Bellflower also opened shelters after voluntarily entering the riverbed lawsuit to secure Carter's guidance through settlements. Costa Mesa opened a 50-bed shelter in 2019 and currently is constructing a 70-bed shelter, in partnership with Newport Beach.

Prior to the riverbed lawsuit, there were two shelters in Orange County: one in Laguna Beach and another the county opened in Anaheim in 2016.

The judge is allowing enforcement if cities have beds for 60% of the homeless population recorded in the most recent annual count, though he takes a hands-on approach that focuses on individual out-

reach instead of police involvement. His work has caught on with cities not under his purview, including Huntington Beach, where city officials cited the judge's 60% requirement when authorizing a 174-bed shelter that was to open last week.

But many shelters have reduced capacity because of the pandemic, and Santa Ana says the county's closure of an armory in Fullerton and its restrictions on the 425-bed shelter have eliminated hundreds of beds. The city's attorneys also blame the closure of hotels through the statewide Project Roomkey program for putting more people on the street.

All this contributes to what Santa Ana's lawsuit alleges is the county's breach of its riverbed settlement, which forbids the county from transporting people from outside Santa Ana and its nearby partner cities into the area for services. The number of unhoused people taken to the jail since the July 2019 settlement range from 11 in La Habra and 13 in Cypress to 30 in Buena Park and 48 in Brea, according to city records cited by Santa Ana.

Santa Ana initially sued the southern cities of Dana Point, San Clemente and San Juan Capistrano, but attorneys dropped them from the case after each assured them they hadn't transported any unhoused people to Santa Ana. The sheriff's department isn't currently enforcing anti-camping ordinances in

those cities or its other south patrol areas because of the lack of shelter.

Still, Breckner said sheriff's deputies "do make a point to contact individuals experiencing homelessness to offer services that might be available."

And anti-camping ordinances aside, unhoused people from all over Orange County often are jailed for other alleged crimes, and the releases Santa Ana is suing over expose what some describe as a troubling lack of post-incarceration services.

"I couldn't imagine being a girl, coming out here and being released on your own and this place not being here. It'd be pretty scary," said Harold Walker, 27, as he waited outside Koshkerian's RV for a ride home on a recent November night. "Just the simple thing of somebody having a phone and a little spot to sit and relax while the people come in and get them, it helps out a lot."

Walker was among eight or so men released from jail who sought Koshkerian's help between 9 and about 11 p.m. that night. He's not homeless, but others were, including 43-year-old Matthew Jacobs, who said a bus pass was his only way back to a tent where he sleeps in a railroad area in the city of Orange. Koshkerian has bus passes to give and a taxi driver who can help, but he said he sees some people who stay in Santa Ana rather than attempt to get back to wherever they were picked up.

"It happens all the time," he said.

Meanwhile, attorneys for the city and county were in Carter's courtroom Nov. 16, and they're meeting with Carter's friend, professional mediator and retired judge Jim Smith, to hatch a possible solution before the next hearing on Jan. 13. That's after Carter warned he's skeptical of Santa Ana's claims and noted the city's historical support of being the center of Orange County government.

Carter said he believes the covert transporting of homeless people into Santa Ana has largely stopped after his firm stance against it in previous court proceedings, which have included him threatening to involve the U.S. Attorney's Office for possible criminal charges against cities that leave homeless people in Santa Ana.

"What maybe has changed in the last five or 10 years is the onslaught of homelessness," the judge said. "I think Santa Ana's here crying out for help."

MEGHANN M. CUNIFF is a contributor to TimesOC.

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GRIN AND BEAR IT

A smile or grimace may reduce needle injection pain, UC Irvine researcher shows.

BY BEN BRAZIL

UC Irvine has good news for the 50 million Americans who are afraid of needles.

In a recently published paper, UC Irvine researchers found that simply smiling or grimacing can significantly reduce pain from needle injections.

The researchers also found that a smile can reduce the stress of a needle injection and lower an individual's heart rate.

"If you can put yourself in a good mood while you're stressed it really helps it go away faster," said Sarah Pressman, principal investigator and UC Irvine professor of psychological science. "If you're in a positive mood when something stressful happens, you don't perceive it as being as bad."

"... There is this natural predisposition where a lot of people smile when they're stressed. There's just like nervous smiling that sometimes happens. And we really wondered, why do people do this? Why do they smile during stress if it's not useful?"

For the study, which was published in the online journal *Emotion*, the researchers analyzed the re-

sponses of 231 people who were injected with a needle the size of a typical flu shot.

Participants were asked to either express a Duchenne smile, non-Duchenne smile, grimace or a neutral facial expression.

A Duchenne smile is a genuine smile that raises the corners of the mouth and produces crow's feet around the eyes.

The individuals who expressed the Duchenne smile and grimace reported that the injection hurt only about half as much as the participants in the neutral expression group. The Duchenne smile group also showed lower heart rates.

Pressman said they don't yet fully understand why the facial expressions help dampen pain and stress. The theory behind it is called the facial feedback hypothesis.

"Which is just the idea of like fake it 'til you make it," Pressman said. "So, this idea that if you pretend like you're feeling a certain emotion, then it should translate into feeling that to some extent. It should alter your emotion."

Pressman said the idea has been around since Charles Darwin proposed it in the 1800s. Psychologists



Neelvin C. Cepeda | San Diego Union-Tribune

A NURSE gives an injection in San Diego in February. UC Irvine researchers say they have found that simply smiling or grimacing can significantly reduce pain from needle injections.

have been researching it for the past few decades.

"The thought is that the nerves in your face, that when those muscles are activating they actually send a message to your brain that's telling you that you're happy," Pressman said.

"... The basic premise is that somehow that expression is sending signals back to your mind, and it's altering your emotion in some sense."

Pressman said researchers have long thought that the evolutionary purpose of smiling is, at least partially, to signal to other people that you are not a threat.

So smiling has an anti-stress effect because it is meant to encourage us to be social.

Pressman said it's also possible that if facial nerves are sending messages to the

brain, then they could also send messages to the body.

In particular, it could be signaling a nerve which is responsible for parasympathetic function in the body. Pressman said it could be telling this "rest and digest" nerve to calm down.

"It could be that those nerves, when you smile, are actually directly triggering that sort of relaxation nerve in the body and that's why it's reducing stress, that's why it's making things not hurt as much," Pressman said.

Pressman said the explanation for why grimacing may reduce pain is more complex because researchers have not really been studying the expression.

The UC Irvine researchers included it in the study

See *Grin*, page R4



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Virtual posada will raise funds for LGBTQ asylum seekers and immigrants

BY VERA CASTANEDA

The LGBTQ Center OC is putting a twist on this year's posada.

Posadas re-create the journey of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem in search of safe refuge, in which they are rejected multiple times before reaching a manger. Variations of the yearly religious-based event celebrated in Latin America are typically held in neighborhoods during the weeks leading up to Christmas Eve. The last house visited is expected to host a feast.

The center is taking the spirit of the celebration to give it a 2020 treatment—a virtual event with the goal to raise funds for LGBTQ asylum seekers and immigrants.

Jonatan Gutierrez, the center's immigration outreach coordinator, who grew up in Mexico, remembers his whole neighborhood would gather and enact the tradition.

"The spirit of the posada is a stranger offering their home to individuals for a night so that they can stay so that they can feel safe," Gutierrez said. "A lot of LGBTQ immigrants, who are seeking asylum or who are coming to the United States, that's what they want. They want a place where they can live their true authentic selves."

Queer Posada 2020, which will be held over Zoom on Saturday, includes a game of *loteria*, a raffle and performance by LGBTQ Mariachi Arcoiris de Los Angeles.

The nearly 15-minute "Before and After Detention" documentary will be screened followed by a Q&A with the director Armando Ibañez. The film follows three trans wom-



Courtesy of Armando Ibañez

FERNANDA IS FEATURED in "Before and After Detention," a short documentary by Armando Ibañez.

en who were released from detention centers. Angela, Fernanda and Gladys live in Los Angeles, while their asylum status is pending. In the documentary, they talk about their lives in their home countries of El Salvador, Guatemala and Mexico and being detained in the U.S.

The idea to document the immigrant trans community started after Ibañez, who describes himself as undocumented and queer, joined community organizing movements in 2013.

"I learned that the struggles and barriers for me as a cisgender person are not the same as the transgender community," Ibañez said. "I wanted to tell this story about some of the reasons the trans community keeps coming to the U.S. seeking a better life, just to realize that there's still transphobia and violence in this country. Not only in American society but also in immigrant communities."

He reached out to organizations like Familia: Trans Queer Liberation Movement and TransLatina to get into contact with people who had

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been released from detention centers.

For Ibañez, it was important to document how Angela, Fernanda and Gladys processed the trauma from their experiences at the detention centers but also moments of joy, whether it was performing on stage, working at a flower shop or a nonprofit helping others in similar situations.

Donations from the Queer Posada will go toward the center's LGBTQ Immigrant Fund. The unrestricted funds meet multiple needs from bonds, commissary funds, airline tickets to immigration filing fees. The center has also distributed checks to LGBTQ community members who have been severely impacted by COVID-19.

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Don Leach | Staff Photographer

OWNER GAIL LANDAU stands in front of Catmosphere, the cat cafe that had to close its doors recently because of complications brought on by the coronavirus pandemic.

Catmosphere Laguna, O.C.'s first cat cafe, closes due to pandemic, but will live on through foundation

BY ANDREW TURNER

In May 2017, Gail Landau was in the Southeast for her stepson's graduation from the College of Charleston.

Before she left Charleston, S.C., the self-proclaimed feline aficionado stopped by a cat cafe. Her first thought was that Laguna Beach was ready for the same sort of experiment.

"I wrote my business plan on the airplane on the way home," Landau said, "and I presented at City Hall the next week."

By the summer of 2018, Landau had opened Catmosphere Laguna, Orange County's first cat cafe.

The cat cafe and lounge brought happy memories for many. Landau, who has a lexicon of cat puns at her disposal, said that people could sit down for "meowmosas" for brunch, have birthday parties, and even get engaged.

"I got the ring ahead of time from the gentleman, and I took one of the cats that his fiancé was very interested in and took her collar and put the ring on the collar," Landau said. "When the cat walked over to her, the ring was hanging from the collar. There was not a dry eye in the room."

Unfortunately, the Laguna Beach cat cafe, like many businesses, has found it difficult to operate during the coronavirus pandemic, and last week, the decision was made to close its doors.

Although the brick and mortar aspect of her operation is going away for now, Landau said the mission to find the "purr-fect" home for abandoned and homeless cats and kittens will go on through the Catmosphere Laguna Foundation.

As of last week, Catmosphere Laguna had adopted out 195 cats. Landau added that the demand for pet companions has gone up during the pandemic, but she continues to be particu-

"[The cats] are fully vetted, spayed or neutered, receive all their vaccinations, they're socialized, they've been with fosters, and I carefully interview the prospective adopting paw-rents."

— Gail Landau

lar about the conditions of adoption. She wants to make sure the cats are going to an environment that they will fit into and that they will continue to receive veterinary care, if necessary.

"[The cats] are fully vetted, spayed or neutered, receive all their vaccinations, they're socialized, they've been with fosters, and I carefully interview the prospective adopting paw-rents," Landau said.

"I make sure they go to a home where they will be an indoor cat only. The individuals sign an adoption agreement after the interview process with me. I used to go to the homes and do a home check, but now I do a Zoom check or I do a FaceTime check."

Landau is also conscious of relationships that have been formed between the cats, and she said that she does not allow for separation of bonded pairs.

As a nonprofit organization, Landau said the Catmosphere Laguna Foundation pays for veterinary bills and food with the help of donations. Donations can be made at catmosphere.laguna.com.

Adoptions through Catmosphere Laguna are \$300. Landau added that the cats are microchipped, and a veterinarian health report, flea treatment and a super "purr-sonality" are included.

Landau said she is on the hunt for her next location, as she hopes to open a cat cafe again after things improve from the impact of the pandemic.

Catmosphere Laguna has also partnered with rescue outfits like the Ark of San Juan and the Laguna Beach Animal Shelter.

"Catmosphere Laguna Foundation is a part of the fabric of Laguna Beach," said Nancy Goodwin, the manager of the Laguna Beach Animal Shelter.

"As one of our fellow nonprofits, Catmosphere's mission to provide homes for rescued and abandoned cats is vital and important to our community. We serve to protect animals and partner together for their health and survival. We look forward to our continued work together."

Susan Hamil is the chairwoman of the Blue Bell Foundation for Cats, another Laguna Beach-based organization that acts as caretaker of older cats whose owners can no longer do so.

Hamil, a registered veterinarian technician who is also on the board of directors for Catmosphere Laguna, said that Landau had established a model for anyone who wants to start a cat cafe.

"You can be really assured of a healthy cat, and the atmosphere at Catmosphere was such that you can't just walk in and adopt a cat," Hamil said. "You have to sit down and get to know that cat and be friends with the cat and have the cat accept you as much as you want to accept the cat, and that was the beauty of it."

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GRIN

Continued from page R2

because it's the face people naturally make in response to pain.

Pressman said the grimace is interesting because it actually resembles a smile. In the study, the expression worked similarly as a smile in lessening pain.

"The really interesting thing that we found was that, while they both made you feel psychologically better, and grimacing was even helpful in reducing your perceived stress, only the smiling was associated with a physical effect," Pressman said.

"So, when we have a stress response, you know, our heart rate goes up. And so we were monitoring that, and it was really interesting because the grimacing group, even though they felt better, they looked identical to our control group when you look at their physiology."

Pressman said some of the same muscles are activated during a grimace and smile. But the grimace also includes activation of negative emotion muscles, which may "cancel out" the physiological benefit of the reduced heart rate.

Pressman said smiling helps with other kinds of pain and stress as well,

though it's likely more helpful in situations where the pain is short-lasting.

Previous research showed that it helped with cold-related pain and stress, like from putting your hand in a bucket of ice.

"Since we know it helps with cold pain and with needle pain, there's no reason to think that it wouldn't help with other kinds of pain," Pressman said, pointing out that it likely won't help with more extreme or chronic types of pain, like cutting off a finger.

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A year of service: Irvine high school students find new ways to connect

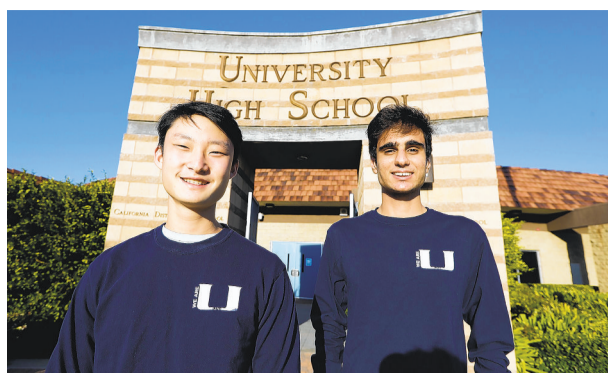
BY VERA CASTANEDA

In lieu of common high school events like football games and homecoming, it has been a year of service for a couple of Irvine high school students.

Amerdeep Passananti and Leyland Yang, two University High School students, have put together drives to meet the needs of those affected by COVID-19 and fire evacuations since the start of the school year.

"Our school community doesn't really seem united," Passananti said. "We're like two different schools. People don't really talk. It wasn't the same energy we saw in the prior years before COVID."

In September, Irvine Unified School District opened classrooms with a hybrid learning model. University High students were separated into two



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

UNIVERSITY HIGH students Leyland Yang, left, and Amerdeep Passananti have led community service work since coming back to a hybrid learning model in September.

cohorts. Each student attends in-person classes twice a week. As Associated Student Body service project coordinators, Passananti and Yang settled on competitions of service among the school's grade levels as a way to connect with each other and help out Irvine residents at the

same time.

The first drive was for face masks, hand sanitizer and antimicrobial wipes. Yang noticed a need for face masks early on as he saw his dad, who is a doctor, reuse a mask for four days because his hospital had a shortage. They collected over 2,000 masks,

34.5 gallons of hand sanitizer, 1,150 gloves and 795 wipes to donate to OC Rescue Mission.

The second drive focused on the aftermath of the Silverado fire in October. The high school campus was used as an evacuation center for Irvine residents — some of which were also University High students. On the day the fires hit Irvine, the students led an impromptu project to donate food and water to the school's shelter as well as collecting thank you letters for firefighters written by people from Irvine to Iran.

In time for Thanksgiving, the students also led a drive to gather canned foods from local elementary schools where they talked to kids about the effects the coronavirus pandemic on families and

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Spencer Grant

RUNNERS RACE along the Surf City Marathon course in 2017.

Surf City Marathon pushed back to September 2021

BY MATT SZABO

The Surf City Marathon, run in Huntington Beach every year on Super Bowl Sunday, has been pushed back to Sept. 11, 2021, due to the ongoing novel coronavirus pandemic.

The marathon weekend, which also includes a half marathon, 10K, 5K and beach mile runs, was set to

take place Feb. 6 and 7 next year.

Event organizer Motiv Sports announced on the marathon website that it is committed to a live event but that it would be too difficult to pull off in February due to soaring COVID-19 numbers.

Motiv Sports plans to

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HAMANN

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Canada. When he died nearly a quarter century ago, she decided she wasn't going to feel sorry for herself.

"I don't remember panicking about things," she said.

In fact she is quite happy living alone at her senior citizen mobile home park in Yorba Linda.

"I don't want to have a roommate," she said. "I like doing what I do when I want to do with it. I'm not a bit lonely."

In a nutshell, Jo epitomizes the spirit of senior independence living.

That's why she was selected for a social media campaign called "stAGES: 100 over 100," launched last spring by Senior Care Action Network. SCAN is a not-for-profit Medicare Advantage health plan founded in Long Beach in 1977 "by 12 angry seniors" advocating for services to help them

stay in their own homes and out of a nursing care facilities as long as possible.

The digital docuseries has so far spotlighted 56 Californians (in photos and short videos) who are 100 to 104 years old and still living on their own. The aim: to break the stereotypes associated with aging.

"Many see aging as frailty, but these are portraits of strength," said Eve Gelb, SCAN's community health vice president. "Older people are strong and smart and vibrant and we owe them a lot and we can learn a lot from them. Older folks don't have to be a burden."

The campaign's other mission is to highlight the importance of reaching out to elderly friends and relatives, particularly through the isolating COVID-19 lockdowns.

"We hope folks don't run away from the older adults in their lives; that they embrace the older folks in their lives," Gelb said.

Two of Jo's three foster children are still alive but do

TO FOLLOW STAGES:100 OVER 100:

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not live nearby. Her only biological daughter died in 1959 at age 15 of after an operation for a heart defect. But her biological son takes her to the Pancake House in Placentia every Friday morning for breakfast. And two of her grandchildren visit regularly.

Before the coronavirus pandemic, Jo played the tile game Mexican Train several times a week with friends at her mobile home park. Not quite a decade ago she took a dance class at the clubhouse until she fell and broke her hip at age 91 while waltzing with a partner. "He went one way and I went the other," she said. "Nobody will let me dance



JO HAMANN, left, sees "Happy 100th" birthday wishes from members of the SCAN team (who couldn't be there because of the pandemic) via Facetime in July.

Photo by Robert Duron

anymore, so I had to give that up."

Exercise is down to a daily walk outside, with her cane for balance.

Jo said she takes medication only for her blood pressure and something else that she couldn't recall off the top of her head.

"Oh Lordy, maybe I should be taking medicine for my memory," she said, laughing, but then later recalled it was for her thyroid.

She takes no vitamins.

As for that "sturdy peasant stock," it is mostly German. She was born here, though, in Minnesota, in July 1920, one of seven children.

"I learned to get along and accept whatever was there without expecting more," is how she explained her upbringing.

Her favorite decade so far? Her 50s.

"By then you've been through a lot and you've seen a lot and, you know, you've learned to adjust to

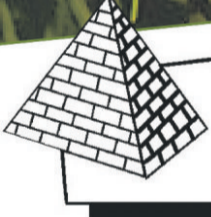
life," she said.

As for the future?

"I don't care how long I live as long as I can enjoy living," she said. "If you're in good health and you enjoy life and you enjoy seeing people and your mind is still OK, then you should keep going."



Good advice for the more than 80,000 centenarians living in America today.

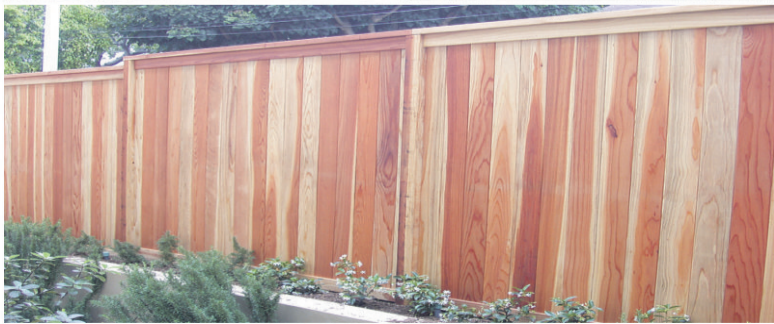
LORI BASHEDA is a contributor to Times Community News.



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PROJECT

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pretty bare. "It didn't affect all of Bee Flat Canyon, there was some oaks remaining there. The thing is, the fire burned uneven so some spots are really bare and some spots are not touched by the fire."

The conservancy just completed a decade-long habitat restoration project at Bee Flat Canyon a few months ago. The land had been decimated over the years from cattle grazing and wildfires. The conservancy launched restoration efforts in Agua Chinon in 2013.

The 84-acre restoration of the 300-acre Bee Flat Canyon is the longest and most substantial project ever undertaken by the conservancy. The nonprofit, initially funded by Donald Bren, has managed open space in Orange County — primarily in Irvine and Newport Beach — through its 15-year history.

The conservancy has restored about 250 acres of land so far and manages about 30,000 acres in Orange County.

De Santiago said the restoration efforts will be more challenging because the



ALERTWildfire.org

A REMOTE CAMERA image shows the Silverado fire burning in Orange County the morning of Oct. 26.

conservancy cannot seek volunteer help due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The conservancy has about 50 total staff, but about half of those are field workers. "My plan was to have the public participate on the planting of the trees as well as volunteers to go out there, but now we can't do that," De Santiago said. "The challenge now is finding staff to be able to go out there and plant that many trees."

"We will see how it goes. We will try and pull from our restoration team and field crew. Normally I would have a corporate, youth or school group and we would get it done in one day."

The oak trees will come from the conservancy's

Augustine nursery, which was untouched by the fire.

De Santiago said they will plant more oaks in the nursery so they will be ready for next year.

"There's a lot of wildlife that depend on this oak plant community," De Santiago said. "Lots of animals use these plants for habitat ... It's sad because before the fire there was a lot of animal activity out there and now, as you can imagine, there isn't."

Another fire broke out in Silverado on Wednesday night and spread to about 6,400 acres. It's unclear how much damage had been caused to the Limestone Canyon area.

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SERVICE

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food security.

They also opened up the canned food drive to the city. Passananti said they announced the drive on the hyper-local social networking website Nextdoor. They were on Nextdoor's trending list and connected with University High alumni. The students collected six large trash bins of canned and boxed food to donate to Families Forward.

"I had doubts about whether some of our plans would work, but the re-

sponse from the community really shattered our expectations," Yang said.

Although Irvine Unified campuses have shut down once again due to poor air quality from the Bond fire that erupted Wednesday night, the last drive of 2020 goes on. The districtwide drive is collecting essential items like hygiene products, school supplies and cleaning items to donate as holiday stockings. The drive will last from Dec. 1 to 11. Each participating high school can choose a local charity to donate to such as Salvation Army, Laura's House or the Friendship Shelter.

The local impact of University High spread through Irvine Unified. But Passananti and Yang are hoping for something even bigger.

"One of the best parts is seeing the impact we have around our community and I hope that we could really inspire other high schools in the Southern California region to follow suit as well," Passananti said.

For more information about Irvine Unified's holiday drive, visit universityhigh.iusd.org/asb.

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MARATHON

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combine the Surf City Marathon and Surf City 10 into one event in September 2021. The Surf City 10 was scheduled for Sept. 12 this year but canceled due to COVID-19.

"In case you are wondering why we are combining the events instead of keeping them separate, both of our Surf City events require the complete closure of the Pacific Coast Highway (PCH) in Huntington Beach," event

organizers wrote on the Surf City Marathon website.

"Completely closing PCH requires a lot of coordination and cooperation with the California Department of Transportation, the city of Huntington Beach, local businesses and the local residents. Closing it multiple times in the fall would place too heavy of a burden on those stakeholders. Attempting to host the Surf City Marathon in the spring or summer, before vaccines are widely available, was deemed too

risky. Combining the events in September is our best option to ensure a live event takes place."

The Surf City Marathon typically draws 2,500 runners to its 26.2-mile course. It would be celebrating its 25th year in 2021. Organizers said those who have already registered would be automatically transferred to the Sept. 11 date. They also have the option of deferring to the 2022 race, scheduled for Feb. 6, 2022.

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GUARD

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rest prompted by the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis. Flight crews with 1-140th moved soldiers from Joint Forces Training Base Los Alamitos to the Los Angeles Police Department heliport in downtown Los Angeles and flew a reconnaissance flight over Los Angeles County for the commanding general.

In October, one of the battalion's flight crews practiced dropping super-sized sandbags during a simulated breach at the Whittier Narrows Dam in coordination with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Amid a global pandemic, the battalion has also performed the required training to deploy and fight abroad when called upon

by the U.S. Department of Defense.

"We're prepared to go and do this mission and if something changes with that, it does. People just have to adjust. Their employers have to adjust," Goldsmith said.

As the Global War on Terror has dragged on and the Pentagon pivots for potential conflicts with China or Russia, the National Guard has played a larger role in missions historically conducted by the U.S. Army. This means Guard units are deploying thousands of miles away from their home states more frequently.

Meanwhile, the National Guard Bureau reports the number of natural disasters requiring assistance from soldiers and airmen has trended upward nationally in recent years. In fiscal

year 2013, the Guard responded to nearly 60 natural disasters across the country. The Guard responded to 71 natural disasters in fiscal year 2018.

California has seen more than 4 million acres burn this year, the most since Cal Fire started record keeping. At the summer fires' peak, the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services requested 16 helicopters from military officials, Goldsmith said. At any time, 1-140th can typically dispatch no more than three aircraft. This shortage of California-based flight crews required National Guard helicopters to fly from as far away as Wisconsin, Illinois, Wyoming and West Virginia.

It's not necessarily a shortage of aircraft, Goldsmith said, but the limited number of pilots who meet

a U.S. Forest Service requirement for each crew to include a senior pilot with at least 500 flight hours on their assigned helicopter. It typically takes five years for a junior National Guard helicopter pilot to hit this threshold.

Aerial firefighting is dangerous work. The airspace above a wildfire is highly controlled and trafficked by various aircraft and strong winds and thick smoke make for dangerous flying conditions. Helicopter pilots often push their aircraft to its limits by lifting 640-gallon water buckets at high altitudes, Goldsmith said.

Cal Fire places experienced firefighters aboard National Guard helicopters to make sure they're operating safely and efficiently with crews on the ground and other aircraft.

"There was a guy I flew with this time who has been a firefighter for 40 years and he said this was the worst year ever," Goldsmith said.

The Pentagon is typically the last organization to be tapped for aircraft to suppress wildfires. In September, Marine Corps and Navy helicopters responded to the Valley Fire in San Diego County because state and regional agencies were fully stretched.

"That's not a mission they normally do and that just shows you how bad this fire season was," Goldsmith said.

State emergency planners are confident that there will be plenty of aircraft based in California for natural disaster response while the 1-140th is deployed overseas, said Brian Ferguson, a Cal OES

spokesperson.

The upcoming deployment could offer relief to part-time soldiers who were laid off from or are underemployed at civilian jobs because of the pandemic, Goldsmith said. For others, military service provides an important support network and purpose in an uncertain time.

"We have a lot of people in this unit now who were born after 9/11 and so their understanding of why we are doing stuff in certain parts of the world and why they have to be away from their family is kind of murky," Goldsmith said. "One thing that's not murky is saving a house from burning down. You can see that."

DANIEL LANGHORNE is a contributor to Times Community News.

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