



Photos by Don Leach | Staff Photographer

LONGTIME EMPLOYEE Fiona Zachary fills an order at the Sugar 'n Spice frozen banana stand on Balboa Island on Thursday. Around 400 frozen bananas were prepared for Thursday's giveaway and nearly 60 of those were accounted about half an hour after the giveaway started.

For sale: Balboa Island's iconic frozen banana stand

BY LILLY NGUYEN

It was a perfect day for frozen bananas. The sun finally emerged Thursday after days of rain. Although temperatures were still hanging low, customers bundled up in jackets and visited Balboa Island's Sugar 'n Spice, which bustled with activity because owners Will and Courtney Alovís are selling the business and decided a unique send-off would be a giveaway of its iconic treat.

Will Alovís said the sale is "just because it was time" and that the two made the decision last summer but didn't reach out to a real estate firm until late last year. He said the sale is at least partially motivated by the recent death of some friends; their passing gave the couple a new perspective on life.

"We just realized how short life is and we need to not work ourselves to death. [We wanted] time to enjoy life and do stuff we love. I don't think we're going to retire fully," Courtney Alovís said, adding that she and her husband plan on staying local even after the sale is made.

The two worked in Hollywood for about 30



See **Stand**, page A2 **WILL AND COURTNEY** Alovís stand in front of the iconic Sugar 'n Spice frozen banana stand.

Festival returns with violinist at the helm

Music event from the Philharmonic Society of O.C. and Laguna Beach Live features numerous world-class musicians.

BY SARA CARDINE

The city of Laguna Beach will suspend its small-town status next week when a host of larger-than-life musical talents make appearances at multiple local venues, including the Laguna Playhouse, for the 22nd annual Laguna Beach Music Festival.

The multiday series intertwines larger public concerts with small, intimate classical and contemporary musical performances and workshops that give students, seniors and community members a chance to experience world-class performances in person.

Co-presented by the Philharmonic Society of Orange County and Laguna Beach Live, the festival is created and curated by a special guest musician who serves as artistic director, headlining concerts and making appearances at smaller events within the schedule.

Tommy Phillips, president and artistic director of the Philharmonic Society, said allowing artists to develop their own programming creates one-of-a-kind events that audiences cannot find anywhere else.

"We really give them an open invitation to perform and to curate and present programs and collaborating artists they might not get a chance to work with in a regular season," Phillips said Friday. "We give them that invitation to bring both a traditional musical canon but also to explore the outer edges."

This year's artistic director is renowned Los Angeles-based violinist Anne Akiko Meyers, who regularly performs around the world as a soloist with leading orchestras and is a prolific recording

See **Festival**, page A3

'Zoe' scares 'doubled' in Fullerton

BY JESSICA PERALTA

When escape room owner Christina Compani dreamed she was trapped inside a body bag alive, she knew she had to use the idea.

"I was stuck in there and I couldn't breathe ... all of the sudden I started feeling my entire body being dragged, being taken," said Compani, co-owner of Escapade Games in Fullerton. "I woke up and I turned to my husband ... I said, 'We need to start putting people in a body bag and dragging them across the floor.'"

This, in fact, is a key scene in the revamped escape room experience, "Zoe: Reborn," the current game at Escapade Games, which first opened as a horror-themed escape room in Fullerton in 2017



Jessica Peralta

"**ZOE: REBORN**" is the latest game, with 'extreme' mode, at Escapade Games, a 2,350-square-foot horror-themed escape room in Fullerton.

See **Scares**, page A6

ALSO FROM THE DAILY PILOT:



Susan Hoffman

COSTA MESA BUTCHERY SET TO OFFER MORE THAN MEAT Sections Fine Meats has expanded with locally sourced grocery items and for some customers has become a one-stop shop. Page A3

a Surf City favorite since 1961

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DINING



SERVICES

Symphony set to bring 'Latin Fire' to O.C.

BY MATT SZABO

Cuban American jazz trumpeting legend Arturo Sandoval may be almost 75 years old now, but he vividly remembers hearing one particular vinyl album more than five decades ago.

It was a Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker compilation record from the 1940s, just before Sandoval was born. And it blew his mind.

"I was so in shock, because I'd never heard anything like it," Sandoval said. "It turned my head upside down. I'm still trying to figure it out, what those people were playing in '46, because they were ahead of their time, big time. They created that style that they call bebop, which is the most intricate and complicated and beautiful style of music within jazz in general."

Sandoval has brought that kind of excitement to audiences too, as part of a long career that has included 10 Grammy Awards and one Emmy. Now he's coming to Costa Mesa next weekend to bring some heat to the stage.

He will perform at the Pacific Symphony's "Latin Fire" concerts on Friday and Saturday nights, Feb. 16 and 17, at the Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall. The show promises to merge jazz and Latin music for an upbeat and energetic night.

"We're going to do it like a fusion, but it's mainly based on Afro-Cuban jazz," Sandoval said, smoking a cigar, during a recent Zoom interview. "My main concern, and the only thing I pray to God for those two nights, is that we need a full house. That's the only thing, man. If we have a full house, we'll take care of the rest. We're going to try our best to let those people have a good time and enjoy music."

The first half of the show will feature arrangements from Pacific Symphony Principal Pops Conductor

Enrico Lopez-Yañez and Costa Rican trumpet soloist José Sibaja of favorites including Piazzolla's "Libertango," Lecuona's "Malagueña" and Bizet's "Carmen Suite."

Sibaja, who is Sandoval's good friend and spent more than a decade as Ricky Martin's trumpet player, will perform along with soprano Mónica Ábrego.

After the intermission, Sandoval will take the stage with his band for his Pacific Symphony debut. He said they'll play some standard jazz, as well as compositions that specifically honor his mentor, Gillespie.

"So much of the music of Latin America is based on dance, love and passion," Lopez-Yañez said. "The audience will get to hear that in some of the words and music that Monica will sing, and some of the feeling and style of that more accelerated music. And then, of course, fire, in my mind, depicts what you'll be seeing visually, in terms of the virtuosic playing that both Arturo and Jose will be doing."

Lopez-Yañez, who grew up a trumpet player himself, said he's a big fan of Sandoval and looking forward to working with him for the first time.

"It's just such a dynamic instrument when it's in the hands of these great performers like Arturo and José," he said. "Sometimes you feel like their fingers are going to be on fire, or their lips are going to be on fire, just because they're doing these incredible acrobatics on their instruments. It's really fun to watch."

The evening promises concert-goers a trip to Old Havana as soon as they step into the lobby, with people teaching salsa dancing and signature Latin cocktails being served.

Tickets for Pacific Symphony can be purchased via PacificSymphony.org or by calling (714) 755-5799.

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Courtesy of Timothy Norris

LEGENDARY JAZZ trumpeter Arturo Sandoval, shown performing at Dorothy Chandler Pavillion in Los Angeles in 2016, will join the Pacific Symphony for two shows next weekend.



Dr. Daniela A. Bota, a neuro-oncologist at UCI Health

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STAND

Continued from page A1

years prior to taking up the mantle of frozen banana proprietors in 2015, after Courtney Alovís' mother, Helen Connolly, fell ill.

Connolly purchased the brand in 1995 and was the third owner of Sugar 'n Spice, which originally opened in 1945. The hope, the Alovís said, is to keep the business alive through its next owner, though they acknowledge there is no real way of knowing what will transpire after the property is purchased.

But until it is, the Alovís family will continue operations as usual.

"There's a rumor going around that we're closing down. No, no, no — we're staying here until the new owner, whoever that is, takes over so it's going to be seamless," Courtney Alovís said.

The mixed-use property, which includes a house in

the back, was listed with Compass Wednesday night at \$3.49 million. The Sugar 'n Spice business itself will be listed at \$1.5 million.

Listing agent Annie Clougherty said a number of Newport Beach families have expressed interest in the property, which she said was iconic not only to visitors but to herself.

"I grew up on Balboa Island, at 212 Opal, and it's just like there's not that many places left like this, where it feels, [considering it's] in Newport Beach and in Orange County, this is a small town," Clougherty said. "It was like this in 1945 and it's still like this. I feel like that's the bygone era that people love and want to keep around. So many people have said, 'It's such a shame if this goes away,' and I think no one wants it to go away. So, that's what makes it special. There's a pride of ownership with every family that's owned it, and [they] always own it for so

long.

"It's just a part of the fabric of Newport."

Corona del Mar residents Bill and Mary Lee Gair said they visited the business Thursday because they'd heard about the giveaway. The Gairs said their granddaughter used to work at the shop, which led them to become regular customers.

Ly Do, who came with her daughter, Jennifer, said they moved to Newport Beach years ago, and that one of the first things they noticed on Balboa Island was that Sugar 'n Spice and Dad's Donut & Bakery Shop were just a few storefronts apart.

"Every time I bring friends here, they always ask who's the original, and I don't know," Ly Do said, laughing. "But, Sugar 'n Spice always seems to have a longer line, so maybe it's just a timing thing, but people can draw their own conclusions."

Jennifer Do said she likes



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

WILL AND COURTNEY Alovís stand in front of the iconic Sugar 'n Spice frozen banana stand with longtime regular Carre Otsuka, center.

Sugar 'n Spice because it is one-of-a-kind. She pointed to the Bluth's Original Frozen Banana Stand featured in the TV series "Arrested Development," which pulls inspiration

from Sugar 'n Spice and Dad's Donut & Bakery Shop.

"It's something that's so unique to Newport and iconic that people even emulated it on a television

show. And then, people come here and they really want to visit it for that. It's just really cool," Do said.

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Butchery brings on grocers with quality in mind



Susan Hoffman

SECTIONS FINE MEATS owner Ryan Ramming looks on as butcher James Croix trims dry-aged New York strip steak.

BY SUSAN HOFFMAN

Ryan Ramming, who grew up in Newport Beach, had been working in commercial real estate in Virginia Beach, Va., after college when he became involved helping his friends start a butcher shop in nearby Norfolk.

"I worked for them for about a year building out the space, buying equipment, and then helped open and stayed with them for about six months after we opened," Ramming said. "I saw the excitement of locally sourced produce and going out to see the farms. I slowly learned by watching and by doing it. It's very, very inspiring once we opened, and I saw how excited everyone was."

Ramming moved back to Newport Beach with his wife about 12 years ago with the idea of opening his own butchery, thinking



CASEY WALTERS, back, and Hayley McDonald arrange goods and produce in the newly added grocery section.

if it had worked well in a smaller state it could work here. "California is a viable state, agriculturally," said Ramming. "It's so big and a good place for meat and produce."

Four years ago, Ramming and his brother, Nick, opened Sections Fine Meats, located on East 17th Street in Costa Mesa. "It was two months before COVID when we opened," said Ramming. "We got to stay open as an essential business — the only reason we survived the first two years."

"We have one location, all fresh no freezer, and it's cut up from a bigger piece, full transparency, so you can see what we're doing," Ramming explained. "We get in big pieces of whole cows, pigs, lambs, and we cut it any way you like. It's the whole-animal butcher shop."

Ramming said he has personally visited farms in the state. "I've tasted 100 steak samples from farms because everybody wants

you to buy theirs, and the ones we picked stand apart."

He is quick to point out that his employees' knowledge and service has helped build a loyal customer base.

"One of our customers even hosted his company Xmas party for 60 people in our store," said Ramming, "and he gave everyone a steak."

Sections is becoming a one-stop shop, thanks to grocery items added by three moms who joined the team.

About five months ago, Hayley McDonald, Casey Walters and Sharon Arnesen, all with a shared interest in high-quality, fresh food, partnered with Sections.

"I picked Ryan's brain about starting as a small grocer where we would carry his meats," said McDonald, a friend who grew up with Ramming in Newport Beach. "He sug-

See **Butchery**, page A5

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6	1	2	9	7	4	3	8	5
5	8	9	6	3	1	4	7	2

FESTIVAL

Continued from page A1

artist with more than 40 titles to her name. She's performed at Carnegie Hall and the Walt Disney Hall and recently appeared with Gustavo Dudamel and the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl.

In an interview Friday, Meyers said she's excited for next week's line up.

"I'm completely obsessed with living composers and wanted to bring a lot of the composers I work with to Laguna," she said, citing the Feb. 16 world premiere of Philip Glass' "New Chaconne" for violin and bassline, written for her, as one among many highlights.

"There's so much music that is going to happen in the next week."

This year's festivities kick off Wednesday evening with a prelude soiree at the Laguna Art Museum at 6 p.m., highlighted by an inaugural performance by



Scott Chamberlin

ANNE AKIKO MEYERS and Fabio Bidini rehearse for a Summer of Beethoven Festival in 2022. Meyers is artistic director of the 2024 Laguna Beach Music Festival.

Myers.

The program continues Thursday and Friday as guest musicians visit local audiences in privately scheduled events at Thurston Middle and La-

guna Beach High schools and the Susi Q Senior Center.

On Saturday, at Heisler Park, from 9 a.m. to noon, members of the Laguna Plain Air Painters Assn. will

capture scenes on small canvases as festival musicians play live along the Laguna Beach cliffs for a "morning of art, music and ocean views."

Anchoring the festival are

three public performances that will take place Friday, Saturday and Sunday at the Laguna Playhouse, headlined by Meyers and featuring a stunning lineup of musical talents, collaborations and two world premiere pieces.

On Feb. 16, Meyers will appear on stage for "Metamorphoses," playing alongside French harpist Emmanuel Ceysson and accompanied by dancers who will headline the Laguna Beach Dance Festival at the Playhouse from Feb. 22 to 25. A pre-concert lecture is set for 7 p.m.

The following night's show, "Doubles," features Meyers and fellow violinist Aubree Oliverson playing works arranged for two violins, including Bach's "Double Concerto in D Minor." The duo will be backed by members of the prestigious Colburn School's Academy Virtuosi.

Closing out the show with a 3 p.m. performance Sunday is "Carnaval!"

which pairs Astor Piazzolla's homage to the tango, "L'histoire du Tango," with a whimsical new arrangement of Camille Saint-Saëns' "Carnival of the Animals."

Lucinda Prewitt — who founded Laguna Beach Live in 2001 with two friends as a means of bringing more musical performances into the local community — said the festival provides a rare opportunity for audiences to hear artists of a very high caliber in an intimate setting.

"It's all about getting music to more people," she said. "This music may only be here in Laguna, and this is the only chance they're going to hear these people together, in this program."

Tickets can be purchased for individual concerts or as a group and are available online at lagunabeachlive.org/musicfestival or at philharmonicsociety.org.

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forum

COLUMN | PATRICE APODACA

To buy or not to buy — a question worth asking

About two years ago I embarked on a purge of my Newport Beach house in anticipation of some upcoming remodeling projects.



Out went box upon box of old stuff, and though some of the items were attached to warm memories, I was satisfied with the feeling of lightness that I gained.

Now a friend is about to start a remodel, and she, too, is engaged in a heavy household cleanse. But she is adding an important element that I neglected.

She is on a self-imposed shopping moratorium as part of a plan to keep the clutter under control. No shoes. No purses. No clothes.

For all of 2024, she has vowed, she will buy personal items only out of need, not desire. "I feel so good looking the other way and not buying anything anymore," she said.

After hearing this, I took a quick inventory and realized that most of the closets and drawers in my house were still — or again — bulging. And I couldn't escape a mild sense of shame that I had failed to break a bad pattern.

This tug of war between the accumulation of material goods and the need to rid ourselves of outdated or superfluous items is typically characterized as a first-world — and most particularly American — problem, one that provokes worries and recriminations over our tendencies toward overindulgence.

The impulse to load up on unnecessary goods — what economists politely refer to as our "discretionary spending" — runs strong in our culture, leading to an unflattering depiction of Americans as thoughtless, materialistic bores.

The recent news stories about



U.S. District Court

A PHOTO that is part of U.S. District Court record shows some 50 pairs of high-end shoes in a closet.

the Stanley cup craze provide a perfect example of this baffling consumer profligacy. No, this isn't about the professional hockey trophy — I'm referring to the news that after more than a century as a reliably sturdy staple of campsites, the reusable Stanley beverage container suddenly and inexplicably became the accessory rage of the 2023 holiday season.

Numerous press reports told of shoppers standing in lines to buy the thermoses, and racing to snag new Stanley color drops. Expectations for Valentine's Day Stanley gifts are through the roof. Company revenues have grown dramatically.

Of course, we've seen such product bonanzas many times before, and history teaches us that these episodes rarely endure for long. I wouldn't be surprised if

used Stanleys start turning up en masse at thrift stores in the not-too-distant future. What's next — muck boot mania?

As nutty as this buy-and-discard cycle appears, however, a closer examination reveals a more complicated picture.

The American economy is not only the largest on earth, but it is overwhelmingly driven by consumer spending. The fact that we are now enjoying a surprisingly strong economy — it expanded by 2.5% in 2023, defying expectations that a recession was imminent — is due primarily to robust personal consumption expenditures. Economists see signals that the growth will continue this year.

As with most economic trends, however, there are pluses and minuses. That consumer spending is driven largely by strong

employment and wage growth. Good. The flip side is it can also fuel inflation, deflate savings and add to debt. Not good.

There are other facets of this complex picture. Our cups might runneth over from all those high-speed blenders and fancy coffee makers, but manufacturing them takes a toll on the environment. Worse still, many discarded items end up in our ever-growing landfills.

A better outcome is when they can be given a second life through such organizations as Goodwill of Orange County, which takes in an average of about 57 million pounds of cast-offs annually, according to Chief Operating Officer Corrine Allen.

The usual pattern of donations was disrupted in recent years. In 2020, the first year of the pan-

dem, they plunged by about 25 percent, but then soared in the following two years due to pent-up closet cleaning. In 2023, the donation level settled back into its normal, pre-pandemic pace.

Clothing invariably accounts for the bulk of donated items; some pieces even turn up with the original sales tags still affixed. But all manner of items get dropped off. Goodwill staffers have been known to discover expensive luxury designer goods. A valuable Picasso engraving once landed in the donation pile.

The weirdest item? A human skull, which — after local police and a CSI team showed up to investigate — turned out to be a hand-me-down from a medical school. That was an interesting take on the "reduce, reuse, recycle" regimen that we are encouraged to follow.

The upshot of all this is that we could all — and by referring to "all" I'm really addressing myself — do a better, more thoughtful job of monitoring and reining in spending on nonessential goods. When we do feel tempted to buy something, we should think long and hard about its value, utility and what kind of afterlife it might one day have.

Since my friend gave me pause to consider, I have been studiously avoiding all the messages showing up in my inbox telling me that I "simply need this" or "this is so you" or "we noticed you looking at this." For a little while, at least, I'll try not to look.

Let's see how long it lasts. At some point, the economy might need me.

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

A WORD, PLEASE | JUNE CASAGRANDE

People who don't care about grammar often get it right

"I'll dress warm," I wrote to friends recently in a group email about a get-together on the patio of a local café.

What happened next will sound familiar to every careful user of the English

language: I second-guessed my own grammar. "Is 'warm' OK

instead of 'warmly?'" I wondered. "How do those rules work again? And, even if I got it right, do I have to worry my friends will think I was wrong? Can I defend my choice? Will I have to?"

If you know people who don't care a whit about their grammar, don't look down on them. Envy them. These folks not only sidestep a lot of this anguish, but, ironically, their nonchalance often ensures good grammar. After all, natural language



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

KIDS CHOOSE jackets during the 15th annual Holiday New Coats for Kids Drive at the Boys & Girls Club of Costa Mesa. To "dress warm" can mean the same as to "dress warmly," writes grammar expert June Casagrande. The former is regarded as a flat adverb.

is where grammar rules come from.

Winging it prevents hypercorrection, which is what happens when you work too hard to speak grammatically and, as a result, make a mistake. "Between you and I" is a good example. The more

grammatically correct form is "between you and me," since "between" is a preposition and prepositions take object pronouns. But people trying to be proper use "I," ironically making their

See Word, page A5

MAILBAG

Commentary offered 'scary' reminder of potential for nuclear war

The article, "Atomic veteran's experience with 31-kiloton nuke is worth recalling as 'Doomsday Clock' resets" (Daily Pilot, Feb. 4) was almost like reading a make-believe movie thriller that has a possibility of coming true. The 92-year-old atomic veteran, Ray Calloway, recalls his experience back in April 1950 when he was just under 4 miles from

the testing sight of a 31 kiloton atom bomb. He best remembers "the most beautiful crimson he's ever seen" and the 14-second delay between the initial blast and the blast wave that hit him. It's been many years without atmospheric testing and reported close calls which seems to have created a sense of global safety with not much thinking on the

subject. But the article had some profound and scary statements such as: "Most experts agree that a reliable defense against a determined nuclear attack does not exist" and "China, Russia and the U.S. are all spending huge sums to expand or modernize their nuclear ar-

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THE DAILY COMMUTER PUZZLE

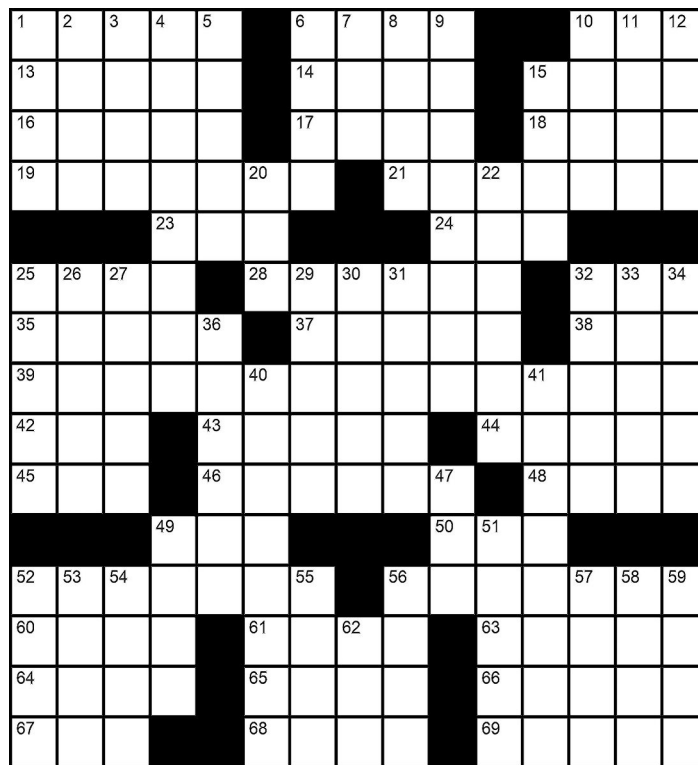
By Jacqueline E. Mathews

ACROSS

- 1 Lacking in skill
6 Baking
10 Exec's degree
13 Israel's Dayan
14 Up to no good
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39 Noncommittal answer
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43 Magna follower
44 Breaker of Ruth's record
45 LA Galaxy's grp.
46 "Lupin, Gentleman Burglar"
48 Ancient stringed instrument
49 Ancient
50 Contribute
52 English class subject
56 Do well
60 Sheepdog with a corded coat
61 Go up
63 Verdi's art form
64 Very much
65 Exam for a future Dr.
66 Violin player's supply
67 Look at
68 Plies a needle
69 Soup base

DOWN

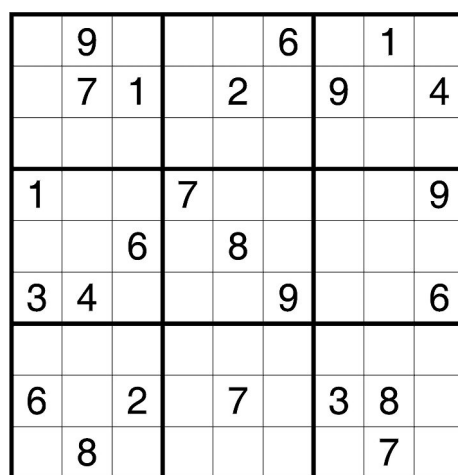
- 1 Website for cinephiles
2 Oasis frontman



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 A3.

- Gallagher
3 "¿Cómo _ usted?"
4 Pic development place
5 Houstonian, e.g.
6 Aug. follower
7 Fertility clinic cells
8 The D in CD

- 9 63-Across solo for a low female voice
10 Kind of paste
11 Head, slangily
12 _ and sciences
15 Answered an allegation
20 "Metroid" console, for short

- 22 Informal words to a faraway loved one
25 Teen's resentful assent, perhaps
26 Gem from an oyster
27 Deep pit
29 Manual readers
30 Tale of adventure
31 Jordan's capital
32 Big name in labels
33 Country estate
34 Masonry material
36 "Don't panic!"
40 Nautical supports
41 Place covered by a toupee
47 Listening organ
49 Skip
51 Entrance feature
52 Student stats
53 Regulation
54 Soothing lotion ingredient
55 Staple of Chinese cuisine
56 Fluffy family members
57 Cancun cash
58 "The Little Mermaid" prince
59 Horribly smelly
62 Toothly tool

Tribune Media Services

BUTCHERY

Continued from page A3

gested instead sharing space.”

“Ryan has really high quality, and we wanted to focus on quality natural brands,” said Walters. “We felt it was something we could build with a really well rounded store.”

The moms agreed they had been frustrated shopping in traditional grocery stores where they spent too much time reading

labels in search of healthy food.

“We wanted to combine convenience with quality by creating a place where people could shop at a place they could trust the products on the shelves,” explained Walters. “Like when your kid asks for something you’re OK with by giving them something where the product is less processed.”

“We want to support local farms and small manufacturers that are focused on bringing real food to

customers,” said Walters. “And keep the gunk out of food,” said McDonald.

For example, their fruit roll-ups from Arnett Farms are dried pure fruit without preservatives or added sugar. The peanut butter is just the nuts, the bread is from artisan bakery Champaign, with no preservatives or added sugar. Eggs are from La Bahn Ranch, a locally sourced, cage-free brand found at local farmers markets.

“Part of the convenience, if you can’t make it to the

farmers market, is you can come to our store,” said Walters. “We have the produce, apples, oranges, berries, sweet potatoes, broccoli and fresh salad green mix from Oak Grove Farms.”

The final build-out at Sections, adding more shelving and categories similar to grocery stores along with a coffee bar, is expected to be completed in April.

Susan Hoffman is a contributor to TimesOC.

WORD

Continued from page A4

choice less proper than the people who didn’t try so hard.

That goes double for adverbs. Consider the sentence: Slice the onions thinly. To someone who’s fretting over grammar, the adverb “thinly” might seem necessary, since you’re talking about an action: slicing. But you’re not describing an action. You’re describing a noun: the onions.

“One must analyze the sentence,” advises Bryan Garner in Garner’s Modern American Usage.

In this case, he explains, “slice” is a verb, “the onions” is the object of the verb, and the word that follows is the object com-

plement — that is, a word modifying the object. So when choosing between “thin” and “thinly,” you have to understand that you’re describing not a verb but a noun: the onions. And describing nouns is the job of adjectives, not adverbs. Thinly isn’t the manner of slicing. Thin is the state of the onions when you’re done. So the correct form is “slice the onions thin.”

In “I’ll dress warm/warmly,” these relationships aren’t as clear. Yes, I want myself, a noun, to be warm. But you could also consider this a manner of dressing: dress warmly. So in this case, it’s up to the speaker to decide whether she wants to modify the verb, to dress, or the noun, herself. There’s no wrong answer.

Sentences like “I feel bad” are a little different. Here, there’s no object of the verb because this isn’t a transitive verb. It’s a linking verb, whose job is to point back to the subject. This dynamic is clearer in “Jane is happy,” “Joe seems nice” and “The dog acts innocent.” Because these are linking verbs, you need adjectives like “happy” to describe the nouns in the subject. Whereas in “slice the onions thin,” you’re describing a noun not in the subject but in the object.

But even if you were slicing thinly or dressing warmly — if you really meant to describe the action — you could still say “thin” or “warm” if you wanted to. Why? Because of flat adverbs.

Flat adverbs are words

used as adverbs in which you just drop the “ly.” “Drive slow.” In this example, there’s no question that you’re describing an action and that you need an adverb to do so. But “slow,” when you use it as an adverb, is an adverb. Yes, even without the “ly” ending. That’s why “drive slow” is grammatical.

Of course, “drive slowly” is more proper. So avoid flat adverbs when they might raise eyebrows. But my email with “I’ll dress warm” wasn’t going to ruffle any feathers, so I stuck with it.

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

MAILBAG

Continued from page A4

senals” with the U.S. government’s plan to spend \$1.5 trillion on a new generation of modernized nukes. And now it’s getting scary again. With what is going on in the world today in the Mideast and Russia, who knows what could happen tomorrow with so much anger, hate and the means by which we could destroy each other with the pressing of a button? Is there any kind of deterrent that could stop a future nuclear war?

In 1959 there was a movie called “On the Beach,” with Gregory Peck and Ava Gardner, about the world having had a nuclear war with only Australia having survived the blast, but with a slowly moving nuclear fallout heading towards Australia and everyone knowing that their time is very short. The movie was too real and way too scary. The film was shown in numerous countries around the world in hopes that it would provide ample deterrent and fear to ward off any possibilities of a real nuclear war. So far, so good, as any wars since then have been conventional, sans the deadly nukes we now possess. Perhaps it’s time to bring back that movie to prevent a real-life scenario of “On the Beach.”

Bill Spitalnick
Newport Beach

Surf City politics continue to frustrate

Re: “Huntington Beach City Council stands with Texas in border dispute on split vote,” Daily Pilot, Feb. 8: Why did a “Statement of Solidarity with Texas” appear as an agenda item for the Huntington Beach City Council? A Democrat-bashing statement of solidarity with a Republican governor intent on taking away the rights of women, people of color, and LGBTQ+ people? Personal partisanship is the answer, never mind that council members are supposed to represent all of us, not just those who vote Republican.

Comparing President Biden’s purported (not actual) “open border” policy and Gov. Newsom’s housing mandates to Gov. Greg Abbott’s horrific treatment of undocumented immigrants is false equivalency. Neither Biden nor Newsom are violating federal law, ignoring a U.S. Supreme Court decision, erecting razor wire that endangers human lives, dumping undocumented migrants in other cities, or joking about shooting immigrants if only it weren’t illegal.

Councilman Pat Burns



KTLA-TV

KTLA MADE HISTORY with its 1952 live broadcast an atomic bomb blast, which was aired by the major networks. The station’s founding general manager Klaus Landsberg devised a 140-mile link to enable a broadcast from the Nevada desert.

and the other three conservative council members need to stop injecting their personal politics into the City Council agenda and focus instead on what actually affects all of us right here in Huntington Beach — like balancing the budget, maintaining our city streets and sidewalks, resolving the homeless problem and cracking down on the speeding/ noisy vehicles taking over our city.

This misguided statement should have been voted down and thrown in the trash where it belongs. Let’s not turn Huntington Beach into another Texas or Florida.

Michele Burgess
Huntington Beach

The actions of the City Council majority at the Feb. 6 meeting may have been, as Councilwoman Natalie Moser described, “bad political performance art,” but it goes much deeper than that. It shows that the amateur autocrats in control have no clue about how to govern and run a city and no inclination to represent any constituents beyond their MAGA-style base. To paraphrase the words of Mayor Pro Tem Pat Burns, the local center of the Texas controversy, and referring in this case to the council majority, “I

wish they’d work as hard for us as they do against the people of Huntington Beach. Their policies are destroying our community.”

Equally disturbing to the political posturing on the dais was the political posturing of the “psycho-phants” of the council majority in public comments. This especially applies to the three “anointed” candidates of the council majority running in the November election, which some have begun calling “The Three Stooges.” They make no cogent arguments or show evidence for their accusations. Just pure rhetoric and head-bashing ideology. No wonder it is, all as speaker Wendy Rincon exclaimed, “political theater.” In addition, psycho-phants in the audience were boisterous and rude towards opposing public speakers, requiring the mayor to continually up-braid them for being disrespectful. Not a good look for the autocrats in charge.

The icing on the cake was the council vote on the controversial “Texas two step” move by Burns to align Surf City with the Lone Star state in bucking authority. The council majority may have been calling the tune, but it was clear many opponents were sitting it out. Why follow the lead of amateurs?

Tim Geddes
Huntington Beach

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NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY OF A DRAFT PROGRAM ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT FOR THE CITY OF NEWPORT BEACH GENERAL PLAN HOUSING IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM (PA2022-0245) (SCH No. 2023060699)

DATE: February 11, 2024
TO: Reviewing Agencies and Other Interested Parties

FROM: City of Newport Beach, Community Development Department, 100 Civic Center Drive, Newport Beach, CA 92660

PROJECT TITLE/SUBJECT: City of Newport Beach General Plan Housing Implementation Program: Notice of Availability of a Draft Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR)

NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY REVIEW PERIOD: February 12, 2024, through March 27, 2024 (45 days)

PURPOSE OF THIS NOTICE: The City of Newport Beach (City) is the “public agency which has the principal responsibility for carrying out or approving the project” and, as such, is the “Lead Agency” for this Project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines §15367). CEQA requires the Lead Agency to consider the information contained in an EIR prior to taking any discretionary action. This Program EIR is intended to provide information to public agencies, the public, and decision-makers regarding the potential environmental impacts associated with future housing development as set forth in the 6th Cycle General Plan Housing Element for 2021-2029 (2021-2029 Housing Element). Therefore, this Program EIR includes analysis of governmental approvals to be taken by the City to implement the 2021-2029 Housing Element. The City, as the Lead Agency, will review and consider this Program EIR in its decision to approve, revise, or deny the Project. Notice is hereby given that the City has completed a Draft Program EIR (State Clearinghouse No. 2023060699) for the Project to address the potential environmental effects associated with implementation of the Project.

PROJECT LOCATION: The Project area encompasses housing sites throughout the City of Newport Beach and its Sphere of Influence (collectively referred to herein as the City). Located in coastal Orange County, Newport Beach is generally northwest of the City of Laguna Beach, southeast of the City of Costa Mesa, east of the City of Huntington Beach, and southwest of the City of Irvine. Newport Beach is bordered to the west by the Pacific Ocean.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: State law mandates that each jurisdiction demonstrate that the 6th Cycle (2021-2029) Housing Element can accommodate its Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) allocation at all income levels. The City’s 2021-2029 Housing Element RHNA allocation is 4,845 housing units, including 1,456 Very-Low-Income units and 930 Low-Income units. The Draft Program EIR includes an additional analysis of housing sites to accommodate a RHNA buffer to ensure adequate sites are available during 6th Cycle Housing Element implementation, as required by State Housing law. Therefore, this Draft Program EIR conservatively analyzes a total development capacity of 9,914 units (4,845 RHNA plus a 5,069-unit buffer). However, only a portion of the housing units identified on housing sites will be necessary to accommodate the City’s RHNA planning obligation of 4,845 housing units.

The City is not required to build housing units in order to meet its RHNA allocation, only to identify potential sites and create the framework to allow the market the opportunity to develop these units. The proposed Project would not directly construct new housing but would facilitate the development of residential units by adopting implementing actions associated with the 2021-2029 Housing Element.

The 2021-2029 Housing Element identifies six Focus Areas in the City that have sufficient capacity to meet its RHNA allocation for the 6th Cycle. The six Focus Areas are: Airport Area, West Newport Mesa, Dover-Westcliff, Newport Center, Coyote Canyon, and Banning Ranch. The Banning Ranch Focus Area is included in the 2021-2029 Housing Element’s sites inventory but is not assumed to accommodate the City’s 2021-2029 RHNA growth need. Banning Ranch is considered as additional dwelling unit opportunity in addition to those that accommodate the RHNA.

The following actions associated with the proposed Project are required:

- Certification of the City of Newport Beach General Plan 2021-2029 Housing Implementation Program Final Program Environmental Impact Report (Program EIR);
- Amendment to the General Plan Land Use Element to include changes to goals and policies consistent with the adopted and certified 2021-2029 Housing Element;
- Amendments to the following Municipal Code provisions: (1) Amend Newport Beach Municipal Code Chapter 20.28, Overlay Zoning Districts, to include Section 20.28.050: Housing Opportunity (HO) Overlay Zoning Districts. (2) Amend Zoning Maps to identify the HO Overlay Zoning Districts. (3) Adopt City of Newport Beach Multi-Unit Objective Design Standards;
- Amendment to the Local Coastal Program (subject to certification by the California Coastal Commission) to include new and changes to policies; and
- Voter Approval. Voter approval of the proposed Project in compliance with City Charter Section 423.

SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS: The Draft Program EIR indicates there may be significant unavoidable adverse environmental impacts associated with the following environmental categories: aesthetics, air quality, cultural resources, greenhouse gas emissions, noise, and utilities and services systems. Upon compliance with regulatory requirements, General Plan policies, and standard conditions/mitigation measures, environmental impacts were found to be less than significant for the remaining environmental categories. The proposed Project is not included on the list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5.

RESPONDING TO THIS NOTICE: The Draft Program EIR is available for a 45-day public review period beginning February 12, 2024, and ending March 27, 2024. Copies of the Draft Program EIR are available for review in the Community Development Department, 100 Civic Center Drive, Bay 1B, Newport Beach, CA 92660 between the hours of 7:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m., Monday through Thursday, and 7:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. on Friday. The Draft PEIR can also be accessed online at the City’s website at: www.newportbeachca.gov/CEQA.

Additionally, copies are also available for review at the following Newport Beach public libraries during regular hours:

<p>Corona del Mar Branch 420 Marigold Avenue Corona del Mar, CA 92625</p>	<p>Crean Mariners Branch 1300 Irvine Avenue Newport Beach, CA 92660</p>
<p>Balboa Branch 100 East Balboa Boulevard Newport Beach, CA 92661</p>	<p>Central Library 1000 Avocado Avenue Newport Beach, CA 92660</p>

Written comments on the Draft Program EIR must be received no later than March 27, 2024, at 5:00 p.m., sent to the attention of Benjamin Zdeba, Principal Planner, at the address listed below or via email. There is no fee to submit comments. You are also invited to attend and testify at the public hearings as to the appropriateness of the Draft Program EIR document.

It is currently anticipated that the Newport Beach Planning Commission will conduct a public hearing for the proposed Project and Draft Program EIR in April 2024, and that the City Council will conduct a public hearing for the proposed Project and Draft Program EIR in July 2024. Notice of public hearings for the proposed Project will be provided at a later date. For additional information about the Draft Program EIR, the proposed Project, or about future meetings, please contact the City of Newport Beach at:
Benjamin Zdeba, AICP, Principal Planner
(949) 644-3253 or at bzdeba@newportbeachca.gov

City of Newport Beach
Community Development Department, Planning Division
100 Civic Center Drive, Bay B
Newport Beach, CA 92660

SCARES

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by Russian owners Kirill Ostrovskiy and Julia Ostrovskaya. David Watermeier, who owns Escape Room Era in Anaheim, and husband-and-wife team Jorin Andresen and Compagni purchased Escapade Games in March 2023 from the original owners, and have since created an even more intense experience in a new location in Fullerton. The three owners formed Escape Room Alliance as an overarching connector between the businesses.

The new Fullerton location is larger, by 1,700 square feet, so that the game now has five additional rooms.

“So we’ve really just taken everything from ‘Zoe’ and nearly doubled it,” Andresen said. “Overall, just doubled the size, doubled the scares. Just so that when people come, they could be like, ‘Wow, there’s a lot of really cool Zoe aspects to the game,’ so they still know that this is a Zoe game. But they’re like, ‘This is just like the bigger, better version of it.’”

Over the course of 100 minutes and 10 rooms on 2,350 square feet, players are blindfolded, chased, dragged, possibly shocked (with a stun pen) and carried off in a body bag while trying to solve game puzzles as a team. In one scene, you’re crouched under a dining room table, listening to scare actors stomp, jump and yell for you and members of your group. One by one, each of you is dragged off.

“It’s like a real-life horror movie, it is,” Compagni said.

The length of the experience is longer than the usual 60 minutes of many escape rooms. The full-contact element is also unusual for an average escape room. Don’t be surprised if you’re missing a shoe or two by the end — but you’ll get them back.

“There are between one and two actors depending on the season and timings of the games,” Watermeier



CHRISTINA COMPAGNI and Jorin Andresen, pictured, own horror-themed Escapade Games with David Watermeier.

said. “The story of ‘Zoe: Reborn’ takes place some years after the original, so it’s a sequel. The players play as paranormal investigators exploring the abandoned house of Uncle Robert. There is actually a low amount of physical activity required to play in the escape room, technically nobody is forced to run. However, due to the nature of the escape room, the physical activity most players do is much higher. They are running away from the monster — by their own choice — crawling very fast to escape, and on high alert almost the entire time, so their hearts are racing.”

The original “Zoe” game told a story from Russian folklore of a little girl born with supernatural abilities who is killed by her father after he and her uncle experiment on her. In trying to bring her back from the dead, her uncle accidentally summons a demon, which he then confines to a cage. It was at this point when guests were invited to come “save” Zoe — not knowing she’s a demon.

In “Zoe Reborn,” an “extreme” option allows actors to use a shock pen on players. The normal version is the same except for the shocking elements, and the difference doesn’t impact the pricing. But all members of the group must agree before the game on the preferred version.

“I personally was against it in the beginning,” Water-

meier said, regarding the “extreme” mode. “But after experiencing it as a player and seeing so many people’s reactions, I realized that it wasn’t just a lame gimmick or that we want to hurt people. Having the ‘extreme’ mode is just a way to heighten the overall fun as a player.”

Orlando Salvatore, of Rancho Mission Viejo, said the first time he visited Escapade Games for Zoe, his group was concerned initially about the full-contact elements and shocking.

“We thought it would be really rough and not good for our group,” he said. “Then we did the experience when not knowing what to expect and this is the only way to experience ‘Zoe.’ The ‘extreme’ mode they offer is awesome and makes some really fun and scary experiences. You’re never in true danger so make sure to tell your party to not hurt the actors.”

Salvatore, an escape room enthusiast who has visited more than 50, said he found out about Escapade Games through online forums like Reddit and Yelp. He first went to ‘Zoe’ in March 2023 at the business’ previous location.

“I went to their original one twice, and their new one twice, so a total of four times,” he said. “The actors and interactions have become more intricate and their usage of the spaces that they have made has improved greatly. Almost every inch of ‘Zoe’ is used,



Photos by Jessica Peralta

CHILDREN’S DOLLS and splattered paint create an evocative scene at Escapade Games.

and reused, to make it a truly immersive experience.”

He said he prefers horror-themed escape rooms because he enjoys horror in general and it gives him a way to experience it year round instead of just during the Halloween season.

“‘Zoe’ is one of those experiences where you forget the real world exists,” he said. “For the time that you’re inside of this escape room, other things that are happening in your day-to-day get pushed to the side, and it’s all about having a good and horrific time with your friends.”

Compagni and Andresen, who are escape room enthusiasts themselves, with 90 to 100 games under their belt, said that safety is their top priority, and their interview, audition and training processes are extensive.

Compagni came up with the idea for using shocks while working for Escapade Games’ original owners. Andresen said the then-owners were initially against it, so they did an October run to test it out. They got such positive feedback and requests that they continued doing it.

“We did our research,” Compagni said. “We looked at what can we use? What is a low voltage so that we’re

not actually physically hurting people and how can we do this in a very safe environment, in a controlled environment? We’re not trying to hurt people. Our goal is to give a panic-induced thrill where you’re still safe.”

She said they did hours of training with the employees and any employee that is going to use the shock pen has to try it on themselves first.

“Because you have to know what it feels like in order to do it on another human,” she said. “All of our staff members here, they go through almost two months of training before they actually physically get to have the taser and go in and scare on a group. They do hours and hours and hours of training, because they are touching, grabbing people and they are held responsible for this. I bring in a beta test group for them to do as their first game.”

Andresen said even if a group does opt for the shocks, players aren’t guaranteed to get zapped.

“It’s super safe,” he said. “It’s no more than a little pinch or a carpet shock, it’s really not that bad. The word ‘taser’ freaks people out. And we are obviously here to scare people, so we

use that word to heighten the fear.”

Compagni said, “Ninety-five percent of our groups do choose the ‘extreme’ mode version.”

But regardless if you choose shocks or not, the owners guarantee it will get scary. Andresen said though there is technically no age minimum, they recommend 13 and older, but discretion is left to parents. He said though they won’t use shocks on young players and generally take it much easier on them, it is a very scary atmosphere.

“How’s your kid with scary?” he said he asks parents who call. “If they can’t even handle a scary movie, they cannot be in a scary movie.”

As the owners continue scaring and shocking, they’re also looking to expand what they do in the space — including an upcoming, traditional-style murder-mystery.

“People are gonna get to come in and talk with people beyond the grave and find out who killed Zoe, why, what was their motive and where. Traditional-style clue game,” Compagni said. “We are super excited for that.”

Jessica Peralta is a contributor to TimesOC.

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Classic Caesar Salad

Chopped hearts of romaine, herb croutons, tomato, shaved Manchego

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Prime Filet Mignon

8 oz. prime filet mignon, Yukon Gold mashed potatoes, fried shallots

Bone-In Rib Eye

16 oz. prime bone-in rib eye, Yukon Gold mashed potatoes, fried onion strings

(Twenty-Five Dollar Supplement)

Wild Shrimp

Panko breaded wild shrimp, whipped mashed potatoes, broccolini, fresh tomato, capers, lemon butter sauce

Lobster Pot Pie

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Miso-Marinated Chilean Sea Bass

Soy glaze, coconut rice, stir-fried vegetables, mushrooms, lemongrass ginger beurre blanc

Double Pork Chop

Thick-cut grilled all natural pork chop, creamy caramelized onion barley risotto, creamed kale, sherry sauce

Australian Lobster Tail

10 oz. drawn butter, grilled lemon, Yukon Gold mashed potatoes

(Twenty Dollar Supplement)

DESSERT

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New York-Style Cheesecake

Fresh whipped cream, raspberry coulis

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