

Daily Pilot

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Photos by Don Leach | Staff Photographer

SUPER ELF Jeff Glass gets in the holiday spirit at Hospitality Night in Laguna Beach on Friday. The annual event returned after being canceled last year.

'It's like you're transported into a Hallmark movie by the ocean'

Hospitality Night, an annual holiday event in Laguna Beach, returned with a big turnout on Friday. It was canceled last year due to the coronavirus pandemic.

BY ANDREW TURNER

A block party took over downtown Laguna Beach on Friday night, as the city saw the return of Hospitality Night, an annual holiday event for the seaside community.

The whole town appeared to turn out for the festivities, which of course carried a beach theme.

Arriving with his personal police escort, Santa joined the party by riding in on a beach lifeguard Jeep, then made his way over to the Peppertree Lot. That's where Laguna Beach Mayor Bob Whalen welcomed the crowd and led it in a countdown for the tree-lighting ceremony.

Then Santa's travels took him to the Promenade on Forest. Stationed at one of the outdoor decks, the holly, jolly, festive figure met all the good boys and girls to find out what they wanted for Christmas, many of them meeting the man in the red suit for the first time.

"I get to bring my kid down here and it feels normal," Kelsey Geis of Laguna Niguel said. "He's so young and seeing a lot of peo-



A GROUP of friends who call themselves the Vic Beach Girls show off their reindeer glasses soon after the Peppertree Lot tree was lit during Hospitality Night in Laguna Beach on Friday.

ple in masks usually scares him, so getting to see Santa's face for the first time, it brings joy to my heart."

Geis' husband then coaxed their 2-year-

old son to say, "Father Christmas," as they gazed upon the man himself.

See **Holiday**, page A6

Orange County charter seeks hall pass from the county education board to ditch local approvals

BY SARA CARDINE

When the Orange County Classical Academy came before the Orange Unified Board of Education in December 2019 seeking a charter to operate a K-5 school that would offer 360 students a classical education curriculum, it was a tough sell.

School district staff in a 14-page report recommended board members deny the petition, find-

ing the charter proposal to be inadequate, its budget documents "fundamentally flawed" and its educational plan out of line with California state standards.

They maintained the findings in their report were legally sufficient to support the board's absolute denial of the charter but also issued a warning.

Staff concluded should the petitioners ever decide to propose another charter that they possess

"the knowledge, understanding and expertise necessary both to write an educationally, fiscally and practically sound charter petition and to operate a sound charter school."

What followed was an hours-long public hearing among trustees and some 50 public commenters, who spoke passionately on both sides of the debate. Supporters touted the school's commitment to scholarship, moral

character and civic virtue while criticizing public schools and teachers.

Although board members urged people to practice civility throughout the hearing, audience members employed cheers, jeers and even chanting as the meeting approached 1:30 a.m.

A divided board ultimately voted 4-3 in favor of pushing the

See **Charter**, page A6

Newport Harbor Area Alumnae Panhellenic gives out \$7,600 in scholarships

BY LILLY NGUYEN

The Newport Harbor Area Alumnae Panhellenic, now in its 70th year of operation, recently distributed \$7,600 in scholarships to women across Southern California — and has given a total of \$33,500 in the last five years.

The organization was founded in 1951 and aims to raise scholarship funds for women in college, but also makes some one-time philanthropic donations to local organizations such as the Balboa Island Museum in New-

port Beach and the Pacific Marine Mammal Center in Laguna Beach. Members typically meet once a month to discuss local causes that they could help.

"We're very proud that our main focus is to provide scholarships for women. We are a women-based group," chapter President Susan Lank said in a phone interview. She said the organization does whatever it can "to help out in any way to make sure that the girls have some help

See **Newport**, page A2



THE MEMBERS of the Newport Harbor Area Alumnae Panhellenic at an April meeting.

Courtesy of Susan Lank

JWA to provide free COVID testing

The Orange County Health Care Agency announced the partnership with the airport on Friday.

BY LILLY NGUYEN

Ahead of the holiday travel season, the Orange County Health Care Agency and John Wayne Airport announced the airport would be providing free self-collection COVID-19 kits starting Wednesday.

"The health and safety of our travelers and employees is a top priority for the airport," said Marisa Unvert, a spokeswoman for the airport, in an email. "The test distribution program will complement our healthy travel practices currently being implemented throughout the terminal."

Currently, the airport requires people to wear face coverings both in the buildings and aboard aircrafts. It also provides rapid COVID-19 testing through Hoag at Terminal B on the departure floor before the TSA security checkpoint. Tests there cost \$139.

Unvert said that the county

See **Testing**, page A2

Fountain Valley, H.B. to elect new mayors

The city councils are scheduled to decide at Tuesday's meetings who will serve in their respective cities.

BY ANDREW TURNER

The calendar has turned to December, and that means it's time for local cities to decide who will serve as their next mayor and mayor pro tempore.

Fountain Valley and Huntington Beach are scheduled to elect those positions at their next city council meetings on Tuesday at 6 p.m.

In Fountain Valley, Michael Vo and Patrick Harper are the current mayor and mayor pro tem, respectively. Both are entering the last year of their terms on the dais.

The oath of office will be administered to the new mayor, followed by their remarks.

In Huntington Beach, the outgoing mayor is Kim Carr and mayor pro tempore is Barbara Delgeize.

See **Mayor**, page A4

TESTING

Continued from page A1

healthcare agency would be taking care of distribution and that, as of Friday afternoon, the intention is to distribute tests in terminals A and C before security on the upper level and in those same terminals in baggage claims.

Those plans are not yet finalized.

Orange County Supervisor Katrina Foley said during a media briefing on the new Omicron variant Friday that the tests would be offered to every passenger that leaves John Wayne Airport, but that they would not be required to take it if they chose not to.

"The holidays are about spending quality time with family and friends," supervisor and vice chairman Doug Chaffee said in a statement. "This is also a time for us to come together and protect our



File Photo

PRIVATE PLANES at John Wayne Airport. The Orange County Health Care Agency said Friday the airport would be offering free COVID-19 testing kits starting Wednesday.

loved ones however we can, which includes continuing to get tested against COVID if we are traveling and in close contact with others who may be unvaccinated."

As of Friday, there have been no cases of the Omicron variant reported in

Orange County, but a case was identified in nearby Los Angeles County on Thursday. Officials there say the cause for transmission to the adult individual was likely related to travel.

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NEWPORT

Continued from page A1

with their tuition and better themselves and get the education to push them into the next chapter of their life."

"We always say that we're small but mighty," Lank said, adding that some members are homebound and unable to attend meetings, but continue to renew their memberships. "We don't have a huge membership, but we pride ourselves on the fact that we could raise \$7,600 to give four scholarships to women in the Southern California area."

Scholarships are given out in the spring and are primarily based on need, though Lank said grade point averages and activities can factor into a decision. Most donations are from private donors.

Third-year UC Irvine student Meghan Powers said she heard about the Newport Harbor scholarship from a friend in her sorority — Gamma Phi

Beta — and applied for it this spring, receiving a one-time scholarship of \$1,800 that she put toward textbooks, her sorority dues and helping her family with rent.

Powers, a literary journalism major, said she hadn't intended to join a sorority from the outset when she graduated from Fountain Valley High School, but that she did eventually do so with some encouragement from her mother to explore opportunities.

"I was just a little intimidated," Powers said, laughing.

Powers said she felt the support of Panhellenic societies was important and necessary to help women further their educations.

"Especially in 2020, a lot of people faced a lot of financial hardship so something like this [scholarship] is definitely super helpful. [Scholarship winners] can still enjoy doing the stuff that they like without having to worry about financial hardships," Powers said.

Fellow scholarship recipient and UC Irvine student Kate Platten said she applied for the scholarship after hearing about it from another student and Newport Harbor alumnae in her sorority, Delta Gamma.

Platten said she is a first generation college student and is currently double majoring in business administration and criminology, but added that she didn't really have a solid group of friends in place on campus. It was the genuine connections she made in Delta Gamma, she said, that made her joining it "the best decision I made in my college career."

"Every job that I've gotten in college thus far has been through another sorority woman," Platten said. "So, having a support system that's been through what you've gone through ... in my chapter, have graduated or in other Panhellenic communities has been helpful."

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THE DAILY COMMUTER PUZZLE

By Jacqueline E. Mathews

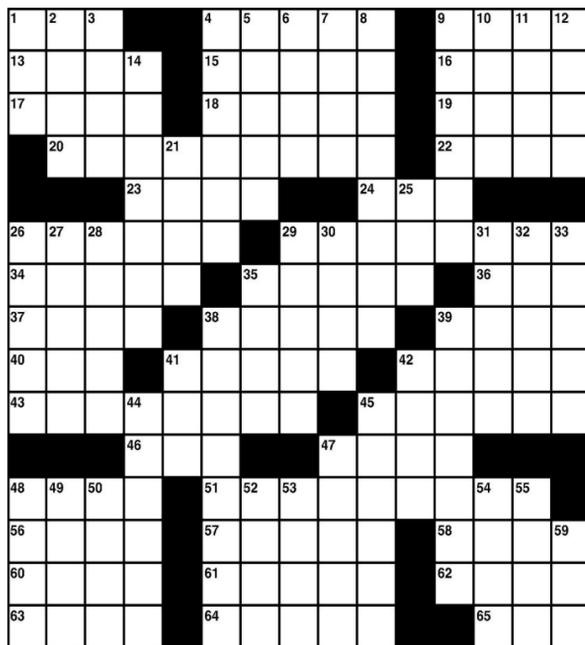
ACROSS

- 1 Conk on the head
- 4 Hornet homes
- 9 Tallies up
- 13 "It's __, Mad, Mad, Mad World"
- 15 Mineral water brand
- 16 Authentic
- 17 Pasta sauce
- 18 Bottle resident
- 19 Comedian
- Carvey
- 20 Geometric shape
- 22 Not relaxed
- 23 Clothing accessories
- 24 Galloped
- 26 Peaceful
- 29

- Hewlett-Packard machines
- 34 Elegance
- 35 Piano for Liberace
- 36 Snoop Dogg's music
- 37 European peaks
- 38 Mistaken
- 39 Creamy buttery cheese
- 40 Ring around the collar
- 41 Black out
- 42 Nearby
- 43 Lasting
- 45 Raised, as kids
- 46 TV's "What __ to Wear"
- 47 Soothing salve
- 48 Team defeat
- 51 Eco-friendly activity
- 56 A single time
- 57 Banishment
- 58 Tidy
- 60 Classic board game
- 61 Stringed instrument
- 62 Coat with gold
- 63 "Ave Maria," e.g.
- 64 Crock-Pot meals, perhaps
- 65 French article

DOWN

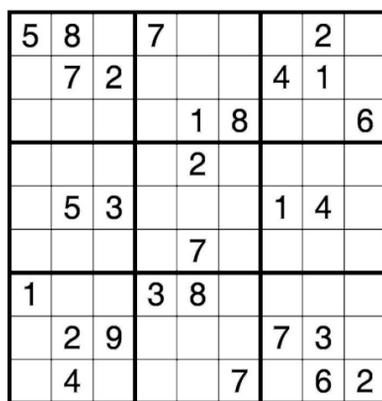
- 1 Forbid entry to



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 A4.

- 2 Poet Khayyām
- 3 Singer Patti
- 4 Cancel; nullify
- 5 __ out; makes level
- 6 Croon
- 7 Word attached to gate or spin
- 8 Smiling

- scornfully
- 9 Passionate
- 10 No longer with us
- 11 "Doggone it!"
- 12 Assassinate
- 14 Title for Prince William's Kate
- 21 Sunbathes

- 25 Connecting word
- 26 Bathroom floor item
- 27 Actress Corby
- 28 Quick
- 29 Fork part
- 30 Angry speech
- 31 Boo-boo
- 32 Employee's delight
- 33 Miles per hour
- 35 Put on a happy face
- 38 Café worker
- 39 Pointing the finger at
- 41 To and __
- 42 Word before phone or tower
- 44 Not noticed
- 45 Petty & Earnhardt
- 47 Club rule
- 48 Lomond or Ness
- 49 "It's __ a Paper Moon"
- 50 Aquarium wall gunk
- 52 Leave the stage
- 53 Refer to
- 54 __ Patrick Harris
- 55 Destructive wind
- 59 Six-pointers, for short

Tribune Media Services

the holidays are happening at

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forum

COMMENTARY | **KAREN YELSEY**

Newport-Mesa schools still face COVID-19 challenges

It's been 21 months since the pandemic upended how we live and work. For our teachers, it changed how they teach; for our children, how they learn; and for our community, how they make sense of an abundance of often conflicting information surrounding COVID-19 and the mandates that schools in California must abide by.

As a member of this community for more than 40 years, having been a parent of three children who are graduates of our schools, and serving as a board member of the Newport-Mesa Unified School District for 15 years, I too am frustrated and concerned about the mixed messages and misinformation circulating in our community.

As elected representatives, all seven members of our board, serving as a bridge for parents and our school district, have consistently listened to community concerns and questions, and have responded in a timely and professional manner.

While some districts continue to operate virtual board meetings, our meetings have been in-person and open to the public since July. We recently amended our board policy to allow the public additional time to comment on topics not on our agenda. Per the Ralph M. Brown Act, which governs local government conduct at board meetings, board members are prohibited from engaging in two-way dialogue with the public or responding to public comments. However, our superintendent can clarify and direct staff to follow up on matters within our jurisdiction.

Community members also have the ability to email [NMUSD BoardofEducation@nmusd.us](mailto:NMUSDBoardofEducation@nmusd.us), and all seven board members will receive a copy of your correspondence.

Our school district, like all public and private schools, is required to enforce COVID-19



Scott Smeltzer | Staff Photographer

STUDENTS LEAVE school at Newport Harbor High on Aug. 23.

mandates or face serious penalties from the state of California, which include closing our schools, financial penalties and/or legal penalties. As we have said since the beginning of the school year, our commitment and our focus is to keep schools open all day, every day, all year. As such, we must comply with state mandates.

While some have strongly argued that they are not in support of the requirement for students to wear masks indoors, our school district is not the governing body that has the authority to change health mandates. We are, however, required to follow the mandates.

The board is not considering a district-initiated vaccine mandate for students, and we have no intention of doing so. Parents who want to influence the state's direction on this potential mandate should contact the governor's office, as well as state Sen. Richard Pan's office. Sen. Pan has introduced a very restrictive legislative vehicle that will not include a personal belief exemption.

As mentioned, our goal has been to keep our school open for in-person learning full time, all year. We have been successful in doing so in part because we have followed state health and safety guidelines. Additionally, we have opened sports to full-time practices and competition, and have reinstated all high school music and theatrical performances. Options to allow more volunteers on campus are currently being evaluated.

Operating a school district and offering safe in-person instruction to our 19,000 students is no easy feat, especially during the ongoing pandemic. Our teachers, certificated and classified employees, and administrators, who are all essential in providing a quality educational environment for students have been exceptional in navigating this pandemic with us and our community. COVID-19 continues to be a challenge for everyone, but we continue to do our best in support of students.

KAREN YELSEY is the president of the NMUSD board of education.

A WORD, PLEASE | **JUNE CASAGRANDE**

Consistency is key when choosing between editing styles

Some days, I change "O.K." to "OK."

On other days, you might find me changing "OK" to "okay." Sometimes I spend a good deal of time deleting spaces around dashes, other times I insert spaces around dashes. Then there are the mornings when I add an extra S after a possessive James or Charles. In the afternoon, no S.

I'm not confused. I'm not being fickle. I'm not playing God with the rules. Instead, I have the dubious privilege of editing according to two different style guides: the Associated Press stylebook for my newspaper work and the Chicago Manual of Style for my magazine work.

Astute readers might be wondering: If two ways of writing something can both be correct, why worry about them? Why bother putting them in a stylebook? Just let the writer choose

between "okay" and "OK" and between James's and James'.

That would make sense but for a simple fact: Consistency counts. A lot. If you write "2-year-old" and "two-year-old" on the same page, it looks sloppy and unprofessional. That's why you should pick your style and stick with it. Here a few of the common issues for which you probably should choose sides now.

OK/okay. AP style prefers "OK." Chicago doesn't have a rule but tends toward spelled-out forms like "okay." No one seems to favor the version with two periods.

Spaces around dashes. When you use em dashes — like this — to set off words in a sentence, news media usually put a space on either side. Book publishers do not.

James'/James's. AP Stylebook

See **A Word**, page A4

MAILBAG

A troubling lack of Steel support for infrastructure bill

Whether you think the \$45.5 billion coming to California from the \$1.2 trillion Infrastructure and Jobs Act is a lot of money or not enough (it is, I understand, the most for any state), it is \$45.5 billion more than California Congressional Republicans voted for. In a shameless display of partisanship, my congresswoman, Rep. Michelle Steel (R-48), voted NAY merely to deny any Democrat-engineered bill from benefiting millions of Americans and over 700,000 constituents in her district. Is this what we elected her to do? When Harley Rouda was our congressman, he did a

great job of bringing home the bacon for the 48th District.

What has Rep. Steel done for us lately?

While I can see GOP members of Congress in rock-ribbed Republican districts in California flaunting their perverse partisanship, our district is hardly in that category. Clearly, Rep. Steel doesn't care about the jobs creation, transportation and water-quality improvements, environmental projects to address climate change, and other important and worthwhile programs that the bill would fund. How

See **Mailbag**, page A4



We're here with incisionless essential tremor (ET) treatment.

Learn more at a free Zoom event on Tuesday, January 25, 2022, from 6 – 7 p.m.

Now you can get back to the simple things, whether it's writing a letter, cooking, or combing your hair, all with a minimally invasive procedure. Learn about the new MR-guided Focused Ultrasound treatment offered through Orange Coast Medical Center – only one of two centers in Southern California to offer this procedure – to treat ET and tremor-dominant Parkinson's disease in the dominant hand.


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Register for our Zoom event at [memorialcare.org/OCETevent](https://www.memorialcare.org/OCETevent).

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL

Newport Harbor battles, but loses at Aquinas

BY MATT SZABO

SAN BERNARDINO — High school football coaches talk about the privilege of practicing on Thanksgiving.

Practicing into December, then, is something even more special.

The Newport Harbor High football team got that opportunity this year, even if few would have imagined that as the postseason began.

The Sailors overcame adversity to win a CIF Southern Section Division 6 championship and make the CIF State playoffs for the first time in program history. But they had a hard time slowing down San Bernardino Aquinas in a season-ending defeat Friday night.

Aquinas scored five straight touchdowns, rallying for a 42-28 victory in a CIF State Southern California Regional Division 3-AA bowl game at Aquinas High.

Aquinas (11-5) will play Fairfield Vanden in the Division 3-AA state championship game next week. It's still a banner season for Newport Harbor (7-8), whose players will be able to wear their CIF championship rings with pride.

"I told them before the game, they're playing with house money right now," Newport Harbor coach Peter Lofthouse said.

"They've already had a successful season. Before this season started, we said our dream, our goal was to win a CIF championship. We wanted to be in the final game for the title, and to come out of it with a win and have a championship ... there's no shame in being on this field, on this night in the SoCal Regional and giving yourselves an opportunity for state. That is a special thing in its own right, too."

Newport Harbor's offense was clicking in the first half at Aquinas, the CIF Southern Section Division 7 champion. The Sailors grabbed a 21-7 lead after scoring touchdowns on their first three drives, using quick bubble screen passing plays to their advantage.



James Carbone

NEWPORT HARBOR'S Josiah Lamarque runs in for a touchdown after catching a pass from AJ Guitron-Moore in the CIF State Southern California Regional Division 3-AA bowl game Friday night at San Bernardino Aquinas.

Senior quarterback AJ Guitron-Moore had touchdown passes to Kashton Henjum, Duke Starnes and Josiah Lamarque as Newport Harbor went ahead. Lamarque took a 53-yard inside slant to the house, giving the Sailors their two-touchdown lead with 4:24 left in the first half.

Guitron-Moore finished 30 of 47 passing for 354 yards and the three scores.

But Aquinas freshman running back JoJo Solis scored on a 12-yard touchdown run, then junior quarterback Dre Robles found junior receiver Kaden Willerford on a 23-yard touchdown pass in the final minute of the first half.

The extra point was blocked, so the Sailors maintained a 21-20 halftime lead. That was short-

lived, as Willerford took the second-half kickoff back for a touchdown too.

"We fixed our mistakes," said Willerford, who faked a reverse handoff before sprinting up the left sideline. "We were missing some blocks on the kick return ... We can run the ball, throw the ball. We can do whatever. Our whole team just puts in work, and nobody can take that away from us."

The host Falcons added a 58-yard touchdown run by Solis, a freshman who finished with 203 yards rushing and three scores. After Robles scored on a six-yard keeper, Aquinas suddenly had a 42-21 lead late in the third quarter.

"Teams like this, that just have like seven [players] on the line

and run it at you, they thrive on momentum," Newport Harbor senior lineman Grayson Simon said.

"Once they start building their momentum, they gain their confidence and they'll just keep pounding. We just had to match their energy, and we fell short sometimes. But it's all good. These younger kids got to experience what a dogfight is deep in the playoffs, late in the season."

The Sailors drew a bit closer on Hayden Farley's three-yard touchdown run early in the fourth quarter. Aquinas turned the ball over on downs, and Billy Ridley's interception in the end zone gave the Sailors' offense another chance to score in the final minutes.

They drove to the Aquinas 24-

yard-line, before three straight deep pass attempts from Guitron-Moore to Henjum were incomplete against coverage from Aquinas' Cesar Fernandez. On fourth down, Guitron-Moore went short to Lamarque, but the five-yard gain wasn't enough to keep possession with 1:45 remaining in the game.

Connor Chenier and Alex Pappageorge combined for a sack, and Johnny Chaix had a fumble recovery to highlight the defensive effort for the Sailors.

Lofthouse knows the adversity the Sailors fought through. They finished the regular season with a 3-7 record and a fourth-place finish in the Sunset League.

A month later, they competed against an Aquinas team that has won three CIF Southern Section titles since 2017.

He also knows it's a young team with plenty of talent coming back. Henjum and Lamarque, who both had 13 catches Friday night for a combined 338 yards and two scores, are a junior and sophomore, respectively.

"Josiah in the playoffs has really become a prominent receiver in our offense," Lofthouse said. "He is very special. Those two guys with a full off-season and opportunity to get healthy, it bodes well for us next season for sure."

Still, there were plentiful contributions made by the senior class. Guitron-Moore started the season as a third-string quarterback and ended it as a starter for a CIF champion.

"It's definitely something that's going to stick with me my whole life," Guitron-Moore said.

"The brothers that I have here, my coaches, it's all going to be with me the rest of my life. It's a great story. We wanted to win state, but it ended good. CIF champions is pretty good. I'm proud of the team."

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MAILBAG

Continued from page A3

does turning your nose up at a fair-sized chunk of that \$45.5 billion address our many infrastructure needs and concerns here?

Steel's constituents are already paying the price for putting a "do nothing" partisan puppet in Congress. It is high time

she starts paying a political price for her lousy representation. Given Steel being part of the problem instead of part of the solution, it is time we vote NAY for her reelection bid next November.

Tim Geddes
Huntington Beach

750,000 COVID-19 deaths

To be sure, last week's announcement

that 750,000 Americans have been felled by COVID-19 is shocking.

Given the current daily death rate, my guess is we will reach 1 million fatalities by Valentine's Day 2022.

If you are wondering just how many moms, dads, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles and grandparents this represents, imagine the entire population of San Clemente, Dana Point, Laguna Beach, Newport Beach, Huntington Beach, Costa

Mesa and Irvine completely wiped out.

That's right. Not a single person living in any of these seven cities.

If you are among the tens of thousands of people living at or near the beach who still haven't been vaccinated, please get a COVID-19 shot now.

It's not too late.

Denny Freidenrich
Laguna Beach

CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU ANSWERS

B	O	P		N	E	S	T	S		A	D	D	S		
A	M	A	D	E	V	I	A	N		R	E	A	L		
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2	5	3	8	6	9	1	4	7
4	9	6	5	7	1	2	8	3
1	6	7	3	8	2	9	5	4
8	2	9	6	5	4	7	3	1
3	4	5	1	9	7	8	6	2

A WORD

Continued from page A3

says that, to make singular proper names ending in S possessive, just add an apostrophe: James' hat. Chicago says to add both an apostrophe and an S: James's hat.

That's only for singulars, though. Plurals that end in S all follow the same rule: Apostrophe only. The dogs' tails, the Williamses' house, the attorneys' clients.

Serial comma. The serial comma, also called the Oxford comma, is the optional mark before the conjunction in a list of three or more items: red, white, and blue. News media tend to eschew it. Book and magazine publishing tend to use it. Most individuals with an opinion seem to prefer the serial comma and some fans are downright fanatical.

Healthcare/health care. Both are correct, but AP and Chicago style both prefer "health care." Com-

pounds tend to meld into single words over time: teen-ager, key board, long-time, good-bye. So even though "health care" is preferred now, "health-care" could win in the long run.

COVID-19/Covid-19. When a new word bursts into the headlines, often from the field of technology or medicine, publishers have to pick their preference quickly. No time to wait and see how the word will evolve over years or decades. The major authorities are leaning toward all-caps COVID-19, though dictionaries also recognize Covid-19 and even covid-19.

No. 1/#1/number one. I don't like the pound sign in running text. It looks ugly. And "No." is just weird because the word "number" doesn't have an "o" in it. But my opinions are irrelevant. AP says "No. 1," so that's what I use for newspaper editing. Chicago doesn't take a position, but I've noticed books often spell it out:

number one. Vaxed/vaxxed. None of the major language authorities have taken an official position on "vax" as a verb. But Benjamin Dreyer, Random House copy desk chief and author of "Dreyer's English," argues it's best written like "taxed" and "faxed." Publishers of the Oxford English Dictionary appear to favor "vaxxed."

Italics/quotation marks for composition titles. Writing about a movie, book, TV show or other composition? You can put the title in quotation marks or italics. News agencies, still influenced by the days when italics wouldn't transmit over wire services, use quotation marks. Book publishing leans toward italics. Pick your preference and stick 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.

MAYOR

Continued from page A1

Later in the evening, the Fountain Valley council will consider whether to adopt a resolution in support of a ban on new offshore oil and gas drilling off the California coastline.

If it opts to do so, Fountain Valley would join other local cities that acted quickly to support such legislation in the immediate aftermath of the oil spill off the coast of

Huntington Beach in October.

The final whereas in the resolution reads, "Expanding offshore drilling off the California coast will deepen the state's dependence on fossil fuels and undermine its efforts to address climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and moving toward renewable energy."

The Fountain Valley council is also slated to vote on whether to adopt a resolution that would state the city's preference to be included within

coastal electoral districts as California prepares for redistricting for the next congressional maps to come.

The resolution argues that the interests of Fountain Valley are aligned with the cities of Huntington Beach, Newport Beach, Seal Beach and Westminster, and it contends that the municipalities could benefit from having the same representative.

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CHARTER

Continued from page A1

petition forward, clearing the way for the Orange County Classical Academy — a school founded by conservative-leaning think tank the California Policy Center — to open in July 2020.

Now, into their second academic year, school leaders are looking to expand and have charted a course that could allow them to operate multiple campuses across the county without having to seek or secure approval from individual districts, as is the norm.

OCCA members last month submitted a charter school petition with the Orange County Department of Education that, if approved, would let operators close the single-site campus on June 30, 2022, and reopen as OCCA II — a TK-12 countywide charter school that could draw students from, and operate within the boundaries of Huntington Beach City, Huntington Beach Union High, Orange and Placentia-Yorba Linda unified school districts.

Their proposal need only be approved by the Orange

County Board of Education, some of whose members have spoken openly in favor of school choice and charter schools and whose campaigns for office have been backed by charter-related organizations and PACs.

In a public hearing Wednesday, school leaders made their case for becoming a countywide charter. Headmaster Semi Park reported students in grades three through five who participated in the Smarter Balance Assessment Consortium (SBAC) tests outperformed the state average in English and math.

Park also said the school, in its first year, added two sixth-grade classes, reclassified 55% of English learners and had maintained \$200,000 in reserve funding.

“It’s an education in moral virtue, such as courage, learned through good habits and intellectual virtues, such as prudence and wisdom, which rest on the moral virtues,” she told county board members. “It is truly meant to serve all students, regardless of gender, race, socioeconomic status or ability.”

With 420 students enrolled in TK-6 classes, the

wait list to get into OCCA has maxed out at 700 family names, Park said, indicating a strong appetite throughout Orange County for the classical education being offered.

To be granted countywide charter school status, California Education Code stipulates an institution must prove it can provide instructional services to a student population that cannot be served as well by a single-district charter school.

David Patterson is president of California Charter Authorizing Professionals, a Sacramento nonprofit supporting agencies that provide oversight of charters. In an interview Friday, he said he was involved in early discussions that informed that piece of the code.

Such provisions were made to accommodate programs that would need to pull from a wider geographical area than a single district to fill seats, such as military academies or dual-language immersion schools.

“There were times when it made sense because of the nature of a program, where a countywide approach made more sense



MEMBERS OF the Orange County Board of Education at a Dec. 1 regular meeting.

Daily Pilot Staff

than having to deal with individual districts,” Patterson explained, adding it’s up to county boards to interpret and apply the code.

“It was clearly written in a way to give counties an opportunity to make a judgment call,” he said.

Petitioning charters seeking countywide status must also be able to show parents are meaningfully interested in having their children attend the school.

OCCA supporters Wednesday maintained the program was unique and offered a curriculum students could not get in their home districts. Officials used the maxed-out waiting list as proof of parent interest, and several parent speakers bolstered the claim.

“Every day, I receive phone inquiries about enrollment opportunities,” said Yesenia Flores, mother of two OCCA students, whose stint as a parent volunteer turned into a job as campus monitor. “I truly want to share this community experience with other families who value the same thing for their children.”

Board members listened to comments throughout the hearing and did not provide any critical analysis. That may come in January, when the panel is scheduled to hear a staff report and recommendation regarding the petition.

President Mari Barke recused herself from the discussion due to a potential conflict of interest. Her hus-

band, Jeff Barke — a doctor criticized last year for waving a gun during a YouTube show and calling it more effective in the pandemic than mask wearing — serves as chairman of OCCA’s board of directors.

Board Vice President Ken Williams offered some thoughts on the presentation.

“I do believe this charter [is] a very unique situation,” he said. “I wish we had it in every school district.”

The Orange County Board of Education is expected to vote on the petition during a Feb. 2 meeting. That decision cannot be appealed.

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HOLIDAY

Continued from page A1

A cutout board in the form of a greeting card also allowed people to take pictures of reindeer prancing toward surf and sand. Rich Ferrell, who came to Hospitality Night with his girlfriend, Holly, and brother, Joe, was a good sport in posing as one of the reindeer.

“The camaraderie, bringing the community together, the Christmas spirit, and moving on from the whole COVID thing, especially,” Ferrell said of what he enjoyed about the evening. “It’s time.”

Revelers, many dressed in costume, enjoyed the outdoor gathering. The evening provided several live musical performances — including one that featured a guitarist inside a window display.

Melissa Benson, who came from Texas for a reunion with friends, took to sewing during the pandemic. Her friends enticed her to bring out her crea-



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

BUSHARD’S PHARMACY displays a 75 balloon to mark its 75th anniversary celebration at the Hospitality Night event.

tions, which consisted of an assortment of 18th-century gowns.

“We have known each other for about 25 or 30 years,” Benson said.

“We get together every year for a Christmas party in Laguna Beach. During the pandemic, I’ve been sewing, and so I sewed everything over the last year and a half. They sug-

gested I bring everything out for the Christmas party and [said], ‘We’ll get dressed up.’ ”

How do friendships last across state lines over a span of three decades?

“We like each other and enjoy spending time together,” Benson said. “This is the first time we’ve been together since the pandemic.”

Shops and restaurants throughout the downtown area remained open for business, surrounded by the cheerful and lively atmosphere.

The sights and sounds of the illuminated full streets were missing last year when Hospitality Night was canceled due to the pandemic.

Down on the South Coast Highway end of Forest Avenue, a ukulele-playing chorus of carolers serenaded the audience with a rendition of “Silver Bells” when two toddlers stole the show.

Francesca Aguirre and Amira Beheshti, both 3, danced hand in hand in front of the ukulele band, providing a picturesque scene of holiday cheer.

“They’re in their own universe at the moment,” Laguna Beach resident Jennifer Evans, Francesca’s mother, said. “It’s like you’re transported into a Hallmark movie by the ocean.”

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previously scheduled for **Wednesday, December 8, 2021 at 4:30 p.m.**
Mesa Water District Boardroom
1965 Placentia Avenue
Costa Mesa, CA 92627

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Board of Directors of Mesa Water District has canceled the Public Hearing concerning intention of Mesa Water District to adopt water shortage response ordinance previously scheduled for the place, date and time referenced above.

For more information, please contact Denise Garcia, District Secretary, at (949) 631-1205.

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