

# TimesOC

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Photos by Don Leach | Staff Photographer

**LAURA KENNEDY** teaches her social studies class while remote students follow along on a screen on the wall at JSerra Catholic High School.

## JSerra opts to go 'bold'

The 1,250-student school in San Juan Capistrano became one of few campuses in the state and the largest in Orange County to reopen in September.

BY GREG MELLE

Last year, when JSerra Catholic High School decided to bring students back onto campus full time in the fall, it adopted a motto: "All Lions, all day."

It was also a bold commitment. Some might have said far-fetched, given the crisis at the time.

"From the get-go, we realized kids learn better in person," said Principal Eric Stroupe.

So, in May 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic raged and schools were shuttered and hunkered down for the long haul, JSerra decided to buck the trend.

The 1,250-student Catholic school in San Juan Capistrano became one of few campuses in the state and the largest in Orange County to reopen in September. Officials say

See *Jserra*, page R4



**A POSTER ADVERTISES** a winter formal in a hallway at JSerra Catholic High School in San Juan Capistrano. The private school reopened to its 1,250 students in September.

See *Improve*, page R3

## County looks to improve vaccine equity

Latino population has taken the brunt of the pandemic in O.C. but accounts for only 12% of vaccine recipients so far.

BY BEN BRAZIL

Though the Latino community has taken the brunt of the pandemic in Orange County, the population only accounts for 12% of the people who have received at least one vaccine dose in the county.

There have been concerns that the county hasn't adequately included underserved communities in its vaccine distribution plans, which focus on mass sites called Super PODs at Disneyland, Soka University and the soon-to-be site at the Anaheim Convention Center.

According to state data, the Latino population makes up about 35% of the county's population but accounts for 49% of the county's COVID-19 cases.

White people account for about 28% of the county's COVID-19 cases, yet make up 48% of the recipients of at least one dose of a vaccine in the county, according to county data.

"I think that the original intent to create Super PODs was to increase the volume of vaccines that were distributed," said Isabel Becerra, chief executive of the Coalition of Orange County Community Health Centers. "I don't think that they anticipated that it would be as hard as it has been for the low-income communities and underserved communities to reach these PODs."

Becerra believes the county is moving in the right direction with the opening of a new vaccination site this week at Santa Ana College and a commitment from the county to work with community health clinics.

## Homeless man who chronicled troubles in court filing dies

Family members, friends and activists mourn loss of San Clemente resident Steven Riley, 73, who died last month outside a senior center in that city.

BY MEGHANN M. CUNIFF

About seven years into his life without housing, longtime San Clemente resident Steven Riley described his plight in an official court declaration.

"I use buildings and bushes to protect myself from the sun, rain, wind or other weather," the then-72-year-old man wrote. "Due to my age and health, I cannot stay outside all day. But I can only afford a motel a few nights per month."

Nearly 18 months later, Riley was found dead in front of the very senior center where he told the court he sought shelter, discovered by the director who knew him for years.

His death has devastated friends and family who'd been trying to help him, and it's become a rallying point for local housing activists who've long decried the city's lack of a homeless

shelter and related services. The official court filing that chronicled Riley's troubles well before his death also brings humanity to the ongoing web of litigation over homelessness in Orange County.

"The best I could offer my brother a thousand miles away was that he would at least die with dignity in a warm bed, with food. And then I couldn't even get that," Riley's sister, Margie Lofgren, said in a phone interview from her home in Central Oregon.

Lofgren and San Clemente resident Cathy Domenichini found of the volunteer homeless outreach group iHope, developed a plan to move Riley into supportive housing for help with his medical issues, which began with childhood rheumatoid arthritis and grew to include worsening dementia in his elder years. But he broke his pelvis and was released from a hospital to a care

facility in South Orange County, then checked himself out on his own and returned to the grounds of the San Clemente senior center where he'd spent so many nights.

Lofgren, who worked for decades as a registered nurse, was outraged when she called the facility and learned he'd been allowed to leave.

"Everything was in order, we had a plan for him, and he was willing to go along with the plan," Lofgren said. "But somebody let a person with dementia walk out the door."

Domenichini located Riley outside the senior center with other unhoused men, but she warned Lofgren she didn't think she could find a place for him to go because San Clemente and its neighboring cities don't have shelters. Four days later, on Jan. 28, senior center director Beth Apodaca found Riley dead when she arrived for



Photo by Meghann M. Cuniff

**FRIENDS OF STEVEN RILEY** held a memorial and vigil in San Clemente on Feb. 16. He was found dead outside the city senior center Jan. 28.

work in the morning. The coroner's office hasn't released a cause of death, but Lofgren said investigators believe her brother died about 4 a.m.

After attending a vigil for Riley Feb. 16, Domenichini told the San Clemente City Council his death

See *Dies*, page R2

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# Anaheim supports state bill that would allow Knott's, Disneyland to reopen earlier

BY BEN BRAZIL

The Anaheim City Council is backing a state bill that could allow Disneyland and Knott's Berry Farm to reopen from its pandemic closure earlier than expected.

The council voted 6-1 in favor of showing support for Assembly Bill 420, which was introduced earlier this month by Assembly members Sharon Quirk-Silva, who serves north Orange County, and Suzette Valladares.

The bill would allow larger theme parks like Disneyland and Knott's Berry Farm to reopen after meeting the same requirements as smaller amusement parks.

The state's theme park reopening guidelines hold that larger theme parks can only reopen at 25% capacity when its county is in the minimal tier of less than one new COVID case per 100,000 people per day and a coronavirus positivity rate of less than 2%.

Smaller theme parks can operate at limited capacity once their county has reached the moderate tier of 1 to 3.9 new COVID cases per 100,000 people per day and a coronavirus positivity rate of 2 to 4.9%.

Orange County is still in the widespread tier, which is the most restrictive. The four-tiered system is ranked widespread, substantial, moderate, then minimal.

"Anything that we can do to safely reopen theme parks is critical to economic recovery for our city and region," said Mayor Harry Sidhu, who proposed the item.

Sidhu and other Orange County politicians have called on Gov. Gavin Newsom before to make a pathway for reopening Disneyland.

Sidhu's campaign received \$2,000 from Disney during his mayoral run in 2018. Disney donated at



**DISNEYLAND REMAINS** closed in Anaheim. State Assembly Bill 420 would allow larger theme parks to reopen under certain conditions.

Christina House  
Los Angeles  
Times

least \$1.6 million to candidates and city ballot measures during the 2018 election, including to current council members Jordan Brandman and Trevor O'Neil.

Sidhu said Tuesday that large theme parks like Disneyland have the resources to enforce the best available safety protocols. He also mentioned that reopening the county's larger theme parks would help jump-start the local economy.

"This means tens of thousands of people could go back to work earlier," Sidhu said. "... It could mean the city could start our physical recovery sooner or that we could continue to provide essential services to the residents."

Councilman Jose Moreno, the only dissenting vote, said the council should be focusing more on public health rather than the economy or reopening Disneyland.

"I am extremely worried because it seems that we can't keep our eye on the ball," said Moreno, a staunch critic of Disneyland.

He went on to say that the state bill would put the COVID-19 risk at Disneyland on par with small parks like Adventure City in Stanton, which sits on about 2 acres.

He said that while he was impressed by Disneyland's "bubble environ-

ment," he is more worried about the potential spreading of the virus in the surrounding resort area.

"We are talking about pushing legislation to allow sooner, 25,000 to 35,000 visitors to come to Anaheim every single day," Moreno said. "Not to mention the 5,000 to 10,000 employees who will have to work to serve those folks."

He also noted Anaheim is taking the brunt of the county's coronavirus cases along with Santa Ana, and the areas surrounding the resort are hot spots for the virus, combining for about 50,000 cases.

Moreno also said reopening Disneyland could cause the virus to spread further in children and the Latino population, which has been disproportionately affected by the virus.

Moreno's views failed to gain the support of other council members.

"Public health is currently the priority and focus, and public health will continue to be that until we can overcome this pandemic," said Councilman Avelino Valencia. "However, with that being said, we do need to at least have conversations about reenergizing our economy in a safe manner. And with that, I will be supportive of the resolution."

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# Irvine teen designs cart for homeless

BY BEN BRAZIL

In an effort to provide dignity and privacy for Orange County's homeless, an Irvine teenager has designed and built a mobile cart with a bed, toilet and storage.

Jordan Szigeti-Larenne, 17, came up with the idea for "Homes2Go" after realizing what a crucial resource shopping carts are for homeless people to store and transport their goods.

"I want to be able to help those people and give them some more dignity and a better place to live while they're on the streets and just do the best I can to make their life better," said Szigeti-Larenne, a senior at Woodbridge High School.

Szigeti-Larenne decided to put a new spin on the traditional shopping cart by providing it with more functionality.

The cart includes three buckets, one for storing goods, another for water and the third as a portable toilet.

The water container includes a custom pump to transfer the water into a cup or bottle. The bathroom bucket includes a foam noodle that can be used as a toilet seat.

The cart is outfitted with 10-inch tires that can cross over rough terrain, and it has a foldout bed.

"You just fold it out long enough for an adult, and it sits about a few inches off the ground," Szigeti-Larenne said. "So if the floor is wet or dirty they don't have to sleep on a



Raul Roa | Staff Photographer

**JORDAN SZIGETI-LARENNE** designed and built a mobile cart for homeless individuals with large tires that navigate different terrains, a bed, toilet and other features.

dirty floor. And that bed also folds into like a sort of couch, like a little leisure device."

A water-resistant covering goes over the bed.

"It also provides privacy," Szigeti-Larenne said, "so people don't stare at [the user] while they're asleep."

The cover can also be used while using the cart's toilet.

Szigeti-Larenne thought of the idea about a year ago, prior to the original stay-at-home orders due to the coronavirus. He is all the more emboldened now, he said, because many more people will become homeless as they lose their jobs due to the pandemic economy.

Szigeti-Larenne builds the carts in his garage, which is equipped with all the needed tools.

He said his father taught him how to use the tools as he was constructing the first iterations of the cart.

"I do other things around my house, like fix things, but this was like the first thing that I developed and fabricated myself," Szigeti-Larenne said, pointing out that he went through about four prototypes before settling on the current version of the cart.

Szigeti-Larenne said a homeless veterans group in Los Angeles is interested in ordering 30 carts. He said there isn't currently a timeline on fulfilling that order, and he is still raising money to be able to construct the carts and start a nonprofit.

As of Wednesday afternoon, Szigeti-Larenne has raised \$5,680. He said the carts cost about \$250 to make, though he is working on lowering the cost.

Szigeti-Larenne is accepting donations at [bit.ly/37qNL9f](http://bit.ly/37qNL9f).

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## DIES

Continued from page R1

is "the latest manifestation of a much larger and long-running tragedy" of official city disregard for unhoused people.

"Those of us fortunate to be housed in San Clemente must begin caring about those of us among us who need housing," Domenichini said in her submitted comments.

During the Tuesday meeting, City Councilman Chris Duncan said he's "heartbroken" by Riley's death and believes "it's a call to action."

The council authorized a new homeless outreach coordinator position that night, which Duncan said is an important step "to finally address the homelessness issue in town."

"We're better than that, and I'm confident we will," Duncan said.

City Councilman Gene James also suggested the city manager talk to Dana Point and San Juan Capistrano leaders about a possible regional shelter.

"I'd be the first one to jump up and down and protest placing a homeless shelter here in San Clemente; I will totally acknowledge that. But at the same time, we need some work-around on Martin v. Boise," James said, referring to a U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals decision that bars municipalities from penalizing people for sleeping outside if no alternative shelter is available.

Citing the case, the Orange County Sheriff's Department won't enforce anti-camping ordinances in San Clemente and other South Orange County cities because of the lack of shelters.

"We have to find some place that OCSJ can transport these people to get them off the street," James said Tuesday.

Housing advocacy lawyers sued South Orange County cities over the lack of shelters in 2019, and the case was assigned to U.S. District Judge David O. Carter because it was deemed related to a lawsuit he was overseeing about the disbursement of a 1,200-person homeless camp along the Santa Ana River in Anaheim. But San Clemente, Aliso Viejo and San Juan Capistrano hired the international law firm Jones Day to challenge Carter's assignment, argu-

ing he was biased against the cities and set on forcing them to open shelters.

U.S. District Judge James Selna sided with the cities and recused Carter, and the case went to U.S. District Judge Percy Anderson in Los Angeles. Two weeks later, attorneys filed declarations from Riley and another unhoused San Clemente man, William Brown Jr., as part of their challenge to a new city ordinance that confined camping in the city to a designated lot on Avenida Pico near the city's sewage center.

Riley said he'd have trouble walking up the hill to the lot, and that he traditionally stayed in downtown San Clemente alone and away from shared spaces "due to my age and disabilities."

"If there were an indoor shelter with services, I would be very excited to try staying there and hope for help getting into housing I could afford based on my limited income. But, as far as I know there is no shelter in San Clemente that will take me and no housing that I can afford on my limited income," according to Riley's declaration.

Anderson rejected the bid to overturn the ordinance and eventually dismissed the entire lawsuit. Meanwhile, Lofgren was staying in touch with her brother via telephone, and she sensed his condition deteriorating.

He owned a landscaping business in San Clemente for years, but he struggled with alcoholism, and Lofgren said he was becoming more confused and forgetful. Still, there were consistent glimmers of the older brother she'd always known, from his cantankerous edge, sharp wit and love of San Clemente surfing history to his uncanny ability to reenact scenes from old movies.

As children, Lofgren, Riley and their brother, Greg, moved to San Clemente from Pomona with their parents in 1960 so their father, Leon Riley, could manage the now-closed Alpha Beta grocery store. Leon and Eva Riley were well known in town and involved in local politics, and Leon Riley was profiled in the New York Times and Time Magazine as President Richard Nixon's grocer when he was at the Western White House.

Lofgren moved with her husband to Oregon in 1976, but she visited home regu-

larly, and she has friends in San Clemente who helped keep an eye on her brother after he became homeless. She also tried to work with outreach organizations such as CityNet, but she said she found true compassion in Domenichini, who formed a friendship with Riley and learned his routine.

Together, Lofgren and Domenichini worked to get Riley into physical therapy after he broke his pelvis, and they were searching for a skilled nursing home where he could recover long-term when he was placed in the Capistrano Beach Care Center. Lofgren learned he'd left on his own and against the advice of medical professionals when she called to check on him Jan. 24.

Chris Oakeson, the care center's administrator, declined comment when reached by phone last week.

Domenichini said she last saw Riley in the afternoon on Jan. 26, and she was heading to the senior center to check on him on the morning of Jan. 28 when she got a phone call telling her he had died. Domenichini said she's sure it was hypothermia or weather related. Temperatures in San Clemente dipped into the 40s that night, according to weather reports, and Domenichini said Riley was weak, frail and underdressed.

A photo of him enlarged for his memorial last week shows him bearded and smiling in a hat and sweatshirt with his walker nearby. An accompanying obituary said he'd "lost much of what he had built" to alcohol.

"We all know friends and family who struggle with addiction, and the challenges and destruction that can occur," the obituary reads. "If you did not know Steve you may have thought he was a person who simply didn't care about the comforts of life. Nothing could be further from the truth. Steve was actively working on getting housed and medical care."

Domenichini said she's hopeful Riley's death will inspire change.

"We're hoping some kind of good can come out of this, that people open their eyes to the disenfranchised in our community," she said.

**MEGHANN M. CUNIFF** is a contributor to Times OC.

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# Museum pieces together a picture of 'Car Culture'

BY VERA CASTANEDA

Enter Orange County Center for Contemporary Art and you'll find a full-size Studebaker Avanti parked in the middle of the gallery space.

Artist Earl Shepherd named the car "Tribute" to honor the history and design of the 1964 model created by Raymond Loewy. Starting from the rear on the passenger side, Shepherd's hand-painted design travels from Palm Springs to Los Angeles marking off the car's relevant social landmarks like the now-demolished Chi Chi Room, the Pink Pussycat and Musso & Frank Grill. The driver's side is dedicated to those who raced Avantis and set records at the race-track in the Bonneville Salt Flats.

"Tribute" is one of the pieces in OCCCA's "Car Culture" show, which includes the work of 28 artists. Center for Contemporary Art staff reached out to Bryan Barcena, assistant curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art, to jury the exhibition about a year ago.

"It was really important that the show be representative of not just this idyllic version of car culture — a 1950s glorified American car culture — but more



"NO JUSTICE No Peace 1992," by Luis Genaro Garcia, from 2018, is a depiction of the 1992 Los Angeles riots using current headlines about police shootings.

See **Museum**, page R5

## IMPROVE

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The county recently provided the Coalition of Orange County Community Health Centers with an initial amount of 15,000 vaccine doses.

"I just think there's no other way that you can 100% guarantee that vaccines are going where they need to be unless you work with the community health in your region because that is why community health centers exist in the first place," Becerra said.

Ellen Ahn, executive director of Korean Community Services, said community health clinics are "embedded" in the communities they serve. "All of us community health centers we have different niche populations we work with, and we're experts in those populations," Ahn said. "... I think that that decision by the Health Care Agency was a smart one. Why reinvent the wheel if you already have folks that can address the equity issues?"

The coalition, made up of 23 health centers, may receive more doses on an ongoing basis, though it is dependent on vaccine availability and the ability of the coalition members to administer the vaccine in a timely manner.

Becerra said the coalition has to use at least 65% of the vaccines per week to receive a weekly allotment of 15,000 vaccines.

"In other words, we can't sit on them," Becerra said. "The minute we get them, we have to distribute them and we can absolutely do that."

The county was less forthright in discussing the 15,000-per-week allotment.

Dr. Margaret Bredehoff, the county's deputy agency director of Public Health Services, said in an email the allocation of the 15,000 doses is part of the county's plan to get more vaccines to underserved populations, however, there is no "official agreement" between the county and the coalition for ongoing vaccines.

"Currently we are focusing on addressing equity and ensuring access for vulnerable populations," Bredehoff said. "The county has been addressing the needs of Latino population by hosting smaller PODs and has most recently announced a location at Santa Ana College that will be specifically for residents in Anaheim and Santa Ana — two of the hardest-hit communities."

Before a community clinic receives vaccines from the county, they are required to be approved by the state through CalVAX, demonstrate a plan for dispensing the vaccine doses within seven days and provide proper storage and handling of the vaccine.

The coalition will use a "hub and spoke" model to



Photo by BBP West

**A WOMAN RECEIVES** a first-round COVID-19 vaccine Wednesday at Disneyland in Anaheim. The county is partnering with local clinics to further distribute the shots.

distribute the vaccine. Because maintaining the integrity of the Pfizer vaccine requires a special freezer, only five of the clinics in the coalition will be able to store the vaccine. These clinics will act as hubs. They will then disseminate the vaccine to other clinics within the coalition.

Becerra said much of the vaccine administration is done at the clinics, and many of the clinics have transportation to bring patients to and from appointments. The coalition will also bring mobile units to vaccinate at Latino Health Access sites, senior citizen centers and local elementary schools.

Becerra said they are predominately receiving the Pfizer vaccine due to low supply of the Moderna vaccine.

"The Health Care Agency is allocating a portion of the county's vaccine supply to more than 70 healthcare providers throughout the county, including community clinics," Bredehoff said. "As vaccine supply increases, we will be able to provide more vaccine to more providers."

Jay Lee, chief medical officer with Share Our Selves, said his clinic will be working with a hub because it doesn't have one of the special freezers needed for the Pfizer vaccine.

Share Our Selves has clinics in Costa Mesa, Santa Ana, Newport Beach and Mission Viejo. It serves about 16,000 patients.

Lee said the Pfizer vaccine poses a number of logistical issues for the clinics. He said once his clinic receives doses from the hub, they will need to be administered within about six hours after the vaccine thaws.

"The characteristics of the vaccine and level of quickness means we have to be ultra careful and organized so that we can maximize every dose," Lee said.

Lee said one potential issue with the vaccine administration is his clinic may have to host vaccination events away from the actual clinic location.

"These larger events we are planning to hold are not necessarily places where our patients are familiar or where they would gravitate towards," Lee said.

Ultimately, Lee is grateful for the coalition's work, but he is hoping that the Moderna vaccine will become more readily available because it doesn't require the storage freezer and other logistical hurdles.

"I hope that the county continues to seek our voice out because the pandemic has really done a terrible job of highlighting the gaps in care and service that our patients experience structurally," Lee said. "Community health centers are here to help bridge that gap."

In addition to the new vaccination site and work with community clinics, the county also has equity initiatives aimed at the Latino and Asian American and Asian Pacific Islander communities.

The Latino Health Equity Initiative, launched in June, is a partnership between the county, Latino Health Access, Santa Ana and Anaheim Unified School districts and the coalition.

The Asian American/Pacific Islander initiative is a partnership between the county and the Orange County Asian Pacific Islander Community Alliance and Korean Community Services "to address barriers to testing and care that these communities may experience."

The initiative includes the Asian Pacific Islander Task Force, which offers testing, outreach and other services.

As a part of the task force, Ahn pointed to a greater need in Latino and Black communities, as the Asian community makes up 25% of the people who have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine in the county. The Black community accounts for 1% of the people who have received at least one dose of the vaccine.

"My expertise is the Asian Pacific Islander population," Ahn said. "There was lots of initiatives to address Asian Pacific Islander populations, and at least carve out some attention. But the truth is, Asian Pacific Islanders are not dealing with the same disparities that the Latinx population deals with, or the African American population."

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# JSERRA

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it has been going strong ever since.

"We didn't become a good school because of the pandemic," Stroupe said, "but COVID showed our heart."

After investing \$1.2 million to conform to mandated health requirements, JSerra welcomed back students.

"We felt almost a moral responsibility to return," said President Rich Meyer, noting that without students, "the heart of a school is excised, and all you have is buildings."

To become compliant and gain approval to open is no small feat. It required technology upgrades and innovation, reengineering of classes and common spaces and a host of protocols covering everything from entering and exiting class and eating policies to mask and distancing requirements. And cleaning, cleaning, cleaning.

## SCREENING AND TRACING

In addition, all students continue to undergo health screenings and questioning every day before going on campus, and the school maintains a rigorous contact tracing and quarantining program.

Senior Ryan Horio, 18, is one of 25 student volunteers who checks in students in the morning.

"Between the students there's pressure to call each other out," he said. "Hey, it's a privilege to come back to school."

Since August, 20 JSerra students and seven staffers have been diagnosed with the coronavirus.

Administrators believe none came from on-campus interaction.

"We're only as good as the information on our tracing," Stroupe said. "To our knowledge no transmission has occurred on campus."

Students who have had contact with someone with COVID-19 or suffer symptoms are quarantined up to 14 days and attend classes online.



PRESIDENT RICHARD MEYER, seniors Ryan Horio and Jillian Chade, and principal Eric Stroupe, from left, stand for a picture in front of the administration office at JSerra Catholic High in San Juan Capistrano.

Photos by Don Leach | Staff Photographer



A STUDENT WORKS on a classroom project in Laura Kennedy's social studies class while other students follow along on Zoom at JSerra Catholic High School in San Juan Capistrano.

The school added about 10,000 to 15,000 square feet of extra classrooms by converting public spaces, such as the library and meeting rooms. Classrooms average 18 students. They have hospital-grade air filters and ionization units, and cleanup crews cover the campus

daily. Classrooms are stocked with cleaning supplies and sanitation stations at the doors. The restrooms have touchless faucets and hand dryers.

"You can't go 10 feet without hitting a sanitation station," joked Vice Principal Donna Vandenberg.

## KEEPING IT 'FUN'

The transition hasn't been perfect. Popular activities such as sports, rallies and all-school Masses were eliminated.

However, a lunchtime Winter Formal was held, complete with socially distanced dancing. The school

also staged a surprise "snow day," Feb. 5, with slides and areas where students could make snowballs and "pelt the pandemic."

"They've been really good at making it fun," Horio said. "I know my senior year looks different, but they really want to make it special for us. I have friends from other schools and they're like, 'Wow, you get to see your friends?'"

Gillian Chade, an 18-year-old senior from Dana Point, spent most of the first semester attending classes online before returning to campus.

"Now I'm back in person I realize how much I missed it," she said. "Being back is just a blessing."

Mia Contreras, a 15-year-old sophomore, said her mental health has improved.

"When I was online, I couldn't talk to my friends at all. I felt so alone and isolated," she said.

"I definitely do better being here than sitting in my room all day," said Cameron Ricciardi, 16, a sophomore.

## IN THE CLASSROOM

Students can attend school virtually, but Meyer said more than 90% of families support having their kids on campus. Teachers all have online accounts and classrooms are outfitted with 65-inch high-resolution screens and video conferencing.

On a recent school day, 16 students are arrayed across a classroom and another six on the big screen, as European history teacher Laura Kennedy lectures on the Russian Revolution.

"It's all Bolshevik," she jokes.

A 14-year teacher at JSerra, she has seen firsthand the difference between in-school and online learning. She said the performance and test scores of students who were learning online dipped significantly but rebounded when they returned to campus.

Although debates about returning and how to do it safely have erupted statewide, at JSerra, while there was discussion, in the end there was consensus. Every teacher returned to campus and staff was added.

Kennedy admitted to some trepidation that there would be virus outbreaks, but said she is much less nervous now and adds, "I believe the kids need to be here."

Just in case, she has an extra N95 mask in her desk drawer.

## FORGING AHEAD

Bucking trends is not new for JSerra. Established in 2003, it was the first non-diocesan-founded Roman Catholic high school in the state and fourth in the country. That offers it certain freedoms not afforded to public and other Catholic schools.

Being relatively "bureaucracy free," Meyer said, "We have the fortune of being able to be pretty nimble."

"We're not blazing a path per se," Stroupe said.

But he has a message to other schools: "be bold in your thinking."

GREG MELLE is a contributor to TimesOC.

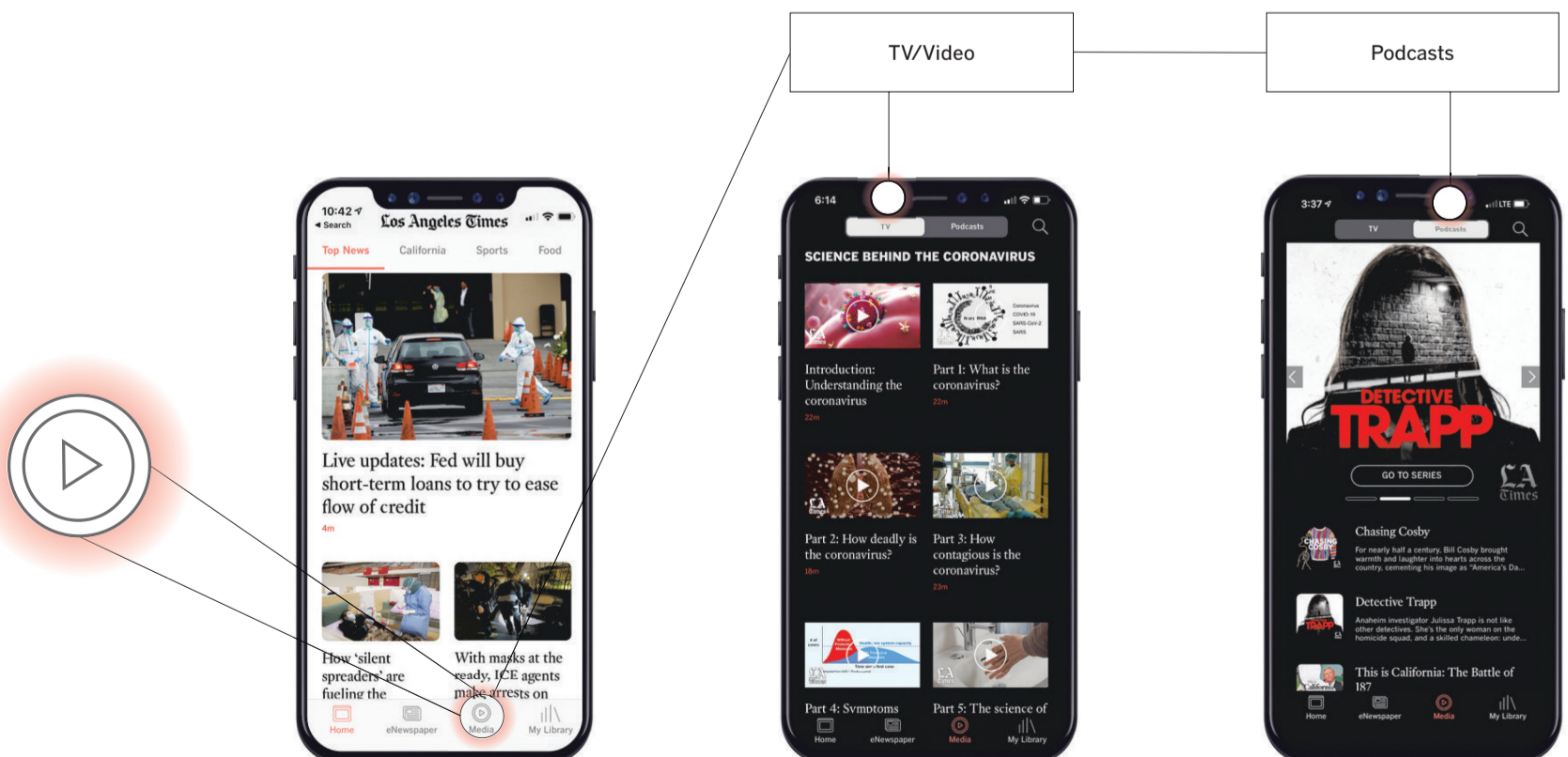
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**MUSEUM**

*Continued from page R3*

representative of the real relationships that people have with cars and what it means in a place like Southern California," Barcena said.

As Barcena looked through submissions, he saw a complex relationship to cars.

The result was art from California and across the country. Works vary from lowrider culture, personal family photos to a motorcycle voting station.

Santa Ana artist Hugo Almanza created a diorama of classic cars at a picnic paying homage to the lowrider community. The diorama's park landscape was built on top of an eating tray and features his collection of mini-scale classic cars.

Collages from Luis Genaro Garcia's series "Cruising L.A.'s Political Landscape" deal with civil rights violations.

In "No Justice No Peace 1992," Garcia placed a 1992 Chevy Caprice cruising the landscape made up of 2017 and 2018 Los Angeles Times news stories about police brutality. His work connects and compares past and present politics.

The longtime South Central art educator said in the show's virtual reception that he created the pieces from the point of view of an educator.

Vanessa Viruet's work explores the language of flags and how it constructs identity, particularly in car racing, gang banging or gay cruising.

Research for pieces like "Race Flags: Unsportsmanlike Conduct and Disqualified" led her down a history of car racing and NASCAR. A black flag with a white cross signifies disqualified.

"NASCAR is very well known for their Confederate flag waving," Viruet said. "The resemblance between the black flag with the white 'x' and the Confederate flag was just uncanny to me."

Rhiannon Valenti works with oil paintings and dolls. Her "Drivin' Thru" features Barbie dolls in a vintage dune buggy with a Carl's Jr.



*Courtesy of Earl Shepherd*

**A FRONT-VIEW** of "Tribute," here displayed at the L.A. Classic Auto Show, now part of an exhibit at OCCCA.



**"DRIVIN' THRU,"** 2014, by Rhiannon Valenti.

*Courtesy of Rhiannon Valenti*

**IF YOU GO**

**What:** "Car Culture"  
**Where:** Orange County Center for Contemporary Art, 117 North Sycamore St., Santa Ana  
**When:** Online 360-degree tour or by appointment only Thursdays through Sundays, ending March 20  
**Cost:** Free  
**Info:** (714) 667-1517, [occca.org](http://occca.org)

burger plopped on the rear. "I wanted to capture the feeling of fun, playfulness

and California driving," Valenti said.

She thought about how drive-through restaurants are a big part of American culture. However, when Barcena saw the painting, he said he thought about how young women have limited access to car culture versus the variety of toy cars young men have access to.

The show, open until March 20, is available for viewing online through a 360-degree tour or in-person by appointment.

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