

Daily Pilot & Times OC

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Don Leach | Staff Photographer

WHEN THE AIRPORT fire sparked and grew exponentially, volunteers sprang into action with the O.C. Animal Response Team and helped evacuate and shelter horses and other large animals at Serrano Creek Equestrian in Lake Forest, pictured, and the O.C. Fairgrounds.

With no official response team, volunteers come to the rescue

BY GABRIEL SAN ROMÁN

When the Airport fire first ignited the dry brush of the Trabuco Canyon foothills, Orange County equestrians sprang into action.

Without an official county animal response team, volunteers were on their own.

An email alert went out on Monday within 20 minutes of the fire's start to a list of 150 people on trailer teams telling them to hook up their trailers and be on call to help evacuate horses to safety.

Later that afternoon, Dee Dee Friedrich and her husband drove their three-horse

Equestrians self-organized volunteer transportation of horses during the first days of the Airport fire after a previous team under the county's emergency services significantly scaled back its efforts.

trailer down from Yorba Linda to a staging area at Saddleback Church in Lake Forest.

From there, Friedrich and other equestrian volunteers headed to Oak Canyon Road in Trabuco Canyon as part of rescue efforts.

"There was a big, long line of horses," Friedrich said. "We waited for the horses to come out of the canyon, loaded them up and got them out of there."

In all, 154 horses were hauled to safety by volunteers on Monday. Volunteers evacuated 168 more on Tuesday.

Friedrich took dozens to Serrano Creek Ranch in Lake Forest where owner Matt Rhyl helped board them. Other rescue volunteers transferred horses to stalls at the Orange

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College district retains provider

Officials agree to keep a \$30M employee health policy with ASCIP, which held \$7M in public money off the books.

BY SARA CARDINE

Rancho Santiago Community College District officials Monday approved keeping a \$30-million employee health policy in the hands of an insurance risk pool operator recently criticized for keeping millions of the district's money for years in a little-known account.

Moved by overwhelming feedback from employees keen on keeping their medical doctors, treatment and coverage intact, RSCCD trustees voted unanimously to retain the Anthem Blue Cross policy maintained by the Alliance of Schools for Cooperative Insurance Programs for a three-year period.

See *College*, page A3

A youth prison's hidden history

An O.C. photographer is behind the effort to remove meaningful items from the state's former juvenile facilities.

BY ERIC LICAS

When Tony Espinoza's fiancée showed him a gallery of recent pictures from inside the now defunct Heman G. Stark Youth Correctional Facility, also known as Youth Training School (YTS), roughly four years of memories from one of the state's most violent youth prisons came flooding back to him.

One of the images among those shot by Brea-based photographer David Reeve depicts a brown sofa against a brick wall with a boxing trophy sitting on one of its cush-

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Don Leach | Staff Photographer

ALSO FROM THE DAILY PILOT:

BEATS AND BREW: INDIE RECORD STORE FINDS A NEW HOME INSIDE ORANGE COFFEE SHOP

Resident Vinyl moved from Santa Ana to Orange this summer, opening inside Contra Coffee and Tea, a location the owner calls 'rad.' PAGE A4

WESTMINSTER CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS DISRUPTIVE DESPITE NEW RULES PAGE A2

DARKROOM IN SANTA ANA DEVELOPS A NEW KIND OF DINING EXPERIENCE PAGE A5

MAILBAG: COASTAL O.C. ELECTIONS WORRY READERS PAGE A6

Second Harvest Food Bank's Mobile School Pantry marks its first decade

BY MATT SZABO

A decade is a long time, but that's how long Huntington Beach resident Rebeca Isidoro has been able to count on the Second Harvest Food Bank Mobile School Pantry program as a resource for her family.

Isidoro, who is Mexican American, lives in the predominantly Latino working class community of Oak View. She and more than 100 other families showed up for the monthly appearance of the Mobile School Pantry at Oak View Elementary School on Wednesday.

Isidoro has a son in preschool and a daughter in kindergarten at

Oak View, but those are just two of her five children at home. She also has two kids in middle school, one in college and one enlisted in the U.S. Army.

The Mobile School Pantry has been an invaluable resource as her young ones grew, she said, providing staples like milk and eggs along with fresh produce.

"It's a blessing to have this program here at school," Isidoro said in Spanish, translated by Oak View Principal Araceli Osborn. "It's amazing that Second Harvest Food Bank facilitates this. It really helps my family. Not just my family, but the other families here in Oak View. With the economy and

everything, this supplements our food needs."

The Mobile School Pantry program has exploded over the past decade while distributing a total of 22.6 million pounds of food.

Oak View Elementary, in the Ocean View School District, was one of 12 original sites in 2014. Today, the program has 74 Mobile School Pantries, Second Harvest chief executive Claudia Bonilla Keller said.

"Coming out of the pandemic, this is not only necessary, this is critical for families," Bonilla Keller said. "We're dealing with inflation,

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James Carbone

OAK VIEW community members shop from a varied selection of fresh produce on Wednesday at the Second Harvest Food Bank's Mobile School Pantry in Huntington Beach.

a Surf City favorite since 1961

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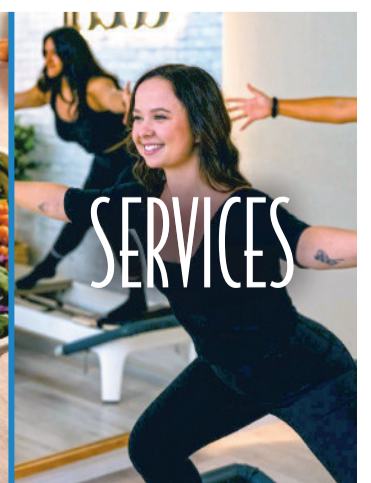
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SHOPS



DINING



SERVICES

Irvine moves to toughen up its lobbying law

City Council members give initial OK to expanded definitions of who lobbyists are and what they do.

BY GABRIEL SAN ROMÁN

A year after being first proposed, the Irvine City Council has voted to add teeth to its existing lobbyist regulations.

Council members approved a first reading of the ordinance during Tuesday's meeting. The changes are set to broaden the definition of lobbyists and their activities and make repeated violations of the law a misdemeanor offense.

Councilwoman Kathleen Treseder first proposed a series of reforms to the law in the wake of political corruption scandals that erupted in Anaheim and Irvine.

In 2022, Anaheim officials ordered a sweeping independent probe into political corruption following the surfacing of an FBI investigation that led to the conviction of former Mayor Harry Sidhu and the termination of the Angel Stadium sale.

A report released the following year alleged a criminal conspiracy surrounding federal pandemic relief funds and recommended a host of reforms aimed at curbing corruption.

Irvine declined to authorize its own independent probe.

But in a memo to City Manager Oliver Chi authored last year, Treseder sought to implement changes in Irvine inspired by the Anaheim report, including strengthening its lobbying law.

"Irvine was named 11 times in the context of a cannabis-related proposal in April 2018," the memo read. "In connection with this proposal, Melahat Rafiei, a political consultant, was indicted and



IRVINE MAYOR Farrah Khan and Councilwoman Tammy Kim during a 2021 Irvine City Council meeting.

pleaded guilty to a felony charge of attempting to defraud one of her political consultancy firm's clients."

In the plea deal, Rafiei also admitted to attempting to bribe two Irvine council members in relation to a retail cannabis ordinance. She is set to be sentenced at a federal courthouse in Los Angeles on Nov. 8.

The FBI investigation didn't surface during Tuesday's discussion.

Instead, following a study session last November, Irvine City Atty. Jeff Melching outlined the proposed changes to the law, which was first passed in 2006.

"The lobbying ordinance is fundamentally about disclosure," he said. "It doesn't prohibit people from lobbying."

It seeks to expand the definition of lobbying to include contacting

any city officials with decision-making powers. The updated language also modernized the ways in which lobbyists can contact city officials with social media and other electronic means of communication in mind.

"It's definitely heading in the right direction of what we need to do in order to close a lot of the loopholes," said Councilwoman Tammy Kim.

The proposed changes would widen who is considered a lobbyist to include "in-house" and "expenditure" lobbyists not previously covered.

Reporting requirements are also set to be more detailed, including if a registered lobbyist has contributed \$100 or more to the campaign of an elected official being contacted.

Irvine is looking to drastically draw down the lobbyist registry

requirements. As it stands now, individual lobbyists only have to register if their paid contact exceeded \$10,000 per quarter. The revised rules would compel registration if paid lobbying tallied \$1,000 or more in a calendar month.

Added enforcement teeth come in the form of a misdemeanor offense for repeated violations of the law.

"We would not begin with a criminal enforcement mechanism if we found somebody out of compliance," Melching said.

But subsequent violations would include fines of \$1,000 per day.

Both Treseder and Kim asked Melching about exemptions from the law for media professionals.

"Are we looking for credentialed press?" Kim asked. "Are we going to be requiring a press pass? I just

want to tighten what we are calling media and journalism."

Melching responded that there would be no press pass requirement for exemption and that media is defined the way it was in 2006, when the law originally passed, to include newspaper, radio, television, wire service and regularly published periodical reporters.

Councilman Mike Carroll proposed an amendment to the updated lobbying law that would ban council-appointed commissioners and committee members from lobbying Irvine, a loophole that existed under previous ethics ordinances and covered the mayor, council members and council staff.

"We're in a very weird world where if we pass this tonight as it's proposed, you could be a lobbyist for the city of Irvine and still serve as a council member or a commissioner or a committee member," Carroll said.

Treseder had no issue with the proposed amendment but made a political point with November's City Council elections in mind.

"It does give the appearance that council member Carroll is using his position to attack Commissioner Ayn Craciun," she said. "She is his opponent for the council race."

Some residents had questioned Craciun's role as chair of Irvine's Sustainability Commission with her advocacy work in Irvine as Climate Action Campaign's policy director.

But with Carroll's council colleagues finding his amendment agreeable, changes to the lobbying law were passed unanimously.

It will come back before council for a second procedural vote at a future meeting.

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Disruption persists at Westminster council meetings

Recently instituted rules on setting agendas and time limits on speaking have little effect.

BY GABRIEL SAN ROMÁN

On the far right of the Westminster City Council, between miniature U.S. and South Vietnamese flags perched in front of her dais seat, Amy Phan West has otherwise been at the constant center of controversy.

Since the councilwoman was elected by a razor-thin margin of 21 votes in 2022, City Council meetings have grown more dysfunctional, with shouting, five-minute recesses, muted microphones, pleas for decorum, censure resolutions and allegations of corruption becoming commonplace this year.

During Tuesday's meeting, a new set of rules aimed at curbing the disruption made their full debut in tandem. Would they work?

The meeting was originally slated to consider censuring Phan West, if she hadn't changed her behavior, which a majority of council members described as violating the city's ethics policy.

But that same council majority felt compelled to censure Phan West on Aug. 14, a month ahead of schedule.

Following the censure resolution, new rules on conducting council meetings were passed two weeks later.

Placing items on a council agenda now requires the support of a third council member on the five-member board. Mayor Chi Charlie Nguyen exempted himself from the rule as he argued that his position is elected at-large and represents all of Westminster.

Speaking times for coun-



THE WESTMINSTER City Council conducts business during the Sept. 11 meeting.

cil members are also limited to two rounds of five-minute comments on agenda items after the Aug. 28 council meeting lasted for nearly 11 hours and ended past 5 a.m., with some city officials bleary-eyed and yawning.

It was the third time this year a council meeting clocked in at over 10 hours long. The speaking time rule, which can be extended by a council majority vote, purportedly took effect immediately during the Aug. 28 meeting.

Similar meeting rules in Anaheim faced criticism when former Mayor Harry Sidhu implemented them during his tenure. Critics claimed the changes silenced minority members and disenfranchised the council districts they represented.

Phan West called Westminster's changes "reminiscent of a communist dictatorship" in a press release after they passed.

At Tuesday's meeting, she tested the fences on the

new rules early and often.

Council members held a closed session discussion before the open meeting about the recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling that gave local governments more power to enforce anti-camping laws against the homeless.

Only the subject matter of discussion, not the discussion itself, was disclosed, as is routine at council meetings across Orange County.

"You guys are hiding something," Phan West nevertheless accused her colleagues.

"We spent over an hour to speak on this item in closed session," Councilwoman Kimberly Ho said. "Unfortunately, you chose not to come. This is the reason why you are so confused. And then you come out here [and] you waste everybody's time. You accused people of hiding. That's a childish game."

Verbal scums over allotted time to speak, clock countdowns and commo-

tion from the audience when Phan West left her seat prompted the mayor to call for a five-minute recess.

The majority of the meeting seemed to run smoothly enough after that until it came time to discuss putting items on the agenda for the next one.

Phan West deemed the council majority as a "gang of three" and criticized the new agenda-setting rule.

"I think it's wrong," she said. "[The] voice[s] of District 1 and District 4 will never be represented."

Phan West, who represents District 1, attempted to put a study session on the Westminster Community Foundation on the agenda for the next meeting. Councilman NamQuan Nguyen, who represents District 4 and is a reliable ally of Phan West, supported it.

All council members approved of the study session, easily clearing the three-member threshold.

But then Councilman Nguyen followed by seeking



WESTMINSTER COUNCILWOMAN Amy Phan West speaks from the dais at the Sept. 11 council meeting.



ACTIVIST TERRY RAINS calls for the recall of council members Amy Phan West and NamQuan Nguyen.

to put a discussion of bribery allegations involving both the mayor and Ho on the agenda.

"I want Mr. Mayor to clear his reputation," Phan West said, in support.

"Don't worry, just vote," Mayor Nguyen told her.

"If you have evidence, go to the authorities," Councilman Carlos Manzo told council members Nguyen and Phan West in not supporting the agenda item.

"They're making a laughingstock out of us," Ho added in voting no, as well. "Don't use this as your forum to grandstand."

Ho encouraged Councilman Nguyen and Phan West to go to the FBI or an-

other law enforcement agency.

So did Mayor Nguyen.

Phan West spoke over him the entire time he explained his third and final no vote, which ensured that the discussion wouldn't appear on the next agenda.

Mayor Nguyen ended the meeting with a plea for Phan West, his council colleague.

"As you pray for me, I pray double for you," the mayor said. "You ask for mutual respect, I think you need to pay attention to what you're saying."

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Art project stirred by Reagan speech

Sealed in 2014, a time capsule at Grand Central Art Center in Santa Ana explores what the past tells us about the future.

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

A small piñata. A coin from Argentina. Film negatives of Santa Ana street life. These are just some of the items packed with intention into a time capsule that has waited in the rafters of the for the last 10 years.

Back in 2014, artist and curator Daniel Tucker worked on a project called "Future Perfect." Developed through the GCAC Artist-in-Residence program and supported in part by a grant to Grand Central Art Center from the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, the project was inspired by a speech Ronald Reagan made at the 1976 Republican National Convention about drafting a letter to be included in a time capsule.

"This was a reoccurring trope; he was very future oriented, and even though I am not someone who is in any way politically sympathetic to Ronald Reagan, I did feel like it was a useful starting point for thinking about the way that at that moment in time, we were living in the imaginary future that Reagan had attempted to conjure throughout his career," said Tucker. "I was interested in finding a way to explore that."

Tucker made an hourlong video that uses the speech to examine Reagan-inspired monuments and time capsules throughout California titled "Future Perfect: Time Capsules in Reagan Country." The letter Reagan referred to was put inside a time capsule, a Mariner 171 test propellant tank, more specifically, on display at the Griffith Observatory in Los Angeles and is set to be opened in 2076. It is featured prominently in the video alongside multiple other time

capsules in the region created during the Bicentennial.

Record-keeping wasn't always thorough, however. Tucker made some surprising discoveries in his research for the project.

"I remember reading one article about a town in Southern California that had done a big construction project and found 30 unopened time capsules," Tucker said.

Even the Ronald Reagan Federal Courthouse building in downtown Santa Ana, newly built at the time, was supposed to get a time capsule buried somewhere within it, but a collection of complications, highlighted in the video, prevented it from happening.

Tucker worked with local historian Cheryl A. Eberly, principal librarian for Santa Ana Public Library and then Santa Ana history room archivist Manny Escamilla along with youths from the Santa Ana Teen Historians program to create a time capsule of their own.

"Part of what we would always try to teach at the Santa Ana Library and in the history room specifically was that everybody's own life story, the story of their families and their experiences growing up in the city and community are part of Santa Ana history," said Escamilla, who is now senior policy advisor for county Supervisor Vicente Sarmiento.

At the Downtown Santa Ana Artwalk on Sept. 7, the time capsule was finally lowered from the ceiling on a rope by John D. Spiak, director and chief curator at GCAC, and unpacked before a small audience that included some of the individuals who originally packed items inside.

Teens in the Santa Ana Teen Historians program in 2014 wrote letters to themselves, though not all were present on Saturday to retrieve them. Christian Ramirez, one of the programs youngest

IF YOU GO

Daniel Tucker's "Future Perfect: Time Capsules in Reagan Country" is on display at the Grand Central Art Center at 125 N Broadway, Santa Ana now through Nov. 17.

participants, passed away earlier this year, leaving behind his letter and three poems he wrote.

Roger Reyes, a founding member of the Santa Ana Community Artist(s) Coalition, known professionally as Roger Eyes R., placed the first paintbrush he used on a public mural in Santa Ana in the capsule back in 2014.

"Roger placed the brush kind of to say, 'In 10 years will I still be doing this?' The happy answer there is yes ... exactly 10 years later, that very morning, he was doing restoration work on local murals," said Escamilla.

When it comes to time capsules, Tucker has a unique perspective.

"In a lot of ways I think about time capsules as being mini, amateur museums, in the sense that they are meant to convey what a specific group of people find valuable at a specific moment in time," said Tucker.

While the time capsule included works of art, like a script for a play, CDs and drawings and paintings by local artists, it also contained items like menus from restaurants that have since closed and a copy of the now-defunct OC Weekly.

"Those things are not rendered art, but they are really interesting artifacts, and for me, because I have a real investment in the democratization of museums and exhibitions, I like the idea of a time capsule as a micro exhibition."

The artifacts and art are now on display at Grand Central Art Cen-



Photos courtesy of Grand Central Art Center

DANIEL TUCKER'S project "Future Perfect" features artifacts from a 2014 time capsule that was opened on Sept. 7, 2024.



MANNY ESCAMILLA prepares to open a time capsule packed in 2014 at Grand Central Art Center.

ter — some with labels handwritten by the people who tucked them into the time capsule in the first place. Tucker's video is also on display. It is an exhibition Escamilla thinks many people, historian or not, can relate to.

"The desire to communicate to the future is part of human na-

ture, to at least leave something behind so that you know your time was impactful, remembered or made a difference," Escamilla said.

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COLLEGE

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The Cerritos-based agency is the same one that in June cut a \$7.1-million check to the district, after it came to light that a risk management fund held by ASCIP had quietly accumulated insurance dividends that, if made known to elected officials, could have been spent at any time.

Instead, the funds grew as district administrators — most likely two now-retired cabinet members whose affiliations with the joint powers authority preceded and outlasted their tenures at Rancho Santiago CCD — apparently managed and spent from the account without the board's full knowledge.

Now, one elected official is demanding a full accounting of the risk management fund, even as the district's chancellor and a key administrator evade questions about what happened and who knew what.

District faculty and staff packed the Rancho Santiago boardroom Monday evening to share their opinions on whether the district should continue receiving employee health benefits through Anthem, using ASCIP's risk pool, or switch to competitor Aetna.

Employees' favor resoundingly landed on the former, recommended 8-2 by the district's advisory Joint Benefits Committee and affirmed by Chancellor

Marvin Martinez. Staying in the pool would allow the policy to earn dividends, or rebates, during periods when premium payments eclipsed claims.

Tiffany Gause, a Santiago Canyon College social sciences professor and officer of the district's faculty union, urged the board to affirm the benefits committee's recommendation to stay with Anthem, reached after an exhaustive process.

"We came together, did what was best for all involved and made the right decision," Gause said, outlining a series of meetings and presentations held over the summer. "We need to rely on process and not be blindsided or uninformed, especially on an important decision like this."

Santiago Canyon reading instructor Amy Freese shared how her husband has received life-saving cancer treatment at the UC Irvine Medical Center, thanks to the district's HMO plan.

"I can't imagine what so many of us would go through if we needed to leave UCI and change any of our medical groups. Could that be life altering? I think that it could be," Freese said.

"The employees of our district are living through some very hard things. And Board of Trustees, you have the opportunity to make another positive difference for us and our families."

Through sheer coinci-



Sara Cardine

RANCHO SANTIAGO CCD Professor Tiffany Gause urges the Board of Trustees to keep employee health coverage with Anthem Blue Cross, a policy arranged through ASCIP.

dence, Monday's vote followed on the heels of the discovery in late May that ASCIP had been maintaining the risk management fund not accounted for in the district's budget and outside the awareness of trustees, that had amassed \$7.1 million.

Trustee Phil Yarbrough, who chairs the board's fiscal audit committee, demanded in a June 10 meeting a full remittance of the funds and called for an audit to track the full life of the fund. He reiterated his call for an investigation Monday.

"There are two issues here. There's the issue about who our health provider's going to be, and the second issue is in regard to the refund account that had been going on since a year after I was elected [in 1996]," he said. "I've got a

bunch of questions about that and I've got a bunch of materials I need to get answers on."

Trustee Tina Arias Miller asked where in the district's budget the \$7.1 million had been placed and whether it might be used to offset future healthcare premiums or pay for other unforeseen employee healthcare-related expenses.

Iris Ingram, vice chancellor of business services, explained board policy stipulates any one-time revenue received be automatically held in Rancho Santiago's reserve fund. Spending from that account, she added, requires approval by a two-third board majority.

"So it requires an additional hurdle now to take that money out of there," she said. "And once the revenue goes into the reserves, it becomes a situation

[where] all money is green."

Chancellor Martinez and Vice Chancellor Ingram were asked multiple times to speak in an interview about the risk management fund, who kept tabs on the account balance and who, according to records reviewed by the Pilot, recommended expenditures from the account totaling nearly \$3.7 million.

Those records track withdrawals made between 2012 and 2020, a time period spanning the tenures of now-retired vice chancellors John Didion (Human Resources, 1997-2016) and Peter Hardash (Fiscal Services, 2006-2020), who handled insurance matters for Rancho Santiago CCD while serving in governance roles with ASCIP, including the executive committee that makes decisions on declaring and distributing dividends to member districts.

Martinez — who in September 2023 spoke on the record with the Pilot about his concerns over the relationships Didion and Hardash had forged with ASCIP, including their service on the board of a captive insurance company the JPA created to handle bond construction insurance — declined to comment on when and how he'd learned about the \$7.1-million fund balance.

Ingram, who initially agreed to a Sept. 3 Zoom interview about the fund, its accounting and who at RSCCD was authorized to

make withdrawals from the account, canceled the interview about 90 minutes prior citing illness and rescheduled it to Sept. 10, two days after two stories appeared in the Sunday edition of the Pilot.

However, just three hours before Tuesday's rescheduled interview, district spokesperson Chi-Chung Keung canceled once more, stating that since the articles had been published, "I don't see a need for us to meet today."

"I'm surprised and disappointed that you published the story without the courtesy of an agreed upon interview this week," Keung wrote in an email, despite the fact that the Pilot sent five emails between Aug. 19 and 23 requesting an audience with Martinez and emailed a question on Aug. 29 asking what the chancellor knew about the fund that was not answered by a Sept. 5 deadline.

While top Rancho Santiago officials are keeping quiet, Yarbrough seeks to agendize for a future board meeting a discussion about the risk management fund held by ASCIP that he hopes will culminate in a call for a review of its historic transactions.

"This issue, in regard to this fund and how it got there is just starting," he assured the public Monday. "And I'm going to get to the bottom of it."

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PANTRY

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we're dealing with a higher cost of living, and this community needs help. We can't think of a better partner than schools. Not only are we reaching children, we're reaching their families and some of the younger children who aren't in the school system yet."

Visitors to the Oak View pantry find a wide assortment of chilies and jalapeños. Bonilla Keller said Second Harvest tries to cater to the food preferences of a particular community as much as it can.

Ocean View School District Board of Trustees Clerk Gina Clayton-Tarvin said she appreciates that attention to the community's customs, as well as the fact that the pantry's fruits and vegetables are organic.

She said about 59% of the district's students qualify as



James Carbone

PEOPLE FROM the Oak View community pick organic peppers at the Second Harvest Mobile School Pantry.

socioeconomically disadvantaged. At Oak View Elementary, that number leaps to 99.4%.

"Just because you're not rich doesn't mean you can't eat well," Clayton-Tarvin said. "Our community here is used to having fresh food in Mexico, and you saw Vietnamese people here as

well. A lot of the food here in the United States is foreign to them, actually, because it's so processed. This food is helping to serve the need of people who are food insecure, but also it's truly nutritional for them.

"I think that is really important. Here at the school district, we have this part-

nership with this organization that's really looking out for our communities. Not just to combat food insecurity, but also to combat having unhealthy foods in our community."

Jadira Lopez, the community liaison for Oak View Elementary, also serves as Mobile School Pantry coordinator at the site.

Lopez said in her time with the mobile pantry it has extended into the summer months so students and families can continue receiving fresh food while school is out.

Part of her role is also explaining to families any new food items that are being distributed. On Wednesday, that was the tropical fruit rambutan, which is native to southeast Asia.

Bonilla Keller said some of the Mobile School Pantries serve the community twice monthly. Seven schools in the county have permanent school pantries,

as well.

Food needs remain a struggle for many families, who first have to worry about paying rent.

Bonilla Keller noted that 43% of households in the county are shelter burdened, paying more than they should for rent or their mortgage. According to a 2023 California Housing Partnership report, renters in Orange County need to earn \$51.39 an hour — 3.3 times the state minimum wage — in order to afford the average monthly rent of \$2,672.

"It erodes their food budget," Bonilla Keller said. "In term of our pantry coverage in Orange County, there's not an overabundance of food distribution points in Huntington Beach. People think that Huntington Beach is fine, nobody's hungry, nobody's food insecure. [But] every city in Orange County has a food insecure population."

Data from Feeding America showed that in 2022, about 84,700 children in the county — one in eight — suffered from food insecurity.

Daren Khatib is the administrator of health and wellness for the Orange County Department of Education.

"I'm constantly looking for resources to bring to them, to connect them to community partners," said Khatib, who is also a Second Harvest board member. "To be honest with you, [the Second Harvest Mobile School Pantry] really wasn't a hard sell at all. A lot of administrators at the district and school level, they recognize that we have to serve the whole child. If we really want to improve academic achievement, we cannot stop at just instruction in the classroom."

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Indie record store finds harmony at coffee shop

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

There was a time when alternative music and coffee shops very much went together.

"I guess it comes from the Seattle grunge days," said Owen Ela, owner of independent record store Resident Vinyl.

That relationship has returned, at least in the city of Orange, since Resident Vinyl opened its new location inside Contra Coffee and Tea.

Located at 115 N. Orange St., the coffee house has long been a popular place for students of nearby Chapman University to study and hang out.

"Contra is a rad spot, and the tables are full all day, with students and their laptops. It is a constant stream of students and people from the community," said Ela.

Resident Vinyl first opened in 2023 in Santa Ana, its name a cheeky reference to the fact that Ela's store was on the first floor of his loft. Opening a record store seemed natural for Ela, who has a deep background in the music industry.

"In high school, I was managing my friend's band, it all kind of started there," he said. "I was the guy who was never good enough to play in a band, but I really wanted to be part of it so I ended up managing my friend's punk band in the late '90s."

He would go on to lead a career in music marketing, working for Epitaph Records, Goldenvoice, Live Nation and later becoming the marketing manager at the Observatory, a Santa Ana music venue.

When Resident Vinyl opened, it joined a band of

both new and used record stores in Orange County that cater to all music tastes and budgets.

This summer, the shop moved to its new home in a roughly 250-square-foot shop set up at the back of Contra, a box-light sign directing people to its narrow doorway.

"This is a much better location for us, and we really want to put all our energy and efforts on this spot," said Ela.

Resident Vinyl sells new records, and the inventory is highly curated.

"It is a small space so we are definitely very picky about what we stock. Everything is hand-picked to what we are into currently," said Ela, describing his inventory as "all killer and no filler."

That doesn't mean there isn't a wide selection. A mix of genres includes artists like Kendrick Lamar, Haim, Thundercat and Chappell Roan. Ela said he employs the same discerning ear he used to use when curating a music festival, and the result is an eclectic collection that hits many notes. If there is anything that music lovers are looking for that he doesn't have, Ela said he is happy to try and track it down. Of course, he also stocks what he refers to as the "classics."

"Nirvana, Sonic Youth and the Smiths," he said.

Besides records, Resident Vinyl sells vintage band tees, audio equipment and refurbished turntables, all things the former space didn't have room to stock.

Ela said it's important that Resident Vinyl remain an approachable shop, where customers can ask questions and not feel intimidated if they aren't audio-

philes. The customers that shop at the store tend to skew younger, and some of them are just getting into vinyl.

"There are a lot of kids who are getting into records who grew up in the streaming world," said Ela. "That's really kind of our people."

In the short two months the shop has been open at its new location, Ela has thought of some improvements he would like to make, like installing a window near the register that can double as a DJ booth. Overall, he said pairing the record store with Contra Coffee was the right move.

"Coffee and vinyl records are a perfect match," he said.

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Photos by Don Leach | Staff Photographer

OWEN ELA holds one of his favorite albums by SZA at his indie record store, Resident Vinyl, at its second location inside Contra Coffee in Old Towne Orange. Ela hopes to resurrect a time when coffee shops and alternative music went together.



ALBUM BINS with a curated selection at Resident Vinyl inside Contra Coffee in Old Towne Orange.



CONTRA COFFEE in Old Towne Orange. The indie record shop Resident Vinyl has opened at the coffee house.

HISTORY

Continued from page A1

ions.

"I couldn't even breathe," Espinosa told the Daily Pilot during an interview Wednesday. "I couldn't even talk. I couldn't even tell her 'that's my trophy.'"

They immediately contacted Reeve, setting off a six-month journey to retrieve a lost artifact hiding in the state's prison system. For Espinosa, it was a symbol of years of training, survival and triumph.

TONY 'THE TIGER'

Tony "The Tiger" Espinosa was a child the first time he strapped on a pair of gloves and knocked someone out. Whenever the monsignor at the Catholic school he attended caught wind of a beef between students, the priest would act as a referee and put on a boxing match with their classmates gathered in a circle around them.

As a kid, boxing was his life. But it became more

than that after he got caught stealing booze from a neighbor's shed in 1983 and was sent to Ventura County Juvenile Hall. Upon turning 18 and transferring into YTS, the sport became his ticket to survival.

"Believe it or not, there's 365 days in the year [and] there was either a fight, a riot, somebody got killed, stabbed or something at least 365 days a year there," Espinosa told the Daily Pilot. "Sometimes two or three times a day."

Espinosa said several friends he met while locked up never made it to their release dates. But he joined the correctional facility's boxing team, ultimately becoming its captain. His training helped isolate him from the constant violence around him and kept him out of gangs.

Being on the team also brought him special treatment like better food and put on a boxing match with their classmates gathered in a circle around them.

As a kid, boxing was his life. But it became more



David Reeve

A FORGOTTEN BOXING trophy sits on a brown sofa in the administrative building of the defunct Youth Training School, a former youth prison in Chino.

could buy and world class trainers.

Espinosa wasn't completely immune to the realities of living at YTS, though; he recalled getting stabbed in the leg once after confronting someone who had tried to steal from his cell. It was the holiday season, and as the car he was being transported in to receive medical care passed by Christmas lights hanging in

front of people's homes he realized he had been away from his family for three years.

"I think it was my first week there when a guy got stabbed in his eye," Espinosa told Reeve in an interview shared alongside his photos of YTS. "His eyeball got ripped out. I don't remember who it was, but they were fighting, and he got stabbed in his eye, and



Eric Licas

PHOTOGRAPHER DAVID REEVE holds handcuffs and a logbook outside of the Heman G. Stark Youth Correctional Facility in Chino, also known as Youth Training School.

his eyeball landed right in

between my two feet." Despite everything happening at the correctional facility, Espinosa's boxing career flourished. He remained undefeated during his roughly four-year stint at YTS, culminating in a match against another boxer with a perfect record to decide the amateur light-heavyweight state championship. His opponent was

"the toughest guy I had ever fought," Espinosa said.

"After the first round, I knew I was winning," Espinosa said. "I was in the zone. I wanted that championship trophy. I was going for his head."

Special arrangements were made to allow his family into YTS, and they watched him win while sur-

See **History**, page A8

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Darkroom in Santa Ana develops a new kind of dining experience

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

Chef Zach Scherer is passionate about two things: food and music, which explains why his new Santa Ana restaurant, conceived with business partner and chef Drew Adams, is lit like a concert venue.

"Everybody has a favorite song and everybody has a favorite dish," said Scherer. "If a song comes on that I used to love, I can remember exactly what I was doing when I first heard it, and I feel like food is like that too. We wanted to create a place that celebrates that."

Scherer would like to see Darkroom become a place where Orange County diners can experience a new kind of dining that involves

quality, chef-driven food without the stuffiness of white tablecloths and a nearly silent dining room. While he said he can appreciate those experiences, they don't always work for everyday eating.

"The problem is that I don't always want to sit in a formal setting and have to whisper to my wife all night," Scherer said. "I want to be in a place where people are having great, interesting food but also listening to cool music and having a good time."

The space at 751 S. Harbor Blvd. is located in a strip mall, but once inside it is easy to forget you are next door to a Tommy Pastrami. Darkened windows and moody lighting with pops of red and purple feel

like a place you might come to for live music rather than a seasonal menu. A lounge area with leather couches and twin turntables is situated near an extensive vinyl record collection where guests can pull LPs from the stacks and set them in the pile to be played next. Art that incorporates rock stars like David Bowie line the walls, but at Darkroom the food is the headliner.

Scherer honed his craft at Santa Ana's Playground and most recently worked at Bello in Newport Beach, while Adams was executive chef at Outpost Kitchen in Costa Mesa before moving on to 370 Common and eventually also Bello. The bar program has an esoteric wine list and low-alcohol cocktails designed to pair

with the food, rather than get diners hammered, and the partners are working together to create the weekly revolving menu.

"It is going to be what we feel like making, first and foremost," said Scherer.

The menu takes cues from California seasonality, new Nordic restaurants and the chefs' personal tastes.

"If we keep it personal, we can't do it wrong," Scherer reasons.

The result is a menu that includes dishes like sweet hunks of Hokkaido scallops, or Japanese scallops, crowned on a light, crispy tostada and drizzled with marigold vinaigrette or steak tartare spiced with smoked onion and served with crackly black nori chips to craft a balanced



Courtesy of Darkroom

DARKROOM IN Santa Ana is lit like a music venue.

bite. Entrees include soft and flaky grilled trout and a hanger steak topped with a chili crunch and served with creamy shisito peppers, a dish that reads as Asian-inspired but somehow also tastes vaguely reminiscent of a chile relleno. It is a blend of flavors Scherer chalks up to California sensibilities.

"We have big Asian cultures here, we have big Hispanic cultures here. That is something I grew up with and that is like soul food for me," said Scherer.

Scherer notes that the steak dish is very "now" in the sense that the shisito peppers are in season and the ones used at Darkroom are sourced locally from the Ecology Center in San Juan Capistrano.

Darkroom will also be a home for Crysilis, the roving pop-up dinners Scherer spent the better part of last year hosting. A private dining room to the side of the front entrance will serve as

a space for the ticketed events, a backstage pass if you will, to a whole other dining experience separate from Darkroom. Tickets start at \$215, and the first available date is Oct. 3.

Either way, Scherer said he wants guests to feel like they get "a slice of today," meaning a unique experience that could only be achieved with today's ingredients, a currentness that he likens to live music.

"I always say when you go dine with chefs that really know what they are doing, it is like going to a concert. If you want to listen to music you have a CD, or at this point an MP3, that you could put on in your car," said Scherer. "But if you want to see a performer play then you go to a concert... and it is special because you were there that one time."

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Sarah Mosqueda

A SCALLOP TOSTADA at Darkroom in Santa Ana is served with Meyer lemon and marigold vinaigrette.

UCI Health

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

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RESCUE

Continued from page A1

County Fair & Event Center in Costa Mesa.

Friedrich returned to Saddleback Church and remained there in case the blaze jumped canyons but called it a night shortly before 10 p.m. after she was assured her volunteer services were no longer needed.

The following day, the winds shifted and the Airport fire, which was accidentally sparked by public works crews, spread toward Lake Elsinore in Riverside County, engulfing its hillsides in flames.

Rescue efforts in O.C. took a wait-and-see approach with the blaze, which, as of Thursday morning, burned through more than 23,000 acres before it started to be contained.

For Friedrich, who serves as president of Yorba Linda Country Riders, the Airport fire wasn't her first time ushering horses to safety. Since 2009, she volunteered



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

EVACUATED HORSES wear protective eye masks after being rescued from areas near the Airport Fire and moved to Serrano Creek Equestrian in Lake Forest.

for several fire rescues as a member of the county's Large Animal Response Team, or LART, which began in San Juan Capistrano.

But at the start of this year, San Juan Capistrano

city officials withdrew the team from countywide efforts, citing a dwindling roster of volunteers and a lack of adequate resources.

City officials warned that an alternative model was

"imminently necessary" and later bemoaned the county's lack of interest in taking over the program.

After the scale back, Friedrich, Marc Hedgepeth, who trained LART volun-

teers until 2018, and a dozen other equestrians from around O.C. started to organize.

They formed the Orange County Animal Response Team, which counts about 250 volunteer members.

The new group signed people up for a mass email list, met with Orange County Supervisor Don Wagner and held community meetings packed with equestrians in advocating for an official county animal response program by next year.

But the Airport fire — the first major wildfire to erupt in O.C. since LART's withdrawal — burned before that time.

The Orange County Animal Response Team was ready to mobilize the best it could.

"Our volunteers were great," Friedrich said. "The fires are coming. All we need is access and communication. We actually did pretty well with access on both days, but communication is still a problem."

Not knowing where to

turn, some residents desperately took to the Nextdoor app in affected areas like Rancho Santa Margarita and asked for horse evacuation help.

"We keep pushing for Orange County Animal Care to basically take us under their wing and let us do our work," Friedrich said. "That's the gap. If it's not going to be Orange County Animal Care, then who's it going to be?"

Under the old LART program, volunteers operated under the county's emergency chain of command and could not begin any animal evacuation efforts until a formal request was made.

Absent that organizational structure, Orange County Animal Response Team volunteers headed to staging areas without any official activation — and with quicker response times.

Once the horses being evacuated were ushered into trailers, volunteers

See **Rescue**, page A8

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forum

MAILBAG

Coastal Orange County elections worry readers

Who better than educators to represent us at the different levels of government? We have had plenty of attorneys, wealthy businessmen and even some actors. But for a fresh and often wholesome outlook, how about electing more teachers? At their best, they are positive, goal oriented and inspirational. We have been fortunate in Orange County to have two UCI college professors represent us, one in the California Senate and one in the House of Representatives. Both Dave Min and Katie Porter are very goal oriented and represented their districts in Orange County by bringing about significant change. Porter introduced a whole new way of aggressive governing by posing difficult questions to representatives of corporate America. Min proposed and passed major gun legislation. His bill, which was upheld by the courts, prohibits the sale of firearms or ammunition on state property, including 73 fairgrounds across the state

of California. Min faces a difficult race against Scott Baugh in the 47th Congressional District, which just might decide control of the House of Representatives. He was endorsed earlier this year by the Los Angeles Times. Surprisingly, on Sept. 9, The Times also had a lot to say about the race in the 45th District (which includes Fountain Valley) between Rep. Michelle Steel and Derek Tran. Tran is a small business owner and an employee-rights attorney. About the incumbent, Steel, The Times had few positive things to say. The editorial opinion states that "Rep. Michelle Steel may officially represent the district in northern Orange County, but her extreme-right values and occasional dishonesty make her a poor fit for her constituents." They speak of Derek Tran as "an excellent alternative." Another educator turned politician visited Orange County recently, vice-presidential candidate Tim Walz, who came shortly

after Donald Trump's visit. The two were seeking campaign contributions from wealthy fans. **Lynn Lorenz**
Newport Beach

Questionable tactics in H.B.

There seems to be no floor to the deceptive tactics of Republican candidates for local office in Huntington Beach. While the reactionary council majority has been busy assaulting our city's library system the entire year, their staunch supporters for City Council are trying to insinuate support for a library system they have repeatedly railed against. Placing HB3 signs for Don Kennedy, Chad Williams and Butch Twining next to Friends of the Library "support" signs is both disingenuous and deceptive. Trolling a community event last month candidate for city clerk Lisa Lane Barnes (a conservative and equally lacking in municipal experience save for being appointed by the council

majority), they reportedly sneered at FOTL volunteers collecting signatures for the petitions to protect our libraries. Some referred to their attitude as the "distaste of Huntington Beach." The true "library supporters" are, of course, incumbent council members Dan Kalmick, Natalie Moser, and Rhonda Bolton. A reported post from candidate Chad Williams claiming to "SUPPORT and LOVE our HB Libraries" is emblematic of this deception. They must think we are stupid! We should not be moving from "incumbent" to "endowment" when it comes to protecting this most precious of civic institutions.

Tim Geddes
Huntington Beach

As election season heats up, it's critical we pay close attention to the words and actions of candidates. Do they gaslight, misrepresent or lie about their actual positions and platform? Friends of the Huntington Beach Library recently issued a statement refuting the implication that they endorse City Council candidates Butch Twining, Chad Williams and Don Kennedy. Why? Because the self-named HB3 released a deceptive campaign video posing in front of the main library with an "I (heart) HBPL" sign, vowing to support and protect our libraries. These men have demonized the library and its librarians for months. Twining called the library "lousy." Williams rants about the highly acclaimed Japanese children's book "The Big Bath House" and insinuated that Councilman Dan Kalmick is a pedophile for reading it to



File Photos

VOTERS MAKE their way to the Costa Mesa City Hall voting center to cast their vote in November 2020.

his young daughter. Kennedy doesn't know the difference between selling the public library and outsourcing its management to a private entity. The council majority and City Atty. Michael Gates have divided our city with their culture wars. We don't need more of the same or worse. Without minority council members Dan Kalmick, Natalie Moser and Rhonda Bolton as a balance, citizens would have no window into what's going on; there would be no pushback against the outrageous agenda items, ordinances and resolutions routinely passed 4-3 by the council majority. The nonpartisan office of city clerk is also on the ballot. Candidate Regina Blankenhorn can be trusted when it comes to our elections, transparency and releasing information in accordance with the California Public Records Act. She has extensive municipal experience working with local city clerks and the Tustin City Council. Her opponent, Lisa Lane Barnes, is a realtor with no experience

other than as conservative Councilman Tony Strickland's representative on the Community & Library Services Commission, where she asserts the children's and teen sections of the library are rife with pornography. She campaigns with Gates and the HB3; endorsements are highly partisan. Please do your homework so you fully understand who and what you're voting for. Don't choose a candidate merely because you recognize their name from a campaign sign or mailer. You could be making a big mistake.

Michele Burgess
Huntington Beach

Like y'all, I just love late night comedy TV. Watching pundits skewer politicians is a guilty pleasure for a lot of us. Sadly, it's tarnished by the pricey nature of cable. But there is a nighttime indulgence that doesn't cost an extra penny: HDTV streaming of Huntington Beach City Council meetings. The Sept. 3 show delivered a belly full of laughs.

One top joke was when Councilman Tony Strickland came down full-throated, holy-righteous about the politicalization of the air show settlement by the minority council members. His finger jabbing, hand-waving accusations were priceless. He was outraged that they are questioning the majority's deal because it unnecessarily guarantees the private vendor, Pacific Airshows LLC, 40 years of exclusive commercial rights. And that the settlement will cost Huntington Beach taxpayers around \$30 million for the period of the agreement!

Strickland followed with an indignant one-liner. "... any long-term contract that the air show does has to come back to the City Council." Comforting hilarity? The council majority

See *Mailbag*, page A7

CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU ANSWERS

D	A	B		L	E	A	S	T		C	O	P	S	
E	M	U		J	A	V	I	E	R		O	B	I	T
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I	N	S	T	A	G	R	A	M		B	T	E	A	M
			E	D	U		S	A	A	R				
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I	M	I	N		D	O	T	T	E	D	L	I	N	E
S	A	R	I		G	O	O			G	R	A	N	
C	H	E	S	S	B	O	A	R	D		R	E	N	T
O	L	D	P	A	L		T	E	E		O	D	E	S
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L	O	C	A	L		L	O	L	L	I	P	O	P	S
A	H	O	Y		T	I	T	I	A	N		R	O	E
W	I	P	E		A	D	O	P	T	S		A	L	E
S	O	A	R		G	E	E	S	E		L	E	D	

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

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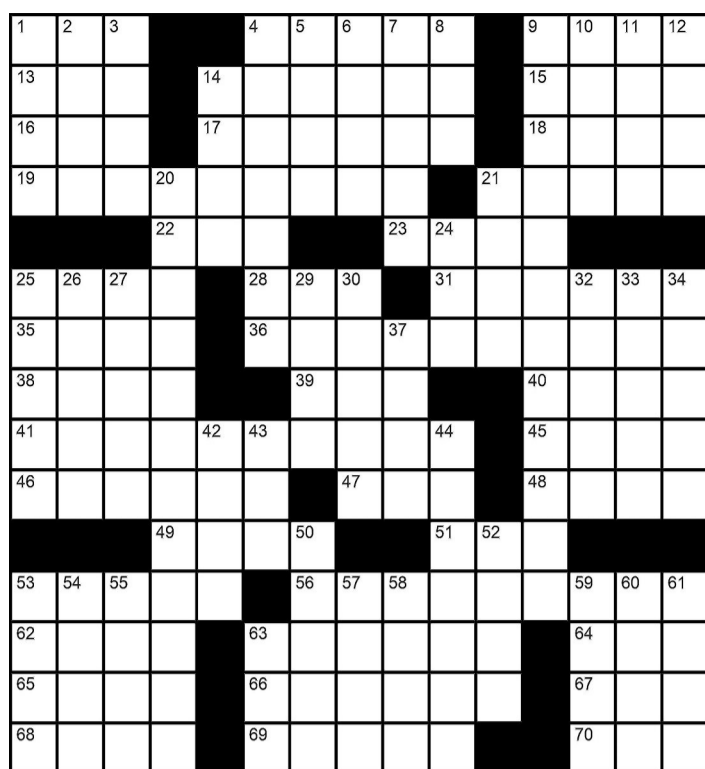
By Stella Zawistowski

ACROSS

- 1 Tiny portion of butter
- 4 Last but not _
- 9 Police officers
- 13 Fast-running bird
- 14 Actor Bardem
- 15 Death notice, for short
- 16 Chicken portion
- 17 Some time in the future: 2 wds.
- 18 Smelling organ
- 19 Picture-posting social media platform
- 21 Subs in sports
- 22 www.yale._
- 23 Moselle tributary
- 25 "Crap!"
- 28 "_ not going to be easy"
- 31 Financial gain
- 35 "Sounds good!": 2 wds.
- 36 Where to sign: 2 wds.
- 38 Draped garment
- 39 Slimy stuff
- 40 Nana
- 41 8x8 game surface
- 45 Lease
- 46 Longtime friend: 2 wds.
- 47 Casual top
- 48 Poems of praise
- 49 Lo-cal
- 51 Tallahassee school: Abbr.
- 53 From the area
- 56 Candy suckers
- 62 "Hi, sailor!"
- 63 Reddish-brown color
- 64 Fish eggs
- 65 Towelette
- 66 Takes in
- 67 Bitter beer
- 68 Fly high
- 69 Canadian birds
- 70 Was in charge

DOWN

- 1 Sandwich shop



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.

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

For answers to the crossword and Sudoku puzzles, see page A6.

- 2 "Hallelujah!"
- 3 Insects
- 4 Lacking in energy
- 5 At any time
- 6 Verdi opera
- 7 Baseball features
- 8 Attempt
- 9 Clinical trial component: 2 wds.
- 10 Wind instrument
- 11 Leaning Tower city
- 12 Flower stalk
- 14 "The Grapes of

- Wrath" name
- 20 Rafael Nadal, e.g.: 2 wds.
- 21 Poet of old
- 24 Gorilla, e.g.
- 25 '70s genre
- 26 "_ and the Night Visitors"
- 27 Stuck in mud
- 29 For takeaway: 2 wds.
- 30 Weasel type
- 32 Dismissed
- 33 Foolish
- 34 Camp shelters
- 37 Ripped
- 42 Go by ship
- 43 Crunchy sandwich
- 44 Let the air out of
- 50 Omit, as a vowel
- 52 Transgressions
- 53 Legal regulations
- 54 Toledo's state
- 55 Manilow's nightclub
- 57 Great Plains people
- 58 "Read my _!"
- 59 Spoken
- 60 Flag holder
- 61 Sesame bit
- 63 Chasing game

Tribune Media Services

MAILBAG

Continued from page A6

and the city attorney enthusiastically signed off on the legal settlement almost two years ago. And when Pacific Airshow sues some future city council over breach, will any court overlook that the first city settlement check for \$1,999,000 has already been cashed? And that checks for \$500,000 are payable every January until 2029? Or that the city is consummating another air show under the settlement in a few weeks?

Don't miss the HBTV comedy show every other Tuesday night. It's a scream. Literally.

Buzz McCord
Huntington Beach

When the Huntington Beach council majority and city attorney provide residents with bad information, it leads to poor decisions. The council has recently decided to privatize the library, approving a 21-member committee — composed of individuals 18 years or older — to determine which books will be included. These committee members will have no required training or qualifications, and their decisions are non-appealable. This is a clear example of how bad information results in bad decisions.

Parents are ultimately responsible for their children's upbringing, and no one has a greater stake in their future. It should be parents — not an untrained and potentially uneducated committee — who decide which books are appropriate for their children. The H.B. council itself reflects this problem, with some members lacking formal education.

We also know that privatizing the library will only reduce the services currently available. If saving money was the true goal, why did the council and city attorney approve a costly settlement with CODE-4, the air show

HOW TO GET PUBLISHED

Send an email to erik.haugli@latimes.com and include your full name, hometown and phone number (for verification purposes) with your submission. All letters should be kept to 350 words or less and address local issues and events. The Daily Pilot reserves the right to edit all accepted submissions for clarity, accuracy and length.

operators, essentially handing taxpayer money to them? This decision is as inappropriate as the recent ethical concerns surrounding a member of the Orange County Board of Supervisors passing privileges to a family member.

Andrew Einhorn
Huntington Beach

Make no mistake: Huntington Beach's new "Parent's Right to Know" ordinance is an attack on our community. Whether it was intentional or simply the latest example of this majority's rank incompetence, our community will be further divided, and the children of Huntington Beach will now be less safe because they have fewer advocates working on their behalf.

Every child benefits from having a trusted adult in their life. That adult can be a parent, a relative, a coach, a teacher, a law enforcement officer or sometimes just a trusted neighbor. Often, the identity of the adult matters little to a child seeking support.

Huntington Beach's new and intentionally vague ordinance targets would-be advocates for no other reason than being willing to help a child who cannot find the acceptance, mentoring and support they seek from home. We used to be a community that stood together and supported children in need. Parents, teachers, administrators, coaches and a host of concerned adults looked out not just for our kids but also for any kid struggling. While most parents could meet their child's needs, sadly, this

wasn't always the case. Some adults simply weren't up to the rigors of being a competent parent, and this reality prompted other adults — teachers, relatives, friends, coaches — to provide children with the understanding, empathy and guidance they could not get at home.

With this ordinance, H.B.'s council majority has now mindlessly and needlessly narrowed a child's options for finding support from a trusted adult in our community. Rather than fostering a community that supports and collectively cares for children in need, we now have an ordinance that promotes fear and targets the well-meaning.

I hope your culture war nonsense was worth it.

Steve Shepherd
Huntington Beach

The dangers of e-bikes are being ignored

Huntington Beach should follow San Clemente's lead (San Clemente moves to toughen up its e-bike rules beyond beachside bans, TimesOC, Aug. 21).

E-bikes should not be allowed on walking paths of Central Park nor beach paths. Children are riding recklessly fast where elderly and baby carriages are. Children are clueless to the rules of roads yet riding motorized bikes on the streets, often speeding and doing wheelies.

Huntington Beach officials have their heads in the sand.

Lynn Copeland
Huntington Beach



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HISTORY

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rounded by guards to protect them from other wards. Afterward, they all joined the warden for a steak and lobster dinner, a rare treasured memory out of almost four years of incarceration that Espinosa would otherwise prefer to forget.

He wound up handing the trophy over to the warden for safekeeping because it was a potential weapon. And Espinosa was so excited about getting released about six months later that he forgot to ask for it.

Espinosa continued boxing for a few more years and eventually moved on to start a family and a plumbing business. He and the rest of the world forgot all about the trophy until coming across Reeve's photos almost three decades later.

"I was there for almost four years, and that place was hell," Espinosa said. "It was hell. What went through my head was us having dinner with all of my family, my grandmother was there, my brothers and sisters. We're laughing and talking and passing around the trophy. I really felt like I was home. I did not feel like I was in prison for that 20 or 30 minutes."

SAVING UNTOLD STORIES

YTS was shut down in 2010 following years of reports of inhumane conditions and oppressive treatment in California's youth prisons. The closure came 14 years after the murder of one of the counselors working at the facility, Ineasie Baker.

Reeve had been driving by YTS almost every day for years on his commute from Brea to Chino without ever realizing the significance of the abandoned building or his own family's connection to it. After doing some research, he discovered that his grandfather had been a temporary warden at the



A VIEW FROM the outside of Youth Training School, a former youth prison in Chino.



David Reeve

TONY "THE TIGER" Espinosa holds a boxing trophy he won while incarcerated at Youth Training School in Chino that he left behind after his release 30 years ago.

youth prison, albeit only for a few weeks.

He reached out to the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation and hounded them for months. They eventually gave him permission to go into the dilapidated facility seven years ago to document what was inside.

Reeve had to wear a hazmat suit and respirator as he explored partially flooded rooms or navigated past collapsing ceilings and questionable staircases. Wherever he went, he encountered textbooks, billy clubs, classroom

desks, handcuffs and more evidence of the former Department of Juvenile Justice's complicated mission to both incarcerate and educate youth. Last summer, the state shut down its last two functioning youth prisons and handed over the task of locking up young offenders to county governments.

"My takeaway is that you're dealing with a highly complicated situation," Reeve said. "This isn't just good guys and bad guys. It's not as simple as black and white."

Former wards and staff started reaching out to

Reeve not long after he began publishing his photos online. The stories they shared with him include the account of a former YTS prisoner who went on to become a teacher at the facility after his release. Another documents the experience of Dr. Ashley Massimino, a psychologist at the prison who recounts masking her femininity while donning literal and figurative "armor" before each shift at the youth prison.

As of earlier this month, Reeve had shared as many as 18 accounts from people with some sort of connection to YTS, all told in the first person alongside images of the crumbling building. Aside from light editing for clarity, their words remain unaltered from their interviews with him, leaving the listener to make their own decisions about each narrator's trustworthiness.

"These stories have been very much sealed," Reeve said. "Previous to this project the only time you knew what was going on inside that institution was from a newspaper reporter or when the state would issue a report ... none of those would actually speak to the people who were there be-

cause they didn't have access to talk to a ward who had gone through a suicide attempt."

What began as an effort to sate Reeve's curiosity wound up becoming both an obsession and a calling for him. People are still reaching out to him recounting events that otherwise might be forgotten, and he aims to keep publishing interviews with them for as long as he can.

Others, like Espinosa, describe long-lost mementos that may or may not be hidden away at YTS. Reeve plans on hunting down these treasures, like a plaque honoring a fallen officer, and returning them to their rightful owners. He's also interested in expanding his mission by gaining access to other closed down prisons.

THE TROPHY

Espinosa's trophy was spotted in a room of the administrative building, but it didn't stay there. It wound up shuffling through the shuttered complex randomly as maintenance crews made their rounds. It took about six months of back and forth between Reeve, Espinosa and the CDCR before a worker who recalled handling it managed to retrace their steps and locate it.

Espinosa said little when the trophy was returned to him during a ceremony; he was too flooded with emotion to think clearly. And after everything he had done to earn and rediscover the memento, he was afraid to even lay hands on it.

"I was expecting the trophy to be like paper or something, and for it to not be real," he said.

But once it was placed into his hands, he didn't want to let it go. It's now one of Espinosa's most prized possessions, and he's building a special case for it so it'll be one of the first things people see when they walk into his home.

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RESCUE

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could count on a number of familiar places to stable them.

The Orange County Fair and Event Center worked with LART in the past to safely house horses and other large animals at the fairgrounds' equestrian center. With the Airport fire, fair officials coordinated with the Orange County Sheriff's Department for large animal evacuations and O.C. Animal Care for smaller ones.

As of Thursday morning, 92 horses were sheltered at the site.

"We continue to be a resource for the community as these emergencies progress and will do all that we can to make sure animals have safe shelter as long as needed," said Michele Richards, OC Fair's chief executive. "The OC Fair & Event Center is here to serve and we have the resources to help."

According to Rhyll, 46 horses were safely stabled at Serrano Creek Ranch on Thursday morning.

"Because we've doing this for so long, we have personal relationships with O.C. Animal Response Team members," said Rhyll, who is also a member. "We didn't have any contact with the Sheriff's Department or O.C. Animal Care. It was our personal relationship with haulers."

For all the successful animal evacuations carried out during the fire, the Orange County Animal Response Team remains steadfast in getting an official county program on board by 2025.

"We need to have insurance," Friedrich said. "If something happens to somebody, if a trailer crashes or a horse gets hurt, we don't want our volunteers being sued. We need an umbrella over us that insures our volunteers."

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