

## Plans for the Ranch advance

Unveiling of makeover at the O.C. fairgrounds' Equestrian Center comes at a bumpy time as some boarders sue.

BY SARA CARDINE

Orange County fairground operators Thursday unveiled plans for the Ranch — a makeover of the site's Equestrian Center that includes after-school programs, exhibits, private boarding and equine therapy — to the delight of board members wishing for a more public-facing facility.

But the road to fulfilling that happy vision may be a bumpy one, as two groups that board horses at the Costa Mesa site have filed a lawsuit over what they describe as “unconscionable” rental agreements, threats

See **Ranch**, page A4

## State adds key O.C. case to textbooks

Legislation requires public schools to teach landmark decision that outlawed education segregation in California.

BY GABRIEL SAN ROMÁN

Lessons about a landmark court case in Orange County that led to school desegregation in California will now be taught in the state's public schools.

On Sept. 20, Gov. Gavin Newsom signed AB 1805, a bill requiring Mendez, et al v. Westminster School District of Orange County, et al be included in the state's history and social science curriculum standards.

Starting on Jan. 1, the law directs a state commission to consider adopting new instructional

See **Case**, page A4



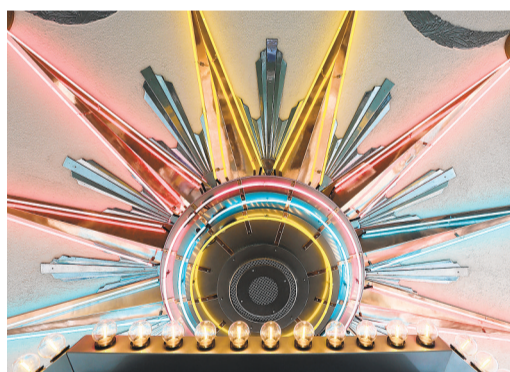
Photots by Don Leach | Staff Photographer

**GENERAL MANAGER** Ines Gandal stands in the lobby of the iconic Lido Theater. The movie theater originally opened in 1939 and maintains an air of Old Hollywood glamour with its Art Deco architectural details.



**AFTER BEING** closed for restoration, the iconic Lido Theater will reopen in time for this year's Newport Beach Film Festival.

**THE REFURBISHED** neon light marquee star at the iconic Lido Theater.



## Lido Theater is ready for its third act

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

**D**irector and producer Joseph McGinty Nichol, known professionally as McG, believes the best seat in the house at Lido Theater in Newport Beach is right in the center.

“I think that is the finest seat. That is where I like to sit, when I test [my own films],” McG said.

McG has had a successful career as a record producer and director of music videos and films like “Charlie's Angels,” “Terminator Salvation” and Netflix's “Uglies.” Now he's getting into another part of the entertainment industry with his company River Jetty Restau-

rant Group as the new operator of the iconic landmark Lido Theater. Carefully restored by the Fritz Duda Co., the theater will reopen in time for this year's 25th annual Newport Beach Film Festival.

McG is a Newport Beach native who frequented the theater as a teenager and credits it for inspiring him to pursue a career in entertainment.

“I grew up going to the Lido Theater, and I have tremendously fond and passionate memories about looking at worlds that were larger than my own on that glorious screen. It awakened a dream life in me and I never looked

See **Theater**, page A2

### ALSO FROM THE DAILY PILOT:



Sarah Mosqueda

**'OCVIBE UNVEILED'** SHARES A LOOK AT ANAHEIM'S FUTURE AS ORANGE COUNTY'S 'NEW DOWNTOWN' PAGE A5

**OLIVE CREST BREAKS GROUND ON O.C. APARTMENTS FOR TRANSITIONAL YOUTH IN NEED** PAGE A3

## Newport Rib Co. pays back for its 40th

BY ANDREW TURNER

There have always been those who believed that community came about by breaking bread together.

In the Newport-Mesa area, many might agree that it is a dish best served with a slab of ribs.

Newport Rib Co. marks its 40th anniversary in business next month, and to celebrate, the family-owned-and-operated eatery is prepared to give back to the community.

The restaurant will donate 20% of its dine-in and takeout checks to local and national charities from Oct. 1 through Oct. 20. The chosen charities benefit animals, children, health-related causes, veterans and more.

See **Rib**, page A10



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

**OWNER JOHN URSINI** will celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Newport Rib Co. with a “20 Charities, 20 Days” campaign at his longtime barbecue restaurant in Costa Mesa.



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# New Anaheim ethics officer outlines his role

BY GABRIEL SAN ROMÁN

In the wake of an ongoing FBI political corruption probe that halted the sale of Angel Stadium and led to a former mayor's conviction, Anaheim publicly introduced its new chief ethics officer for the first time.

Artin Berjikly, former senior commission counsel for the Fair Political Practices Commission, spoke briefly before the Sept. 24 Anaheim City Council meeting after his hiring was announced last month.

"I look forward to building on the good governance reforms that this council has put in place, as well as any additional reforms that we may consider," he said. "My role will be to provide legal counsel and guidance on best ethical practices and to advise on any potential conflicts of interest."

Berjikly's introduction by City Manager Jim Vanderpool did not appear on the agenda for the meeting. Because of that, council members could not ask him any questions in accordance with the state's open meeting laws.

But the chief ethics officer, who also carries the title of assistant city attorney, stated that he had privately met with Mayor Ashleigh Aitken and the rest of the council individually.

"It is common for the city manager to provide organizational updates during his



Screenshot by Gabriel San Roman

**CHIEF ETHICS** officer Artin Berjikly spoke briefly on Sept. 24 before the Anaheim City Council about his duties.

remarks, which are part of the agenda, and that can include the introduction of new staff," said Mike Lyster, an Anaheim spokesman. "This was a chance to introduce the ethics officer to the community, with the council members having already met with him one and one with the ability to ask questions and share thoughts."

TimesOC requested an interview with Berjikly after his hire and start date last

month, but city officials stated he was unavailable for comment as he settled into the job.

Before working for the FPPC, Berjikly served as legal counsel and a senior investigator for the Los Angeles Ethics Commission.

Settling into his new role, he lauded Anaheim's reform efforts as some of the "most advanced" in the state, during his comments before council.

Since the FBI probe pub-

licly surfaced in May 2022, council members have passed several reform measures in an effort to improve transparency and restore public trust.

Council members and city executives are now required to use city-issued phones to dissuade from the practice of using private devices to discuss city business. Council members also publicly post their meeting calendars online.

In one of the more sig-

nificant changes, Anaheim broadened the definition of lobbyists and their activities under an existing law. Disney employees have since registered as lobbyists.

A city-commissioned corruption report by the JL Group released last year urged city officials to hire an ethics officer to oversee political contributions, independent expenditures, political action committees, public record requests and event tickets handed by

council members while providing enforcement of lobbying laws.

In January, council members approved the hiring of the recommended position.

Berjikly, who is earning \$228,000 annually, noted at Tuesday's council meeting that Anaheim's lobbyist registry and reports fall within the scope of his authorities.

At the end of the council meeting, Mayor Aitken asked the city attorney's office for direction on how she and her colleagues are to engage with the ethics officer.

"Hopefully, issues will not arise," Aitken said, "but in the case that they do ... we [want to] have a proper protocol for how we should be interacting with our ethics officer going forward."

The mayor also asked Vanderpool for a review of the city's conflicts of interest policies.

Because of the stated progress of Anaheim's reforms, Berjikly claimed that his most pressing priorities at the onset of the job will be "continued oversight, guidance and review" of the city's ethics procedures.

"If the city were in a different place, as it was several years ago, my role could be different," he said. "Should that policing role again be necessary, I stand fully ready to address it."

gabriel.sanroman  
@latimes.com  
Twitter: @gsanroman2

## THEATER

Continued from page A1

back," McG said.

The Lido Theater was built in 1939 for \$110,000. It was designed by architect Clifford A. Balch, who was known for embracing the Art Deco style. At the time, Via Lido Plaza was owned by the Griffith Co., known for developing much of Lido Isle. The theater opened in October 1939 with "Hollywood Cavalcade," starring Don Ameche and Alice Faye.

In 1986, Fritz Duda Co. purchased the Via Lido Plaza and continues its stewardship. Over the years different theater operators were brought in, including Edwards and Regency Theaters until 2014 when Lido Live took over. But after just one year of trying to make the theater a live music and comedy venue, Regency was back.

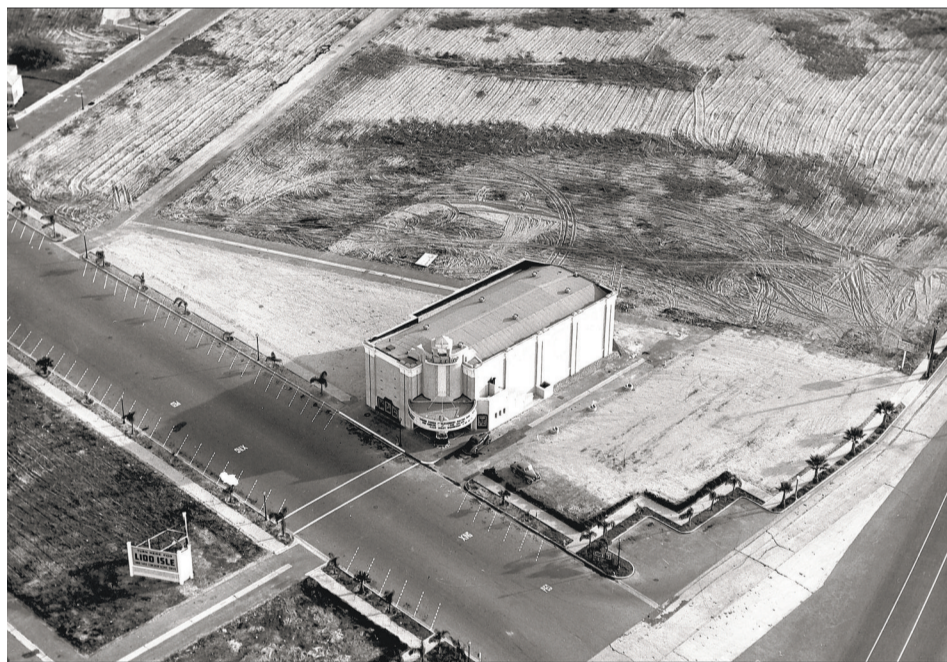
"It is very difficult to successfully operate a movie theater. Edwards was there, Regency was there ... the movie business is tricky," said McG.

In the fall of 2019, the theater closed for renovations and would remain closed for more than four years, partly due to pandemic delays. Now Lido Theater is ready to open for its third act.

The 8,974-square-foot theater has been restored to its original glory, starting with the box office, marquee and movie poster cases outside.

"Right when you walk in you can see the original booth for tickets is there, all the original lighting is there and all these tile floors are original, almost 100 years old," said Ines Gandal, Lido Theater's general manager.

More than 30 linear feet of hand-painted Catalina-style tile was restored in the restrooms and lobby. White, peach and turquoise tiles depicting Art Deco designs can be found in the lobby along with mahogany columns and doors. There is also a time capsule beneath an original floor tile.



Courtesy of the Sherman Library

**AN AERIAL VIEW** of the Lido Theater in Newport Beach in 1939.

A persistent urban legend often credits the Bette Davis film "Jezebel" as the opening film at Lido Theater. In actuality, Davis' film "The Old Maid" was the first regular showing at the theater on opening weekend, according to historians. Davis, a local resident when the theater was being built, remains tied to the theater because a sitting room was added to the women's restroom at her insistence.

"This was Bette Davis' fainting room when it opened," Gandal said, opening the door to the first floor women's restroom. "It is really special."

Wallpaper adorned with pink feathers lines the walls and pink tufted stools sit in front of the fully restored mirrors in the lavish sitting room.

Murals of underwater ocean scenes carry through the lobby and into the theater. Painters worked for almost a year using 30 different paint colors to restore the beach theme inside the two-story, single screen theater.

"The design style is a beach with the sand where the stage is with all the beige, and the greens go from light to dark blue all the way to the back bal-

cony where even the seats are blue," said Gandal.

On the second floor of the theater, 190 blue seats are found, while 330 burgundy seats fill the main level along with seven ADA wheelchair spaces. Irwin Manufacturing was tapped to make the new seats, using vintage molds from the 1930s to create the decorative aisle seat panels. The golden aviation goddess on the aisle seat panels is modeled after the same design used at the Howard Hughes Aero Theater in Santa Monica.

In terms of updated equipment, the theater has been outfitted with Dolby Digital Sound speakers, and a state-of-the-art Christie Xenon Cinema Projector hums upstairs in the projection room. McG plans to show first run and classic movies, but he also envisions the space being a hub for many events with a wide appeal — from live music and comedy performances to benefits and galas.

"I want to make it really fun and vibrant with great food, a great experience, and I want it to be the heart of the community. I want it to be a gift back to Newport Beach," said McG.

### IF YOU GO

See the restored Lido Theater for yourself at the Lido community open house, hosted on Saturday, Oct. 5, from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. The theater will also host films throughout the Newport Beach Film Festival from Oct. 17 to 24, including the closing night film "A Real Pain," starring Jesse Eisenberg and Kieran Culkin.

McG believes the newly renovated Lido Theater can be a great addition to the city.

"I think a theater makes a seismic difference because it is essential that people physically come to together and share a physical space," said McG. "We are more connected and yet more and more lonely than ever before and I think the theater is an offset and antidote to the loneliness and the isolation of social media."

The theater experience is a collective one that emphasizes our similarities and brings people together, he said.

"I mean, it is just more



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

**THE INTERIOR** of the renovated main auditorium at the Lido Theater, set to reopen in time for this year's Newport Beach Film Festival.



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

**ART DECO** goddess figurine aisle lights, taken from 1930s-style molds, were installed during restoration.



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

**A SITTING ROOM** was included in the Lido Theater's women's restroom at the insistence of actor Bette Davis, who was a local resident.

fun to watch "The Hangover" in a theater with a great many people laughing. It is more fun to watch "The Sound of Music" with a great many people singing than it is to

watch it by yourself. I just really believe in that shared experience."

sarah.mosqueda  
@latimes.com  
Twitter: @SarahNMos

# Olive Crest breaks ground on apartment project

BY MATT SZABO

Olive Crest, a West Coast-based nonprofit that works to prevent child abuse and family neglect, celebrated its 50th anniversary last year.

It wasn't just cake and ice cream. It was also about doing some forward thinking.

The first 50 years in existence, Olive Crest served about 250,000 children and families. The goal now is to get to 1.2 million by 2030.

"The board and us got together to celebrate the 50th anniversary, and we said, where are we going to go from here?" Olive Crest chief executive Donald Verleur said. "We took this audacious goal and said, what are the gaps? One of the gaps was youth housing."

Olive Crest is working to fill that need with a new project in Santa Ana.

It held a groundbreaking ceremony Tuesday for 16 apartment units adjacent to its Orange County headquarters on 4th Street. The goal is to prevent homelessness among transitional-aged youths in the foster care system.

"The first thing we have to do is provide stability," Verleur said. "That's food, clothing, a house. And then, from the trauma and the crisis that we've gone through, we can serve their emotional need through counseling and education. But stability is the first thing."

Each of the 16 apartments will have two bedrooms and shared bath, kitchen and living spaces.

The Orange County project also includes a renovation and expansion of Olive Crest's adjacent Children and Family Resource Center, Verleur said, including a new youth drop-in center.

The privately-funded \$18-million project is scheduled to open in winter 2025, officials said, with additional Olive Crest

apartment communities planned in Riverside, southeast Los Angeles, Palm Desert and Las Vegas. They're all part of a \$100-million capital campaign to expand essential services to children, families and young adults in California, Nevada and Washington.

Kerri Dunkelberger, executive director of Olive Crest for Orange County and San Diego, cited national statistics that show that 60% of kids leaving the foster care system will be homeless within the first year, and 20% of those will be homeless immediately.

"This avoids that, allowing them supportive housing," she said.

Project donors include RSI Dream Communities, the Crean Foundation, the Larry and Helen Haag Foundation and the Oltmans Foundation.

RSI Dream Communities was founded by Ron Simon, who started the Simon Scholars Program in 2003.

"Our kids didn't qualify [for the scholarships] because they didn't have a home," Verleur said. "He goes, 'They don't have a home? Let me build you one.'"

Jim Palmer is the president and chief executive of RSI Dream Communities, which has committed to funding construction of the apartments.

As someone who has fostered nine kids through Olive Crest and adopted three, he is also very familiar with both the nonprofit and the need for housing.

"The issue of housing is amplified in Orange County, because of the simple cost of it," Palmer said.

"Even those that are stable and employed have a really difficult time finding a place to live. So imagine a young person that's coming out of foster care or a group home with really no connections and no stable income. Where do they go? This is preventing them from going onto the street, and sort of bridging that



Photos by Don Leach | Staff Photographer

**OLIVE CREST** CEO Donald Verleur, board member Jill Wallace and Jim Palmer, president and CEO of RSI Dream Communities, break ground for new apartment homes in Santa Ana on Tuesday.

gap. Since Olive Crest has been around for 50 years, they've become good at finding the gaps that need to be bridged."

He added that the location is ideal because there are plenty of job opportunities in walking distance.

Santa Ana City Council member Jessie Lopez, who also attended Tuesday's ribbon-cutting, said that Olive Crest occupies a special place for her.

Born and raised in Santa Ana, Lopez said she worked two jobs to put herself through college at Cal State Long Beach. She was still housing insecure, sleeping on her college campus.

According to this year's Orange County Point in Time count, there were 308 transitional-aged youth ages 18 to 24 among the 7,322 homeless people countywide.

"It's really important that

we support these partnerships," Lopez said. "I understand how incredibly difficult these challenges are, especially when you hear a lot of negative rhetoric about the people on the streets that are just being swept altogether. When you hear that, it's very demoralizing. As we heard from some of the people that have benefited from these projects, if they didn't have this resource, they would be the ones sleeping next to a dumpster or on the street."

Seth Putnam, 25, counts himself as lucky that he avoided that circumstance.

Putnam, who spoke at Tuesday's ceremony, is an Olive Crest alumnus who now works as a phlebotomist at Providence St. Jude Medical Center and is also in nursing school. He spent about six years in Olive Crest's housing program before aging out.



**FORMER CLIENT** and Olive Crest success story Seth Putnam makes comments during Tuesday's groundbreaking.

"I didn't have anywhere to go when I turned 18," Putnam said. "Without this program, I pretty much would have been homeless. I feel like this is going to help a lot of people that are in that situation as well. You hit a certain age, and everybody kind of just thinks

that you're not trying hard enough, or it's all your fault that you're homeless. A lot of people just don't have anybody and they need something just to get somewhere."

matthew.szabo@latimes.com  
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Gina Ferazzi | Los Angeles Times

**A PICTURE OF** Gonzales and Felicitas Mendez hangs in the library at Mendez Intermediate School in Santa Ana.

## CASE

*Continued from page A1*

materials on the landmark case to be taught in classes.

Sylvia Mendez, who integrated the formerly all-white 17th Street School in Westminster as a student after the civil rights trial, applauded the move.

"I'm so happy that the governor signed the bill," she said. "The Mendez family has been working for this for over 20 years. It's been a long struggle for everybody who has helped, and we've finally completed our task."

Though lesser known, the Mendez case predated the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Oliver Brown, et al v. Board of Education of Topeka, et al*, which struck down school segregation in 1954 across the nation.

In the fight for an equal education, five Mexican American fathers filed a federal lawsuit in 1945 against school districts in Westminster, Santa Ana, Garden Grove and El Modena, an unincorporated area in Orange, that segregated Mexican children for decades.

Gonzalo Mendez, Sylvia's father, served as the lead plaintiff, after she and her brothers, Gonzalo, Jr. and Jerome, were barred from attending 17th Street School in Westminster and had to enroll at Hoover School, a segregated Mexican schoolhouse, instead.

The class-action suit represented 5,000 segregated Mexican pupils.

After a two-week bench trial in 1946, Judge Paul McCormick ruled in favor of the plaintiffs, a decision upheld by an appellate court the following year.

Two months after the appellate court's decision, California Gov. Earl Warren, who later served as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court during the Brown case, signed a bill into law that repealed remaining codes that allowed for school segregation, which made California the first in the nation to do so.

Inspired by the case's impact, a pair of O.C. lawmakers, Assemblyman Tri Ta (R-Westminster), and state Sen. Tom Umberg (D-Santa Ana) both represent cities central to the case and co-authored the bill requiring its statewide instruction.

"Future generations will learn about the case and understand that this is America where we will stand up for civil rights," said Ta. "Students will benefit from that."

Ta formerly served as Westminster's mayor when he and the Westminster

City Council voted to create the Mendez Freedom Trail and Monument in 2017.

Umberg helped secure \$1.5 million in state funding for the project and teamed with Ta on the new law, making it a bipartisan effort.

"It does demonstrate that we've come to a place where we share values," Umberg said. "I'm proud of the fact that we've done this in a bipartisan and bicameral way."

The bill also enjoyed the support of a wide array of groups including the California Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, California Charter Schools Assn., California State PTA and California Federation of Teachers.

For Mendez, the legislative victory comes 16 years after Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger vetoed a similar bill in 2008. At the time, he cited that the state should refrain from "being overly prescriptive" in mandating specific lessons.

Mendez and her sister, Sandra Mendez Duran, traveled to Sacramento this year to rally support for the bill's passage.

Its text states that the case marked the "beginning of the end of legal school segregation and signifies the important role of California in the civil rights movement, a role that should be both preserved and remembered."

The new law brings the history of the Mendez case full circle.

Mendez Duran attended U.C. Riverside as a student in 1969 when she stumbled across her parents' place in history for the first time when reading Carey McWilliams' "North from Mexico," a classic survey of Chicano history first published in 1949.

She called her mother, Felicitas, who was shocked that a book recounted the case.

"My parents used all their resources to fight the case and returned to Santa Ana with pretty much nothing," Mendez Duran said. "It was a little bit difficult for them."

Before Felicitas passed away in 1998, she told her children that she wanted the history of the case to be known.

"It became my legacy from that day on," Mendez said. "It was such an important case for everyone, not only for Latinos. My mother would be so happy that her request has finally been fulfilled."

gabriel.sanroman  
@latimes.com  
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File Photo

**SYLVIA MENDEZ**, right, and Sandra Mendez Duran speak at the grand opening of the Mendez Tribute Monument Park.

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## RANCH

*Continued from page A1*

of eviction and illegal actions by OC Fair & Event Center officials.

OCFEC Chief Executive Michele Richards shared plans and concept designs for what the reimagined 7.5-acre site might look and feel like during a regular board meeting Thursday.

She said the new space would help further the mission of the center, operating as California's 32nd District Agricultural Assn., of providing equitable access to agriculture along with entertainment, cultural and educational experiences.

"The Ranch is a place open to all in the community with programs that create a positive impact, highlighting equine, ranching and nature, promoting learning, wellness, health and joy through a variety of experiences," Richards told board members.

After-school programs will put kids in touch with horses, exhibits centered on ranching and agriculture, while Discovery Days will offer public tours with hands-on experiences. Officials are already in talks with youth programs like 4-H, Future Farmers of America and scouting groups.

Equine therapy will be offered on site in accordance with standards outlined by the Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Assn. (EAGALA), which also accredits therapists.

"We will only be partnering with organizations who have EAGALA-trained associates who use licensed therapists in order to ensure industry-best practices," Richards said.

Future programming may include offerings for veterans and partnerships with area law enforcement agencies' mounted units. The Ranch will also make room for private individuals and businesses wishing to board horses and offer



Courtesy of the OC Fair &amp; Event Center

**AN ARTIST'S RENDERING** of the Ranch, a reimagining of the O.C. fairground's Equestrian Center that includes public exhibits, after-school programs and equine therapy.

lessons and activities on site.

While 25 tenants have signed new contracts to board 32 horses at the fairgrounds, nearly a dozen previous occupants, who board a combined 17 horses, have refused to accept the rent hikes and re-

vised agreement.

Two among that camp — equine therapy nonprofit Changing Strides, co-owned by Lisa Sabo, and OC Equestrian Vaulting, founded by Gibran Stout — are plaintiffs in an Aug. 30 lawsuit filed against the OC Fair & Event Center.

They allege their longstanding harmonious relationship with the center abruptly ended in 2023, when OCFEC assumed operation of the Equestrian Center from a third-party entity and entered into a \$1.8-million contract with a Laguna Hills street-sweep-

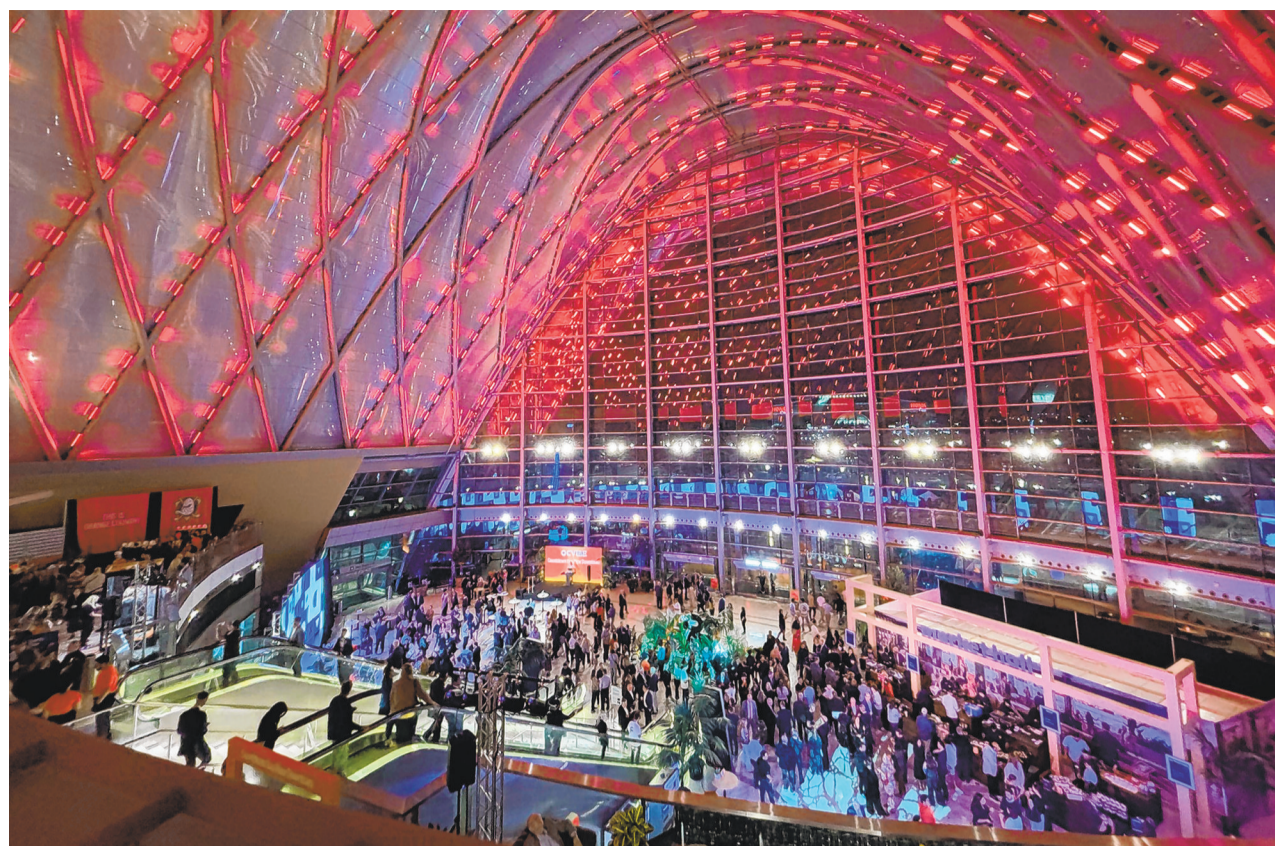
ing business for stall cleaning, feeding and maintenance that caused a budgetary shortfall and, consequently, a rent hike for boarders.

When some equestrians refused to re-up under the new terms, suggesting the center instead seek a more affordable vendor, they were eventually given 30 days to comply or leave. Richards refused to accept edited agreements and also rejected checks in the amount of the previous, cheaper rent.

Horses belonging to the holdout tenants are now being denied use of arenas and other needed exercise areas, which plaintiffs claim is harmful to the animals' physical health. They say Richards must seek a court order if evictions are to follow.

"This 'take it or leave it' approach deprives tenants of the ability to negotiate crucial terms of the lease and is unconscionable,"

See **Ranch**, page A5



Photos by Sarah Mosqueda

**OCVIBE** will be built around the Honda Center and ARTIC, which is open for transit and private events, in Anaheim.



**OCVIBE's** "countdown to a new downtown" event at Anaheim Regional Transportation Center took place on Sept. 25.

# A tantalizing glimpse of Anaheim's future vibe

**BY SARAH MOSQUEDA**

Pop hits echoed through the Anaheim Regional Transportation Intermodal Center on Wednesday evening while guests moved through interactive experiences like yoga in the wellness corner, art demonstrations by an AI robot and drinks flowing from the tequila bar, and digital screens presented renderings of idyllic parks and public use space. The flurry of activity was designed to give guests a small sampling of what a night out at OCVibe will feel like.

OCVibe is a \$4-billion redevelopment project backed by Henry and Susan Samueli that will stretch across nearly 100 acres of immersive entertainment, housing and mixed-use space in Anaheim.

"OCVibe is a one-of-a-kind destination for sports and entertainment," said Morell Marean, chief operating officer at OCVibe. "But what makes it special is our district will really be a place that becomes a new downtown for Orange County."

OCVibe will be built around the existing Honda Center and the ARTIC, which is open for transit and private events now. Wednesday's event, "OCVIBE Unveiled: Countdown to a New Downtown," brought the Samuelis, Anaheim Mayor Ashleigh Aitken and OCVibe leadership including chief executive Bill Foltz and Marean out to make announcements about food and entertainment coming to the district, including the reveal of two major tenants.

A Restaurant, a dining concept from River Jetty Restaurant Group partners, Joseph "McG" Nichol and Jordan Otterbein will join OCVibe's Restaurant Row. This news comes on the heels of River Jetty Restaurant Group becoming the new operator of the recently restored Lido Theater in Newport Beach. More dining options will be available at the two-story Market Hall, which will be home to 21 chef-driven

concepts, six bar and lounge areas and three private event spaces.

Additionally, OCVibe will revive an iconic music venue, the Golden Bear. Open in Huntington Beach from 1966 to 1986, the spot hosted rock 'n' roll legends like Janis Joplin, Bob Dylan and the Doors. The new Golden Bear will be an intimate 300-capacity venue designed to emulate the original's folk music club roots.

"Music and entertainment is so important to what we are doing here, and the Golden Bear was such an iconic center for that in the history of Orange County music," said Marean. "It will be fantastic to see that really special place come back to life here at our property."

The OCVibe will be completed in several phases, with the goal to start welcoming guests in 2026. In 2025, two multi-level parking garages are slated to open followed by the opening of Market Hall, a 5,700-seat concert hall and public park space opening the next year. In 2027, the Golden Bear and another small music venue will open and by 2028 more public parks will be open, along with the first of two hotels. A pedestrian bridge connecting the ARTIC to Honda Center is also part of the long-term plan.

"There is a major housing component as well," Marean noted. "We are entitled for 1,500 multifamily residential units, and 15% of those will be set aside for affordable housing."

Housing is part of OCVibe's final phase planned for 2029 and will help create the new downtown Orange County. Marean said the project's team sees in Anaheim's future.

"It is important to us that OCVibe really reflect the strong diversity of Orange County and of Anaheim," said Marean. "There is really something here for everyone."

sarah.mosqueda@latimes.com  
Twitter: @SarahNMos

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

## RANCH

Continued from page A4

the document states. Plaintiffs further allege OCFEC board members violated the state's Bagley Keene Act — a state law requiring open meetings and guiding their operation — by limiting public comments and failing to properly inform the public of agendized discussions.

The lawsuit also questions the integrity of the board's bidding process and past votes on equestrian contracts. It further contends some members are out of compliance with state laws regarding training and attestations required for directors to retain their seats.

"Therefore, these board members' terms have expired, and the board was not authorized to terminate tenants' contracts or engage in the other actions regarding their tenancies," concludes the document, prepared by attorneys from



Eric Licas

**GIBRAN STOUT** and horse Finn participate in a demonstration at Costa Mesa City Hall in April in protest of increased horse boarding fees at the Orange County Fairgrounds.

Los Angeles-based law firm Sheppard Mullin.

Anna McLean, an attorney representing the

equestrians, submitted a letter to OCFEC outlining the alleged violations and concerns that plans for the

Ranch were advanced without proper description and therefore preventing the public from partici-

ating in the discussion.

"It also appears, based on marketing materials already erected on site and as presented at this meeting, that the board has already determined it would approve the Ranch concept," McLean said Thursday. "It shows the board did not engage in the proper deliberation in a public forum."

Board members disagreed, saying they'd already approved main elements of programming at the Ranch in January, and then changed Thursday's discussion from an action item to an informational one.

Directors uniformly lauded the projects and partnerships described by Richards.

"I am sitting down on the outside, but I am standing up on the inside to see that presentation and how our staff takes our outward thoughts ... and brings that vision to life," said Director Barbara Bagneris. "I'm totally impressed, I'm totally

thrilled — I can hardly contain myself."

Development of the Ranch is already underway. After-school programs will begin next month and new equine-assisted therapy offerings slated for November, along with budgeting for the facility and programming changes and developing exhibits, according to Richards's timeline.

But even as the legal proceedings march forward, with a case management conference scheduled for May 12, 2025, equestrians are expressing hope that the two parties may collaborate on future programming at the fairgrounds.

"I know there's been a lot of tension going on," Stout said in public comment Thursday. "But, regardless, we want you to know we're here and we share your excitement to expand programming, to really build on what's being presented."

sara.cardine@latimes.com  
Twitter: @SaraCardine

forum

A WORD, PLEASE  
JUNE CASAGRANDE

# Legalese is a thing, even when it doesn't come from lawyers

Early in my career as a newspaper reporter, a colleague used the word "detritus" in an article. Our editor changed it to "trash."



Apparently, the entire legal profession begs to differ. Legal writing is famously inscrutable and inaccessible — especially fond of long parenthetical ideas shoved in the middle of sentences. And according to a recent study, their reader-unfriendly prose is contagious.

"That's a 10-dollar word," the editor said. "We use nickle and dime words here."

I had never thought about plain language before. But over the years, the seeds planted by that one brief exchange grew into a deeper understanding of written communication — especially communication that aims to inform the public. When the writer is bent on sounding authoritative, smart, fancy, he's shortchanging the reader. Highfalutin language makes the story about the author — "Look how smart I am" — when it's supposed to serve the reader by making the information as accessible as possible.

"Legal documents are largely incomprehensible to lawyers and laypeople alike," write the authors of a study published this summer. In other words, nobody — not even lawyers themselves — can easily slog through their stuff. Yet they keep cranking out sentences like this gem I found online: "I am herewith returning the stipulation to dismiss in the above entitled matter; the same being duly executed by me."

In my books and columns, I sometimes take badly written passages and show how they could have been better. No can do this time. You can't streamline a passage if you don't know what it says. Bravo, returner

See *Word*, page A8

PASTOR'S PERSPECTIVE | REV. PAUL E. CAPETZ



CHRISTY HERNANDEZ of Saints Simon & Jude Catholic Church performs during the 14th annual Blessing of the Waves ceremony at the Huntington Beach Pier.

File Photo

# Religious diversity is a foundation of the nation

As we gear up for our next national election and those here in Orange County this November, and seeing flags and bumper stickers locally for competing viewpoints everywhere I turn, it behooves all of us to reflect anew on the meaning of "democracy" and what is at stake in its preservation. Our democratic form of government is a precious inheritance bequeathed to us by the founders of our nation and its future should not be taken for granted. Like everything historical, its meaning can only be preserved by those who

understand its importance and are committed to its continuation and furtherance. But sadly, there are two aspects of our culture that work against a genuine understanding of democracy and thus undermine commitment to the values enshrined in our Constitution. These are anti-intellectualism and historical amnesia. The former belittles the role of ideas in our common life and thus discourages serious discussion of them. The latter is ignorant of the past that has shaped our nation. Yet there is not only widespread igno-

rance of American history but also deep resistance to teaching the truth about our nation's origins and the revolutionary ideas that made our nation unique. Responsible citizenship requires that we know our history well enough to understand the ideas that gave birth to our democracy and still undergird it. Otherwise there can be no genuine patriotism worthy of the name.

I offer these reflections not only as an American citizen who believes in democracy and the freedoms it makes possible but also as a Christian

minister since these days so much of the anti-intellectual historical amnesia that threatens the future of our democracy is heard on the lips of Christianity's most vocal public representatives. I refer to the leaders of that movement called "the Religious Right" or "Christian nationalism" which has grown in influence since the 1980s. Its proponents explicitly seek political power for the purpose of legally establishing their own brand of fundamentalist-evangelical religion. Their religious-political

See *Capetz*, page A7

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**Legal Notices**  
**CITY OF COSTA MESA NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING**

**NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN** that a public hearing will be held by the Costa Mesa City Council at its regular meeting at City Hall Council Chambers, 77 Fair Drive, Costa Mesa, California on **Tuesday, October 15, 2024 at 7:00 P.M.**, or as soon as possible thereafter as the matter shall be heard, to consider:  
A resolution establishing and adopting fees related to the Bee Keeping Ordinance No. 2024-12. Pursuant to Government Code Section 66016, data and analysis indicating the estimated fees required to comply with the Bee Keeping Ordinance will be made available on or before September 30, 2024. Copies of the fees data and analysis can be obtained during normal business hours at City Hall, 1st Floor, City Clerk's Office, 77 Fair Drive, Costa Mesa and on the City's website at: [PublicNotices | City of Costa Mesa \(costamesaca.gov\)](http://PublicNotices.CityofCostaMesa.com)  
**Public Comments:**  
Members of the public wishing to participate in the meeting may find instructions to participate on the agenda. Members of the public may also submit written comments via email to the City Clerk at [cityclerk@costamesaca.gov](mailto:cityclerk@costamesaca.gov) and they will be provided to the City Council, made available to the public, and will be part of the meeting record. Any written communications, photos, or other materials for copying and distribution to the City Council that are 10 pages or less, can be e-mailed to [cityclerk@costamesaca.gov](mailto:cityclerk@costamesaca.gov), submitted to the City Clerk's Office on a flash drive, or mailed to the City Clerk's Office. Kindly submit materials to the City Clerk **AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE, BUT NO LATER THAN 12:00 p.m.** on the day of the hearing, **October 15, 2024.** All materials, pictures, PowerPoints, and videos submitted for display at a public meeting must be previously reviewed by staff to verify appropriateness for general audiences. No links to YouTube videos or other streaming services will be accepted, a direct video file will need to be emailed to staff prior to each meeting in order to minimize complications and to play the video without delay. The video must be one of the following formats, .mp4, .mov or .wmv. Only one file may be included per speaker for public comments. Please note that materials submitted by the public that are deemed appropriate for general audiences will not be redacted in any way and will be posted online as submitted, including any personal contact information. For further assistance, contact the City Clerk's Office at (714) 754-5225. The City Council agenda and related documents may also be viewed on the City's website at <http://costamesaca.gov>, 72 hours prior to the public hearing date. **IF THE AFOREMENTIONED ACTION IS CHALLENGED IN COURT,** the challenge may be limited to only those issues raised at the public hearing described in the notice, or in written correspondence delivered to the City Council at, or prior to, the public hearing. Brenda Green, City Clerk, City of Costa Mesa  
Published September 29, 2024 and October 6, 2024

**MAILBAG**  
Election thoughts and more from readers

**L**eah Ersoylu is the incumbent running for Newport-Mesa Unified School District Trustee Area 1 in Costa Mesa, and newbie Robin Mensinger is running as her opponent. My school-age granddaughters and I live in Area 1 and have been grateful for Ersoylu's service. I will be voting for her again.  
Incumbent Ersoylu is qualified to be Area 1 NMUSD Trustee. She has been a Costa Mesa resident for 20 years, building both her business and family here. She has served on several city and county commissions and committees. As a trustee she has been a strong fiscal steward of NMUSD, increased electives at TeWinkle Middle School, ensured math

curricula alignment kindergarten through 12th grade, supported the Estancia Theater project, voted for stricter cellphone policies and supported e-bike education and enforcement.  
Both Ersoylu and her opponent were asked if they support Moms for Liberty, which is a far-right organization that pushes book banning, opposed mask wearing during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, is opposed to all manner of LGBTQ+ issues, has voiced support for Project 2025 and has endorsed Trump. Ersoylu said she does not support this group, but her opponent has not responded to two confirmed requests for comment.  
Ersoylu's newbie opponent has no direct applica-

ble experience, and I am concerned that her opponent has a hidden agenda and is just going to be a parrot for Moms for Liberty and its extreme views. Vague statements in her candidate statement like "parental rights" and the endorsement from the extremist Mari Barke are consistent with my concern for a hidden agenda.  
I will be voting for incumbent Leah Ersoylu for NMUSD Area 1 Trustee and encourage all Area 1 voters to do the same.  
**Margaret Mooney**  
Costa Mesa

**A proposal for H.B. City Council**

Since the Huntington Beach City Council may have taken actions which did not comply with existing laws (such as voter ID, failure to passing a housing element etc.), I made a recommendation during the public comments section of the Sept.17 council meeting describing/requesting procedures to be adopted for all future City Council actions.

My recommendation calls for any member of the City Council to request/obtain a written opinion from the city attorney as to whether the proposed action complies with federal, state or local laws. This response from the city attorney must be reported at the City Council meeting with a yes or no answer.  
I further suggested that if the proposed item does not comply with all laws, the proponent(s) of the motion must present a reasonable estimate of the fines/penalties that the city could be charged if the motion is passed and a reasonable estimate of the cost, including staff time, that it would take to defend and implement this action. This proposed action could not proceed without these estimated costs being presented in writing to the City Council.  
By adopting these procedures, the residents of Huntington Beach would be able to evaluate whether the City Council and city attorney are making decisions that comply with

See *Mailbag*, page A7

**Richard Bushnell**  
March 6, 1930 - September 7, 2024  
Richard "Dick" Bushnell was born on March 6, 1930, in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. The oldest of seven children, he grew up during the Great Depression, learning resourcefulness and a strong work ethic from his parents, Charlie and Marie. A talented gardener, Dick inherited his father's green thumb, a passion he carried throughout his life.  
Dick attended the University of Iowa, and completed his business degree at California State University Long Beach, after service in the Navy. He worked for the 3M Company, where he dedicated 37 years in the print division.  
In 1955, Dick married Martha Jane Osgood, and together they raised three children. They were active members in their local church and community. Dick contributed in various roles with involvement in his sons' Boy Scout troop, church choir member, city government, and as a booster club supporter for various athletic teams.  
Known for his quiet strength, integrity, and unmatched work ethic, Dick was a true friend. His calm demeanor made him a favorite among pets and people alike. He loved traveling, from family road trips to adventures worldwide. A craftsman at heart, he found joy in building and creating, always ready to help with projects big or small. His life embodied loyalty, kindness, and a solid foundation upon which his family and community could rely.  
Dick was preceded in death by his beloved wife, Marly, and other dear family members. He is survived by his children, Cathy, Craig, and Chris, and their families, including 13 grandchildren, and 12 great-grandchildren.  
A Celebration of Life service will be held at Shepherd of the Hills Methodist Church, Mission Viejo, CA at noon on Friday, October 18. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Assistance League of Garden Grove (10932 Trask Avenue, Garden Grove, CA 92843).

**Daily Pilot**  
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**CONTACT US**  
**Carol Cormaci**  
Executive Editor  
[carol.cormaci@latimes.com](mailto:carol.cormaci@latimes.com)  
**Beth Raff**  
Advertising Manager  
(424) 225-9928  
[beth.raff@latimes.com](mailto:beth.raff@latimes.com)  
10540 Talbert Ave., Suite 300 West, Fountain Valley, CA 92708  
Reporters:  
**Sara Cardine**, Costa Mesa  
[sara.cardine@latimes.com](mailto:sara.cardine@latimes.com)  
**Eric Licas**, Newport Beach  
[eric.licas@latimes.com](mailto:eric.licas@latimes.com)  
**Sarah Mosqueda**, TimesOC  
[sarah.mosqueda@latimes.com](mailto:sarah.mosqueda@latimes.com)  
**Gabriel San Román**, TimesOC  
[gabriel.sanroman@latimes.com](mailto:gabriel.sanroman@latimes.com)  
**Matt Szabo**, Huntington Beach and Sports  
[matthew.szabo@latimes.com](mailto:matthew.szabo@latimes.com)  
**Andrew Turner**, Laguna Beach and Sports  
[andrew.turner@latimes.com](mailto:andrew.turner@latimes.com)  
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## MAILBAG

Continued from page A6

existing laws and are making decisions in a fiscally responsible manner.

All members of the City Council and the city attorney must be accountable for their actions.

**Ken Inouye**  
Huntington Beach

### Current H.B. Council majority is divisive

The current Huntington Beach City Council majority has become more known for creating division than fostering unity. They have backed misguided positions on issues irrelevant to our city, often involving other states and countries, while wasting taxpayer money on a questionable Pacific Airshow settlement.

We need leaders who prioritize Huntington

Beach's best interests — not those who engage in needless litigation against the state of California just to appear tough.

Our leaders should be focused on serving the people of Huntington Beach, not advancing personal or political agendas. While some candidates focus on problems, true leaders focus on solutions. We need representatives who stand up for everyone, not just a select few like Pacific Air Show operator Code 4.

The city has enlisted the support of America First Legal — a foundation led by longtime former President Trump adviser Stephen Miller that bills itself as the “long-awaited answer to the ACLU” — to support its frivolous lawsuit. This suit argues that Huntington Beach's recently passed “Parents' Right to Know” ordinance, which conflicts with AB 1955, is justified.

However, this ordinance

makes it illegal for educators to withhold information about a student's gender identity or sexual orientation from parents. The Huntington Beach City Council does not have jurisdiction over schools, and AB 1955 is not unconstitutional. Yet, City Atty. Michael Gates — whose term runs through 2026 — has filed another lawsuit which could be seen as stoking cultural division, targeting the LGBTQ+ community for political gain.

This council majority's approach is not normal, and we can do better. It's time for a shift in attitude and leadership — restoring common sense to our city's governance. This majority has also repeatedly spread misinformation about illegal voting without providing any evidence.

Across Orange County, California and the nation people are watching, and many are mocking this divisive, misguided leadership that prioritizes litiga-

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tion over real solutions. Huntington Beach has a proud history, and now is the time to unite. We stand for ideals and the freedom to be ourselves. Let's restore that pride and come together for the future of Huntington Beach.

**Andrew Einhorn**  
Huntington Beach

We are only a couple weeks away from ballots being dropped for the November election and only a few weeks after that until Election Day.

In both the presidential election and the down ballot races, partisanship should mean less than

honesty, competency and transparency. That will mean Kamala Harris will win the state of California easily aside from an edge in party registration. In Orange County, the same rules should apply. In watching my first Scott Baugh for Congress television ad soft-soap his image to a squeaky clean despite decades of ruthless partisanship and objectionable behavior, I couldn't help but notice other Republicans with ethical, honesty or transparency issues (Janet Nguyen and Andrew Do in my district come to mind) try to use the remaining weeks to “rehabil-

itate” their images. Massive amounts of money from big donor sources will attempt to accomplish this feat. Massive amounts are being spent to smear Democrat candidates like Dave Min as well. They feel that the best defense is a really offensive offense. This time around the electorate may not be so easily fooled.

In Huntington Beach, the supposed nonpartisan offices of City Council and city clerk have been victimized by well-funded Republicans who have made their own rules about campaign financing and partisan pressure. They are trying to create their own MAGAtocracy in Surf City. If they are successful, it will impact things districtwide and create lasting friction, litigation and drama over the next few years.

Voters must decide if tribal trumps truthful or if

See **Mailbag**, page A8

## CAPETZ

Continued from page A6

agenda rests upon the historically false belief that the United States was founded as an officially “Christian” nation based upon “biblical principles.” This movement imperils the freedom of religion not only of non-Christians but also of all Christians who dissent from its religious-political agenda. And freedom of religion is central to the meaning of democracy. I thus find myself in the seemingly odd position of being *both* a professional leader of a Christian church (the United Methodist Church, which is the third largest American denomination after Catholics and Southern Baptists) *and* an opponent of any attempt to establish my religion as the official religion of our nation.

When the Pilgrims came to our shores, they sought religious freedom for themselves as dissenters from the Church of England, which was the official religion of the nation they had left behind. Hence, their dissent was that of a minority of Christians opposed to the majority of Christians in England who had their nation's legal and political power behind them. With such power at their disposal, the majority could coerce the minority to embrace its beliefs by threatening either exile or execution. The story of the

Pilgrims and their reasons for coming to this continent should stand as a constant reminder of what it means to be a persecuted religious minority. But these refugees from religious persecution had no interest in guaranteeing the religious freedom of any other Christians who disagreed with them! That is why colonial New England ended up being as intolerant of religious diversity as the England of old. The historic significance of Rhode Island, led by the Baptist dissenter Roger Williams, was that it was the first American colony to enshrine real freedom of religion. Williams advocated for a “hedge or wall of separation” between church and state since both, he believed, could easily be corrupted through their alliance. He was surely right about this. The historical record bears him out.

When the United States was created in 1776, our Founding Fathers made a deliberate decision that this nation would *not* be an officially Christian nation, which made it unlike all the nations of Europe that had a state church. By definition, the United States does not have any official religion at all. This is what it means to say that our democratic form of government is secular, not religious. Indeed, this freedom of religion from governmental

interference is what made the United States the first truly “modern” nation in Western history. But religious freedom does not mean that our nation is anti-Christian or anti-religious. Quite the contrary! This freedom allowed each distinct variety of Christianity to flourish on this continent, Catholic as well as Protestant. It also made America a safe haven for Jews who had been subject to persecution in the officially Christian nations of Europe. The corollary of this freedom of religion, however, is the commitment of all of our citizens of whatever religion to refrain from efforts to impose their own religion upon the nation as a whole by making it the official religion.

These utterly crucial ideas gave birth to our nation and made it the world's paradigmatic democracy. Responsible citizenship requires accurate knowledge of our history and appreciative understanding of the necessarily reciprocal relationship between freedom of religion and democracy. As both an American and a Christian, therefore, I support democracy because I believe in the freedom of religion that only a democratic form of government can protect.

**REV. PAUL E. CAPETZ** is the head pastor at Christ Church by the Sea in Newport Beach.

## CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU ANSWERS

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Charlotte Butler Skinner, *Rocks*, date unknown, Oil on board, 13 x 15 in. Collection of the Nevada Museum of Art, bequest of John A. White, Jr., in memory of Charlotte Skinner's grandson, James Skinner.

## End of the Range: Charlotte Skinner in the Eastern Sierra

October 5, 2024 – January 18, 2025

Exhibition on view at:  
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Explore the artistry of Charlotte B. Skinner (1879-1963), renowned for her vibrant depictions of California's Sierra Nevada and Owens Valley desert country. This exhibition, organized by the Nevada Museum of Art, has been generously supported by John A. White, Jr., in memory of Charlotte Skinner's grandson, James Skinner.

Free Gallery Talk with curator Kolin L. Perry on October 5 at 11 am

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**UCI** Jack & Shanaz Langson Institute & Museum of California Art

## MAILBAG

Continued from page A7

competency is trumped by the opposite. Do we want problems solved, issues addressed and constituents served, or do we settle for what the partisan winners actually provide? Roman rulers tried to distract from their autocratic actions with a “bread and circuses” approach. Local leaders are trying to do the same with a “bash Sacramento” approach that actually costs big bucks at taxpayer expense.

The bottom line is don't be fooled, don't be frightened and don't stand for being misinformed. Yes, elections have consequences, but we shouldn't have to put up with the wrong ones. Only making informed and unbiased choices can guarantee the best outcomes.

**Tim Geddes**  
Huntington Beach

### In support of Bolton, Kalmick and Moser

Huntington Beach voters should be aware that Measure U has nothing to do with the Huntington Beach Public Library, and that the true supporters of the library are Rhonda Bolton, Natalie Moser and Dan Kalmick.

There are campaign signs located throughout Huntington Beach that say “Save the Library” directly above “Yes on Measure U.”

This is a deceptive ploy to trick people into voting in favor of Measure U, which is the fourth Charter Amendment proposed by the council majority.

The three candidates for City Council who refer to themselves as the “HB-3”, Chad Williams, Butch Twining and Don Kennedy are closely aligned with the council majority and are not true supporters of our public library.

Huntington Beach voters may recall some of the campaign rhetoric of the council majority which included “No more charter amendments” and “transparency.”

Two of three charter amendments proposed by the council majority passed in March of 2024. The first amendment to commence in 2026 requires voter ID, provides more in-person voting locations and allows for monitoring ballot drop boxes. The second amended placed limitations on which flags can be displayed by the city on city property. The third proposed charter amendment to move to a two-year budget process under the guise of “more transparency” did not pass. Here we are again voting on a fourth charter amendment proposed by the council majority.

The terms of the Pacific Air Show settlement were recently, finally disclosed to Huntington Beach citizens as the result of costly legal action, certainly not “transparency” on the part of the council majority.

The three incumbents for



File Photo

**A VOTER** fills out his ballot at the Norma Hertzog Community Center in Costa Mesa in 2022.

City Council, Rhonda Bolton, Natalie Moser and Dan Kalmick are supportive of keeping the Huntington Beach Library public, parents' right to choose what their own children read, and will continue to lead with dignity, truth, and transparency.

**Judy Morris**  
Huntington Beach

### Bad guys notice displays of wealth

It happened again. First it was a stick-up at Fashion Island where the intended victims drove a Ferrari and a Rolls Royce. Now it's South Coast Plaza where a shopper driving a Lambor-

ghini SUV was wounded during an attempted robbery (Man shot Sunday night in attempted robbery at South Coast Plaza, police say, Daily Pilot, Sept. 23).

The way I see it, if people have enough money to own such expensive vehicles, then they probably have enough to buy an understated town car, like a 2021 Subaru, to drive to the mall. Why call attention to yourself when bad guys are looking for rich, easy targets to rob? Like the old saying goes, “You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink.” My new version goes like this: “The next time you get the urge to shop at South Coast Plaza, do it without a neon

target on your back.”

**Denny Freidenrich**  
Laguna Beach

### Writer supports Harlan in C.M.

As a longtime Eastside Costa Mesa resident and avid City Council observer, I've had the opportunity to see Jeff Harlan in action. He diligently works to make sure his constituents are well-represented. Many have recognized his tireless efforts to make our neighborhood, and all of Costa Mesa, a better place to live.

I am a retired public safety professional, and I appreciate Harlan's focus and support of our police

and fire services. He understands that safety is our top priority. This has earned him the endorsement of our police and fire associations.

Harlan listens more than he speaks. He has an excellent sense of our community needs. He understands the issues and faces them head on, determined to implement creative and practice solutions. Jeff has a broad knowledge of community topics and always strives for consensus.

Eastside residents are fortunate to have him advocating for them. He has proven himself over the last four years and deserves your vote for another term. I strongly support Jeff Harlan for District 6 City Council member.

**Tom Arnold**  
Costa Mesa

### Beekeeping law heads to C.M. dais

Costa Mesa's long-awaited beekeeping ordinance will be reviewed by the City Council on Tuesday, Oct. 1. This is the culmination of work done by residents and beekeepers working with the city in 2020, Councilwoman Andrea Marr revisiting the bee ordinance in May 2024 and my public ordeal when Animal Control came to remove a dead animal from my atrium and decided to cite me for bees living in a trash can in said atrium instead.

After pleading on my

See **Mailbag**, page A10

## WORD

Continued from page A6

of the stipulation to dismiss. Bravo.

If non-lawyers can't decipher stuff like this and even lawyers themselves find it hard to understand, why do they write like this?

The researchers have a theory. I'll get to that in a sec. In the meantime, a question: If you were a witch and wanted to curse

a fellow witch, which magic spell would you prefer: “In 24 hours, your fate will be worse, 'cause she who casts spells now is cursed” or “You're cursed, honey. Deal with it.”

That rhyming makes a difference, right? Makes it more magicky. More officially witchy somehow.

Enter the “magic spell hypothesis” of legal writing. “Just as magic spells are written with a distinctive style that sets them apart

from everyday language, the convoluted style of legal language appears to signal a special kind of authority,” the MIT News paraphrases the MIT researchers as saying.

Those researchers tested the hypothesis by asking 200 participants to write laws prohibiting crimes like drunk driving and burglary. Then they asked them to write stories about those crimes.

The laws they wrote

contained unnecessarily long, labyrinthine sentences with lots of parenthetical explanations crammed in. The stories, however, were written simply, without the parenthetical information stuffing. The kicker: None of the participants were lawyers. They were laypeople who somehow got it in their heads that bloated, fussy sentences make you sound more authoritative.

But here's where it gets

funny. The researchers said that this problem barely exists outside the world of legal writing because people are naturally inclined to speak and write clearly. And here, verbatim, is how they said that: “These results suggest law to be a rare exception to the general tendency in human language toward communicating efficiently, and that convoluted structures may be inserted to effectively signal the authoritative

nature of the law, at the cost of increased reading difficulty.”

Maybe someday we'll live in a world with that “general tendency to communicate clearly.” But until then, we'll all keep slogging through textual detritus.

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

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12:59

## Los Angeles Times TimesOC



California State Parks seasonal lifeguard Sierra Fockler discovered a 14-inch Pacific football fish around 2:30 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 13, near the lifeguard station located at Crystal Cve State Park in Orange County. It's the second such case of the fish washing ashore over the last three years. (Courtesy of California State Parks)

Good morning. It's Wednesday, Oct. 25. I'm Carol Cormaci, bringing you this week's [TimesOC newsletter](#) with a look at the latest local news and events.

Watch where you're stepping on O.C.'s famed sands, because you may encounter a rare specimen of marine life. One, in fact, that has very sharp teeth.

That's what happened on a recent afternoon to lifeguard Sierra Fockler, who found a spooky-looking black angler fish, specifically a Pacific football fish, while she was walking near the lifeguard headquarters building on Moro Beach, located within Crystal Cove State Park.



# 17th Door offers an extreme haunt experience

BY GABRIEL SAN ROMÁN

Halfway through the 17th Door haunted house at the Buena Park Mall, a meat locker turns the maze into a chilling experience — literally.

A butcher taunts all who enter its frigid, tight quarters where the repulsive decor comes in the form of dangling, strung-up chickens.

Thrill seekers soon find themselves crammed into individual lockers where an arctic blast continues the haunt's assault on the senses.

By the harrowing Halloween maze's end, survivors will have endured a hurricane alley blasting 100 mile-per-hour winds, an earthquake simulator room and a corridor with live bugs and creepy crunches that sound beneath every panicked footstep.

It's a philosophy of fear that Robbie and Heather Luther have honed since starting the 17th Door in 2015.

"What we offer here is just a totally different experience," Heather said from an empty queue area before its opening Friday night. "The people that travel the world and go to all the haunts say there's nothing like this place."

Strangely enough, the married couple never built mini-haunted mazes at their home for trick-or-treaters on Halloween.

But the 17th Door, named for the final room in the maze, stuck around as one of Robbie's creative ideas for decades before the couple went all-in at the haunt's original location at the Market Place in Tustin.

The haunted house then moved to Fullerton and resettled in a basement area of the Buena Park Mall last year.

Robbie and Heather have big expansion plans to add interactive horror movie theaters and year-round escape rooms by next Hal-



Photos by Don Leach | Staff Photographer

**HEATHER AND** Robbie Luther are co-owners of the 17th Door, which has opened for another season of extreme scares.



**THE PRISON BARBER'S** on break but not for long at the 17th Door in Buena Park.

loween.

For now, they are experimenting with new features at their seasonal maze, including a room with a tunnel where hurricane-level winds blast through.

The ingenuity behind new thrills brings a gleeful grin to Heather's face as she walks through a guided

tour of the maze before its opening weekend — and thankfully, before any scare actors clock in.

There's only a loose storyline that threads all of the 17th Door's maze rooms. All who enter "Perpetuum Penitentiary" are imprisoned by its horrors until they escape half an hour

later.

A step inside the prison barber's room doesn't look too inviting.

"Your hair will be cut," Heather explained. "Usually, it's just a '17' buzzed into the back of your head."

That is, unless you cry "mercy" as a safety word or flash a pendant that works to provide instant relief throughout the maze.

A construction crew continued work on the earthquake simulation room, where a Yoda figure wearing an orange prison jumpsuit provides quick comic relief before the floor beneath you begins to rumble.

There's even a room that brings the Stanford Prison Experiment to mind, as it allows once pelted guests to pull the trigger on pellet guns on another group in total darkness.

Don't say the 17th Door

didn't warn you.

A trigger-warning banner hanging from a chain-link fence in the queue area lists all its offenses from foul smells to shocks to claustrophobia.

Haunt enthusiasts must also sign a waiver form before stepping into the first room.

"Some experiences are a bit challenging, extreme and intense overall but designed to be fun as well," Heather said.

This year, the 17th Door is also offering an exclusive behind-the-scenes pass for people to see the cast, costume and makeup area.

After surviving the maze, pass holders can watch the scare monsters in action and get to hang out in the control room, which Heather refers to as the beating heart of the haunt.

Entertaining on the extremes gives the 17th Door

## IF YOU GO

The 17th Door, at 8420 On the Mall, Buena Park, opened Sept. 27 and runs through Nov. 3. For tickets and more information, visit [the17thdoor.com](http://the17thdoor.com).

the notoriety needed to open one street down from Knott's Halloween Haunt and make a compelling addition to Buena Park's fast-growing reputation as the Halloween capital of Orange County.

Even though the mall maze employs about 115 scare actors per season, it's geared more toward psychological terror than typical "jump scares" found at walk-through haunts.

People are funneled through in groups of eight every 90 seconds. Last year, Heather boasted a headcount of 25,000 people braving the 17th Door before calling it a wrap for the season.

"We definitely get the adrenaline junkies and people who are just into haunts," she said. "But, surprisingly, we get a big range of people from all ages."

Heather recalled one exit interview years ago where a woman described the 17th Door as a "spiritual experience" after completing it.

It may seem strange to think of its delirious rooms as doors of perception waiting to be cleansed, but there's an argument to be made.

"You're going through all these crazy and intense things, but it's all designed in a safe way where you can overcome your fears," Heather said. "A lot of guests get that sense of accomplishment. They're telling the world they're stronger now."

[gabrielsanroman@latimes.com](mailto:gabrielsanroman@latimes.com)  
Twitter: @gsanroman2

## THE DAILY COMMUTER PUZZLE

By Stella Zawistowski

### ACROSS

- 1 Contribute
- 4 Gross gunk
- 8 Earlier-born
- 13 Deep anger
- 14 Prefix with -pathic
- 16 Childbirth attendant
- 17 Stag's mate
- 18 Director Coen
- 19 Roman fountain
- 20 Fruity fall beverage: 2 wds.
- 23 Summers, in French
- 24 Sibling's nickname
- 25 "Almost!": 2 wds.
- 27 Toothpaste additive
- 32 End of a shoe
- 33 Cardboard container
- 34 Pancake topping
- 36 Puppy bites
- 39 Imitate
- 40 Takes a fall
- 42 Trail behind
- 44 "OK, got it!": 2 wds.
- 46 On your toes
- 47 Actress de Armas
- 48 No vote
- 50 Hoops or studs
- 52 Slapped
- 56 "Carpenter" insect
- 57 For carryout: 2 wds.
- 58 Late tournament round
- 64 Prize
- 66 Copier brand
- 67 Payment promise
- 68 Doled (out)
- 69 Couric on TV
- 70 French "no"
- 71 Flatten with an iron
- 72 Jell-O shaper
- 73 Enjoy Aspen, perhaps

|    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1  | 2  | 3  |    | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  |    | 8  | 9  | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 13 |    |    |    | 14 |    |    |    | 15 |    | 16 |    |    |    |
| 17 |    |    |    | 18 |    |    |    |    |    | 19 |    |    |    |
| 20 |    |    | 21 |    |    |    |    |    | 22 |    | 23 |    |    |
|    |    | 24 |    |    |    |    |    | 25 |    | 26 |    |    |    |
| 27 | 28 |    |    |    | 29 | 30 | 31 |    | 32 |    |    |    |    |
| 33 |    |    |    | 34 |    |    |    | 35 |    | 36 | 37 | 38 |    |
| 39 |    |    |    | 40 |    |    |    |    | 41 |    | 42 |    | 43 |
|    | 44 | 45 |    |    | 46 |    |    |    |    | 47 |    |    |    |
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| 64 |    |    |    | 65 |    |    | 66 |    |    |    |    | 67 |    |
| 68 |    |    |    |    |    |    | 69 |    |    |    |    | 70 |    |
| 71 |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 72 |    |    |    |    | 73 |

## 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](http://sudoku.org.uk).

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

**For answers to the crossword and Sudoku puzzles, see page A7.**

### DOWN

- 1 Classic Verdi opera
- 2 Let go of
- 3 Gets rid of
- 4 Philly sandwich
- 5 Campus military group: Abbr.
- 6 "Oh, hello": 2 wds.
- 7 Out of batteries

- 8 NYC summer clock setting: Abbr.
- 9 Legendary siren
- 10 Because of: 2 wds.
- 11 Santa's helpers
- 12 Lift up
- 15 Singles
- 21 Ignited
- 22 Decay

- 26 Severely restricted
- 27 Pugilist's group: Abbr.
- 28 People of Arizona
- 29 Manhattan school: Abbr.
- 30 Humorist Bombeck
- 31 Russian currency
- 35 Desperate request
- 37 Banana-like fruits
- 38 Did some karaoke
- 41 Mess up
- 43 Car fuel
- 45 Bonus performances
- 49 "Okay!"
- 51 B&B
- 52 Piece of postage
- 53 Lawn machine
- 54 Striped marble
- 55 Set of cards
- 59 Polite address for a lady
- 60 Really loving
- 61 Aluminum wrap
- 62 Take a peek
- 63 Gymnast Lee
- 65 Dentist's degree: Abbr.

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**RIB**

Continued from page A1

Guests will have the opportunity to decide which charity to donate to through the program, a concept that Newport Rib Co. has brought back every five years since its 20th anniversary.

"I would say this is a unique way that we are able to give back to the community that has really been giving back to us since we opened," said John Ursini, proprietor of Newport Rib Co. "It's such a two-way street, and sometimes, I don't think everybody gets that."

"Our parents, since we were young kids, were always involved in whatever thing that we were involved in. They were always on the board. ... We're fortunate we have a restaurant, and it's easy to be able to give back to the community, and this is just an easy way and an important way for us to do that."

Newport Rib Co., which originally opened on Newport Boulevard, has operated out of its current location at 2196 Harbor Boulevard in Costa Mesa for the past 25 years.

Ursini said planning for a reunion of staff at the end of the 40th anniversary celebration is underway. In reconnecting with former employees and seeing how their families have grown, it has brought the passage of time into perspective.



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

**OWNER JOHN URSINI** and sister Laura Marroquin, son and daughter of Newport Rib Co. founder Fran Usini, are marking the 40th anniversary of the restaurant with a "20 Charities, 20 Days" campaign.

Laura Marroquin, Ursini's sister, said the restaurant's longevity has created a "legacy."

"Not only do we have employees who have been here, but now we've employed their children," said Marroquin, the community relations and catering manager. "Our dad is the founder, and now we're his children, and now his grandchildren have been working here."

"To be a part of this community for 40 years and see so much change and still be a constant in

the community, it's really special and unique, I think."

Surviving the coronavirus pandemic instilled a confidence like never before.

"The COVID thing kind of kicked us into high gear," Ursini said. "You had a choice. You could sit on your hands — like a lot of people did, or were forced to do — and we literally, within two days, we were doing deliveries. We pivoted, and we were hustling, and no one missed a beat, and we

all kind of came out of that like, 'Yes! We are Rib Co.'"

Ursini graduated from Estancia High in 1982 and Marroquin in 1987. Their brother, Dave, who runs the Long Beach-based Naples Rib Co., graduated from the same school in 1985.

Newport Rib Co. has made a significant contribution to the crosstown rivalries in Costa Mesa (Battle for the Bell) and Newport Beach (Battle of the Bay). The winners of those series have often been treated to catered feasts.

"Athletics is a big part of who we are and who our customer base is," Ursini said. "I think we've built a pretty strong loyalty through doing things like the Battle for the Bell, the Battle of the Bay, team banquets, sponsoring team meals, and that's been a good foundation for us, in a lot of ways."

Patrick's Purpose, among the list of charities included in the event, has recognized those who may have spent less time in the spotlight. Kim Turner formed the foundation after losing Patrick, her son, to suicide at the age of 16 in January 2018. Turner expressed gratitude for having the foundation be a part of the event, calling Newport Rib Co. a "pillar" of the community.

In the letters he left behind, the family found that Patrick longed for those with good character to be recognized like the star athletes and the straight-A students

were. His message was one of inclusion, hoping to engage others in the conversation and look for opportunities to perform acts of kindness.

The foundation has since put "buddy benches," designed with a purpose to always have more than one person on them to serve as conversation starters, at multiple Newport-Mesa schools.

"We started by offering scholarships to kids who decide to go to a community college or a trade school because in Patrick's letters that he left for us, that was a huge issue with him," Turner said. "He couldn't stand how everybody was judged on their GPA and their test scores and what college they went to. He really said, 'What about the nice kid? What about the kid with character? Why aren't we celebrating those kids?'"

"So that's kind of been the foundation of what we started to do, and the scholarship program has been very successful, and it's been really fun to see these kids go [into fields like] culinary school or aviation mechanics. Somebody went to clown school this year. That was really cool. Patrick would love that."

For more information on the selected charities for Newport Rib Co.'s 40th anniversary event, visit [ribcompany.com/40-year-celebration](http://ribcompany.com/40-year-celebration).

andrewturner@latimes.com  
Twitter: @AndrewTurnerTCN

**MAILBAG**

Continued from page A8

part, Orange County Supervisor Katrina Foley and Mayor John Stephens gave my bees a stay, while the beekeeping ordinance was revisited by staff. Supervisor Foley encourages replacing lawns with native pollinator plants, and Mayor Stephens could see the absurdity of asking people to plant natives, only to require them to kill any pollinators that decide to stay. My bees had lived without incident in that trash can in my atrium for 10 years. If you have native gardens, you will have bees, and if you have bees you should have a beekeeping ordinance. QED!

Lovers of bees who wish to attend or participate in

the City Council meeting in person or via Zoom can find the agenda with detailed instructions and information at: [costamesa.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx](http://costamesa.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx).

Costa Mesa City Hall is located at 77 Fair Drive. The meeting starts at 6 p.m. Emails to the City Council must be received by 12 p.m. on Oct. 1 at [cityclerk@costamesa.gov](mailto:cityclerk@costamesa.gov).

**Priscilla Rocco**  
Costa Mesa

**The power of showing up**

Back in 2016, just before the election, our Unitarian Universalist church in Costa Mesa became a place where many of us, myself included, found comfort, connection and purpose during a really divisive

time. Our congregation grew, not just because people were feeling anxious about politics but because we all felt the importance of taking part in something bigger than ourselves.

Throughout American history, when people have come together to act and advocate, they've helped make huge strides toward justice and equality.

But in recent years, we've seen a drop in the kind of involvement that once brought people together. In the book "Bowling Alone," Robert Putnam talks about how fewer people are joining community groups, social clubs or even just getting together with neighbors. This decline weakens the bonds that hold our communities together.

Thankfully, things are

turning around. What we saw in our UU community after 2016 mirrors something bigger happening nationwide. Elections stir a new sense of responsibility among us. By getting involved with UU the Vote, we've been able to live out our democratic values and help in the ongoing fight to create a truly diverse and just democracy. Our growth as a congregation isn't just in numbers but in how much more connected and engaged we've become.

This shift highlights how important places like churches, community centers and local organizations are for fostering participation. They provide the spaces where we can come together, share ideas and work toward common goals. In a world where so much of our interaction is

digital, these face-to-face connections are more important than ever.

Civic engagement doesn't have to be complicated. It can start right where you live. On our cul-de-sac in Newport Beach, we've got a text thread where we help each other with everything from finding lost pets to sharing extra produce and addressing safety concerns. This simple communication brings us together for block parties and gatherings, showing that even with our different backgrounds — religious, political or financial — we can find common ground. Now, more than ever, knowing your neighbors and building local connections is crucial.

As a parent, I feel this call to action deeply. We've seen what happens when people

don't engage and we know how important it is to get involved. It's up to us to set an example, showing that being active in our communities isn't just a responsibility but also key to a healthy democracy. To the younger generation, I urge you to join us. Together, we can face the challenges ahead — whether it's political division or social injustice — and create a future that reflects our shared values.

So, let's not let "Bowling Alone" become our reality. Let's stay committed to civic engagement, strengthen our communities, support our institutions and get involved in the democratic process. Our democracy's health depends on it.

**Nina Smith**  
Newport Beach

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| Camilla                | John Varvatos*          | Ralph Lauren            |
| Club Monaco            | Kate Spade New York     | Reiss                   |
| Coach                  | Kiehl's Since 1851      | Sandro                  |
| Cole Haan              | L'Occitane en Provence  | SC Trojan Town          |
| COS                    | Lacoste                 | Soma Intimates          |
| Diptyque               | Lanvin                  | Stuart Weitzman*        |
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| Fresh                  | MAC Cosmetics           | Terrace by Mix Mix      |
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