

Daily Pilot & Times OC

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2024 // Serving the coastal cities of Orange County and beyond // dailypilot.com

Siblings join return of 'Nutcracker'

Local students take part in the American Ballet Theatre's production of the Christmas classic at the Segerstrom Center.

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

Watching the film version of "The Nutcracker" has long been a tradition in the Kimura family, along with exchanging gifts and putting up the Christmas tree. Sakura Kimura, 13, and her 11-year-old brother, Kotaro Kimura, look forward to the custom each year.

"My favorite part is the party scene," said Sakura. "It really feels like you are at a Christmas party."

This year, the Costa Mesa siblings are among the 44 local dancers from the American Ballet Theatre William J. Gillespie School at Segerstrom Center for the Arts who will join the prestigious dance company on stage for its production of "The Nutcracker" that opened Thursday at the Segerstrom.

Sakura will play the role of young Clara and Kotaro will take on the role of Little Mouse in the critically-acclaimed holiday production.

This is the ninth year the school has provided dance students for the production, giving them a chance to perform along with some of the most renowned dancers in the industry.

"When I was little, I really liked



Scott Smeltzer

See **Siblings**, page A2

SAKURA KIMURA, right, rehearses the role of Clara in the American Ballet Theatre's production of "The Nutcracker."

Elevating digestive health in Orange County

UCI Health

Chao Digestive Health Institute



Long-ago mayor of Irvine Larry Agran again sworn in

BY GABRIEL SAN ROMÁN

Larry Agran took an oath of office as Irvine's new mayor during Tuesday's City Council meeting, returning to a post he first held in 1982.

Agran, 79, bested six competitors in the mayor's race, including former Irvine Councilwoman Tammy Kim, by claiming 39% of the vote.

A longtime fixture on Irvine City Council, Agran first served as a councilman in 1978. Ten years later, he became the first directly-elected mayor of Irvine.

Tuesday's swearing-in marked the beginning of Agran's sixth nonconsecutive term as mayor.

"I believe we are on the verge of becoming an even greater city,"

Agran said after taking his oath. "My aspiration — our aspiration — is to continue to work together, overcoming our differences...to make Irvine the safest, smartest, greenest, healthiest and kindest city in the United States of America."

With two years left on his current term on council, Agran's victory leaves his District 5 seat vacant.

After being sworn in, Irvine's new council discussed a special election to fill the vacancy. Per city law, the vote would be limited to roughly 28,500 registered voters in District 5, which that was not up for election in November.

See **Agran**, page A2



File Photo

DUE TO Larry Agran's election as Irvine mayor, a special election will be held in April to fill his vacant council seat.

ALSO FROM THE DAILY PILOT:



File Photo

THE LAST TAMLADA: LA VEGANA MEXICANA CLOSING AT 4TH STREET MARKET PAGE A8

Aging motel to help Newport house homeless population

BY ERIC LICAS

The Newport Beach City Council on Tuesday signed off on a \$3-million loan to help transform a former Travelodge in Costa Mesa into supportive housing for homeless people and at-risk individuals.

Nonprofit American Family Housing will convert the aging motel at 1400 Bristol St. into 78 units of housing. The property will be purchased by the county of Orange and leased to the developer.

A majority of the money for the project, roughly \$29 million, came from state funds made available through the Project Homekey program. The county provided \$6.8 million, Costa Mesa contributed \$4 million and, in addition to the \$3 million coming from Newport



Courtesy of the office of Cottie-Petrie Norris

A RENDERING shows a 76-unit permanent supportive housing complex planned for the site of a former Travelodge on Costa Mesa's Bristol Street.

Beach, the developer also took out a separate private loan for over \$3.1 million.

The city's loan to AFH is on a 55-year term with a simple 3% interest rate. In exchange for that

support, up to 12 units will be set aside for homeless and extremely low income tenants referred to the supportive housing development from Newport Beach.

Units in the new housing complex will be fully furnished studios with kitchenettes and ADA accessible. Amenities will include a community kitchen and two laundry rooms, as well as indoor and outdoor gathering spaces. Support services to help tenants reach housing stability will also be available on site.

The City Council voted 7-0 to move forward with the loan. However, Councilwoman Lauren Kleiman voiced concern over certain aspects of the deal. She and Councilwoman Robyn Grant will meet with city staff in hope of "finalizing and ironing out the last details of the agreement,"

Kleiman said.

"I'm generally in support of the project moving forward," she said during the meeting. "But particularly, in light of lessons learned from our Costa Mesa Bridge Shelter partnership, I have a lot of questions and concerns about the terms of this agreement and in particular the practical application of our local priority and how that will interplay with our comprehensive approach to homelessness and affordable housing."

Newport Beach teamed up with Costa Mesa to fund the 88-bed Bridge Shelter, and currently has 25 spots reserved at that facility. It typically operates at or near capacity.

A count conducted Nov. 21 by People Assisting the Homeless, an

See **Motel**, page A10

Westminster sues 2 of its council members

Council members Amy Phan West and NamQuan Nguyen have been named in a lawsuit that alleges they have consistently disrupted meetings and impeded the conduct of city business.

BY GABRIEL SAN ROMÁN

Amy Phan West sported a black "Make America Great Again" hat that sparked as she questioned her colleagues on the Westminster City Council during a special meeting on Monday.

"I'm not here to throw anyone under the bus," Phan West said, "but we recently just found out [this] is a council meeting."

With mini-U.S. and Trump flags perched from her seat, Phan West claimed she needed to leave an hour into the meeting and wanted certain city business to be conducted at a later date.

In response to a question posed by Councilman Car-

los Manzo, who often rhetorically tangles with Phan West, Westminster's city clerk noted that all council members received the agenda for the special meeting on the Friday morning prior to it.

A council majority then voted down Phan West's request to continue discussions on a grocery assistance program for elderly residents and potential zoning changes to its regularly scheduled Dec. 11 meeting. Phan West departed after council members agreed to move up a vote on certifying local election results to accommodate her.

As far as Westminster goes, Monday's special



James Carbone

WESTMINSTER COUNCILWOMAN Amy Phan West is named in the city's lawsuit over disorderly meetings.

meeting may seem tame by comparison but it underscores how distrust has seeped into and slowed down even the more granular aspects of city governance.

After enduring three meetings in the past six months that have stretched

past 10 hours, a lawsuit filed by Westminster against Phan West and Councilman NamQuan Nguyen claims that the distrust has fueled disruption that amounts to a misdemeanor violation of city and state law.

Mayor Chi Charlie Nguyen, former Councilwoman



James Carbone

WESTMINSTER MAYOR Chi Charlie Nguyen during a September council meeting (James Carbone)

Kimberly Ho and Manzo voted in October to authorize the hiring of an outside law firm to file the suit. The council majority turned to Judge Gassia Apkarian's courtroom after claiming that all other efforts to curtail council chaos had failed.

In August, the trio voted to censure Phan West after several meetings were marked by five-minute recesses, muted microphones and council members talking over each other even when not recognized by the

See **Sues**, page A4

La Palma extends council term limits

La Palma voters passed Measure W, which allows for three consecutive terms on its City Council. Supporters said it's needed in light of district election reform. Opponents call the measure a "power grab."

BY GABRIEL SAN ROMÁN

In the small city of La Palma, district elections debuted in November with three council candidates all running unopposed.

Incumbents Debbie Baker and Mark Waldman won 100% of the vote, as did newcomer Vikesh Patel.

La Palma voters also passed a ballot measure that extended term limits for members of the City Council. At Tuesday's coun-

cil meeting, Measure W, as the initiative is known, was formally adopted into law. It now allows council members to serve three consecutive four-year terms.

Councilman Nitesh Patel, Vikesh's brother, was unavailable for an interview before the council meeting but emailed TimesOC a statement in support of the reform.

"State law imposed by-district elections reducing the already limited candi-

date pool, as clearly demonstrated in this year's city council elections where all three districts were uncontested," Patel said. "Voters are now empowered to choose whether experienced council members are deserving of an additional term or if they desire a new direction. Ultimately, the power always rests with the voters every four years."

Robert Carruth, a spokesman for La Palma Residents for Fair Elections, expressed disappointment in the election results, where 58% of La Palma's voters approved the initiative.

"It wasn't a grassroots effort," he said. "Nobody in La Palma was asking to in-

crease term limits, but certain council members wanted it, and this is how they went about doing it. The campaign wasn't transparent, and it even bordered on being dishonest."

Carruth pointed to Patel, who was first elected to council in 2018, as someone who could serve up to 20 consecutive years, if re-elected, as the new law is phased in without counting any of his previous terms.

La Palma is home to about 15,000 residents, 10,000 of whom are registered voters.

In 2022, attorney Kevin Shenkman sent La Palma a demand letter that claimed the city's at-large voting sys-



LA PALMA VOTERS

passed a ballot measure in November that extended term limits for members of the City Council.

James Carbone

tem violated the California Voting Rights Act and disenfranchised Latinos, who comprised 19% of the population.

La Palma City Council opted to voluntarily transition to district elections instead of entertaining a costly legal fight.

In November, three of La Palma's new council districts appeared on the ballot

for the first time. All three candidates who ran unopposed won with roughly 1,000 votes each.

Months before the filing deadline, La Palma City Council discussed term limits during a Feb. 6 meeting, when some council members sounded the alarm about district elections dry-

See **Limits**, page A4

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Scott Smeltzer

KOTARO KIMURA strikes a pose during rehearsal.

SIBLINGS

Continued from page A1

Disney princesses and when I saw all the tutus and sparkles, I really wanted to start ballet," said Sakura, who has been dancing since she was 3.

The ABT Gillespie School was founded in 2015, as an expansion of the renowned New York-based American Ballet Theatre. The local school is named for Orange County philanthropist William J. Gillespie, who also served on the ABT board and donated funds to the Segerstrom Center. The school's fall semester runs from early September through early December and the spring semester from January to late May. Following the holiday performances, mid-year enrollment opens, giving young dancers inspired by the show the chance to join the school.

Auditions for this year's production of "The Nutcracker" opened in September, with rehearsals taking place each Saturday afternoon into December.

"Working with these young dancers on 'The Nutcracker' is a joy," said children's rehearsal director, Sarah Jones. "Each rehearsal brings new energy and dedication and it's wonderful to see them embrace the magic of the story."

When the American

Ballet Theatre company dancers arrive, the two groups rehearse together. Sakura said it can be intimidating to share the stage with such talented professionals.

"Getting used to the environment, all the stage lights and the props, it is really different from when we are in rehearsal and practicing in the studio," said Sakura. "It feels more important."

Rehearsal doesn't end at the studio. Sakura shares that she and her brother often show their parents what they have practiced in class.

Kotaro, who began dancing when he was 6, has the challenge of dancing in a mouse costume in the production.

"The Little Mouse costume has a mouse head, tights and a cushion that makes your belly look bigger," he said.

Other principal children performers from Orange County include Savannah Koch of Costa Mesa, Carson Triplett of Trabuco Canyon, Atticus Cunningham of Irvine, Judah Gaglio of Huntington Beach and Chloe Cho of Yorba Linda.

"The Nutcracker" tells the story of Clara, a young girl who receives a nutcracker doll at her family Christmas party. When she goes to sleep that night, the nutcracker comes to life in her dreams as a prince who

takes her on a journey through far-off, magical lands. The production is choreographed by Alexei Ratmansky and will feature the Pacific Symphony performing Tchaikovsky's beloved score. Costumes are by Richard Hudson and lighting is by Jennifer Tip-ton, both Tony Award winners. American Ballet Theatre Artistic Director Susan Jaffe cast Hee Seo as Clara and Cory Stearns as the Nutcracker Prince for the show's opening.

The Kimura siblings both hope to continue pursuing dance as a career and said they are excited for the opportunity to dance with professionals, especially in story that is so beloved to them

"I really like being able to dance with the company and I just want the audience to feel the magic of ballet," said Sakura.

Kotaro said he also doesn't mind getting a little recognition after months of rehearsals and hard work.

"My favorite part is when they clap for me," said Kotaro. "It makes me feel happy."

American Ballet Theatre's "The Nutcracker" runs until Dec. 22, at Segerstrom Center for the Arts in Costa Mesa. Tickets are available at scfta.org.

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AGRAN

Continued from page A1

Three other districts seated council members for the first time since Irvine voters passed Measure D, which created single-member districts and expanded the dais to seven members

earlier this year.

City Clerk Carl Petersen noted that the earliest Irvine could schedule the vote would be April 15.

The special election could cost up to \$625,000 to administer.

Petersen also stated that candidates seeking office in the special election could

file to run between Dec. 23 and Jan. 17.

Joshua Moore, a District 5 resident, lamented the timing of the proposed vote.

"A low-turnout special election is not a terribly democratic way to arrive at a replacement for the mayor on this dais," he said. "I'm not sure that there's any-

thing that we could do to encourage a higher turnout."

Councilwoman Kathleen Treseder thanked Petersen for his work on what would be the city's third election in 13 months. Following her brief comments, the council unanimously approved scheduling the vote for April

15.

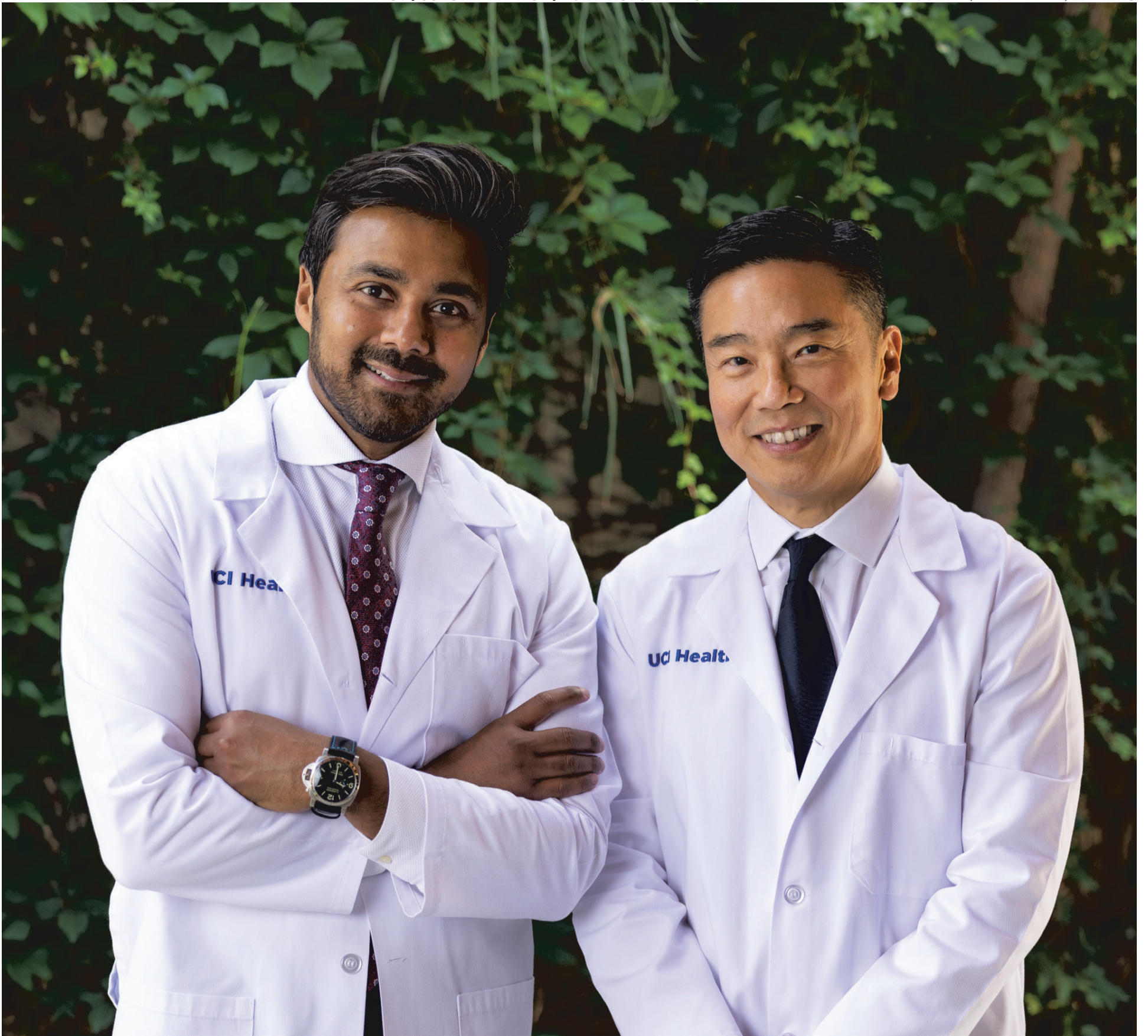
"Good, we've got an election," Agran said.

Council members could not so easily agree on appointing a vice mayor between Treseder and Councilman James Mai. The council deadlocked twice on 3-3 votes before agreeing to continue discussion at

their Jan. 14 meeting.

In reorganizing the council after the election the council selected Mike Carrol to serve as interim mayor should Agran be unavailable to chair a meeting.

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SUES

Continued from page A2

mayor as having the floor. That same month, new rules on how meetings are conducted were also enacted, including time limits on council member comments. Placing items on the agenda now requires the support of a third council member. But even with those reforms, the suit claims that Mayor Nguyen has not been able to rein in Phan West and NamQuan Nguyen's "unruly behavior," which has allegedly impeded the council's ability to conduct city business. The suit was filed in Orange County Superior Court on Nov. 27. Phan West did not respond to a TimesOC request for comment, but

blamed the so-called "Gang of Three" council majority for "misuse of taxpayer money for political stunts" in bringing the lawsuit against her. In a Tuesday news release, she also claimed litigation distracted from issues the city faces like a high sales tax, homelessness and crime. "Westminster deserves leadership that uses taxpayer money wisely and focuses on real solutions — not efforts to silence dissenting voices," Phan West said. The city is seeking a court order that would require Phan West and Councilman Nguyen to abide by decorum rules at council meetings "lest they degenerate into shouting matches; generating heat, but not light." During the Oct. 23 council

meeting, before last month's court filing, Westminster City Atty. Christian Bettenhausen reported out of closed session that the council majority wanted a judge to impose a court order backed by fines for any violations. Mayor Nguyen, Manzo and Ho also want any such fines imposed to be paid out of the pockets of the offending council members and not the city. After the city attorney's report, Phan West called the move a political attack. Mayor Nguyen thanked his colleagues for taking action. "We don't have to do this if we don't have the chaos in our city council meetings," he said. "Unfortunately, we have to proceed this way."

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LIMITS

Continued from page A2

ing up a pool of potential candidates. "It's hard to be able to find people in certain districts," Patel said. "This is not us saying, 'let's eliminate term limits, let's change term limits.'" The council voted unanimously then to hire a consultant for community outreach on the question. Months later, council members returned with a 4-1 vote in June to put Measure W on the ballot. With two new council districts yet to go before voters, Carruth said it's too early to draw conclusions on district elections and any potential impact on competitive council races. "There won't be enough data for quite some time," he said. "If you look back at history, people do run. One data point is not a trend." In recent years, there has been a dearth of candidates in Orange County cities that have recently transitioned to district elections. Dana Point decided to cancel council elections after three candidates, two of

whom were newcomers, were set to run unopposed in their districts. Two incumbent council members ran unopposed in November. Orange, which is home to 140,000 residents, saw no competitive council races in all three districts up for a vote, nor in its at-large mayoral race. But Cypress, a city that borders La Palma and settled a lawsuit over district elections for \$835,000, had competitive races in each of its council districts this November. Sherkman, a Malibu-based attorney, claimed that district election reform is no deterrent to democratic participation and called related arguments in favor of La Palma's ballot measure "wrong" and "paternalistic." "Empirical studies show that more, not less, candidates run when the elections are district based," Sherkman said. "That makes sense, intuitively. It's less expensive to run a campaign to a fifth of the electorate in a smaller geographic area, so potential candidates are less deterred by cost." Mailers in support of the

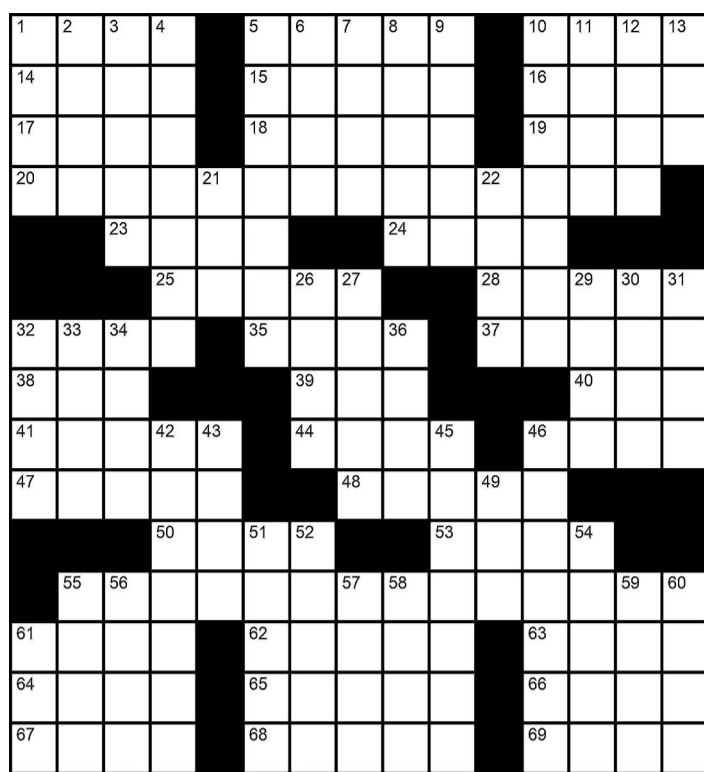
measure leaned heavily on police and firefighter images in suggesting that a yes vote would help protect public safety. The Yes on Measure W campaign also framed the ballot measure as a fight for local control against Sacramento "special interests." Patel and Baker helped fund the campaign, which raised \$27,000, according to public records obtained by TimesOC. The No campaign called Measure W a "power grab," but only spent roughly \$2,800 getting their message out to voters. With its passage, the ballot measure provides for a four-year absence, after which politicians are eligible for three more consecutive four-year terms. The law would sunset if the city reverted to an at-large voting system. "I'm obviously disappointed in the outcome," Carruth said. "I don't think there's any real benefit that will come to La Palma from extending term limits. I think it'll be the opposite."

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THE DAILY COMMUTER PUZZLE

By Stella Zawistowski

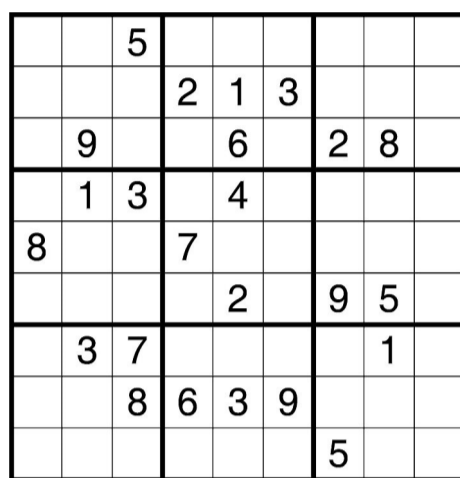
ACROSS
1 Gentle throw
5 Allowed by Muslim law
10 Adorable
14 Ready to receive customers
15 Japanese film genre
16 Harvard or Yale: Abbr.
17 Sorcerer
18 New Delhi's country
19 Make angry
20 Kentucky's nickname: 2 wds.
23 Idle of Monty Python
24 Place in the Senate
25 Get away from
28 Brown beverages
32 Walk very slowly
35 "Watch your ___!"
37 Political pamphlet
38 Ignited
39 Out of the ordinary
40 That lady
41 Up to
44 Coffee cups
46 Agenda part
47 Oscar winner Emma
48 Pie nut
50 Cease
53 Pasta sauce brand
55 Last practice before a big show: 2 wds.
61 Bosc or Bartlett
62 South ___ (Seoul's country)
63 Honda or Hyundai
64 Tenant's payment
65 James ___ Garfield
66 New Mexico art town
67 Makes a choice
68 Takes it easy
69 Hardwood trees



SUDOKU

By the Mephram Group

Complete the grid so each row, column and 3-by-3 box (in bold borders) contains every digit, 1 to 9. For strategies on how to solve Sudoku, visit sudoku.org.uk.



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

DOWN

1 Vault for burial
2 Iridescent gem
3 Transition
4 Made a disdainful face
5 Mullet or pixie
6 "___ Karenina"
7 Jar tops

8 Not quite right
9 Tenant's document
10 Museum worker
11 Curriculum part
12 Mosaic part
13 Adam and ___
21 Hodges of

baseball
22 Diplomacy
26 Gloom and ___
27 Turn out to be: 2 wds.
29 Behind everyone else
30 Feel sore
31 Flower stalk
32 +
33 Dryer debris
34 "The Simpsons" bus driver
36 Competitive advantage
42 Some newspaper ads
43 Permits
45 Hollers
46 Thankless person
49 Driver's group: Abbr.
51 Heroic Schindler
52 Government investigation
54 Customary
55 Low in pitch
56 ___ and rave
57 Screws up
58 Miami's NBA team
59 Tiny particle
60 Sports defeat
61 Paid sports player

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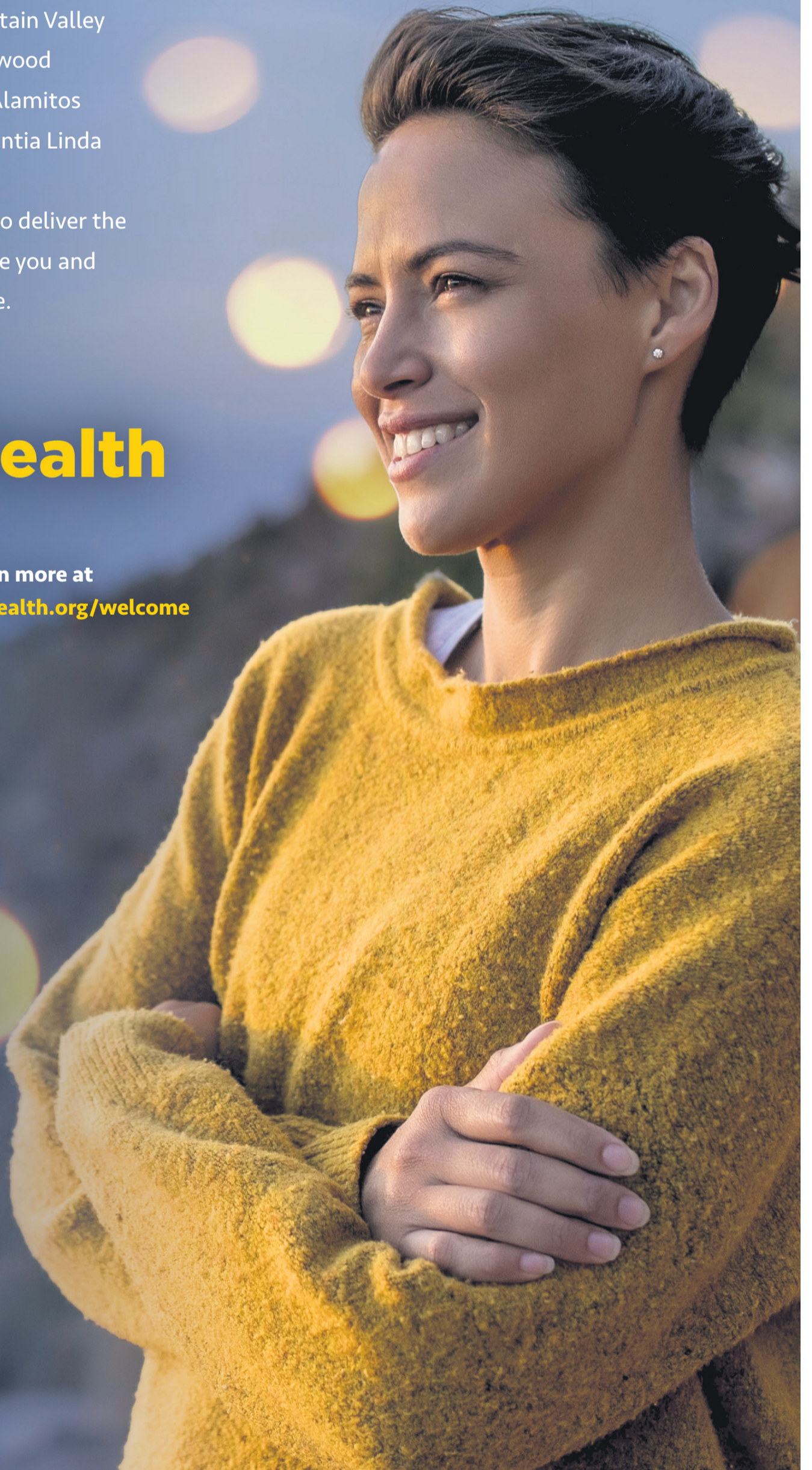
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A WORD, PLEASE | JUNE CASAGRANDE

The mistaken 'rule' we haven't heard the last of

When I first started writing this column in the early aughts, readers would often complain to me about sentence-ending prepositions. Or, to put that ironically: Sentence-ending prepositions were things readers would complain to me about.

In the years since, that complaint has steadily waned. It's gotten so rare that I figured the idea was pretty much dead, gone the way of the ruler-wielding Miss Thistlebottoms who departed this grammatically imperfect world for the great stylebook in the

sky. Nope. Earlier this year, Merriam-Webster's dictionary posted on Instagram, "It is permissible in English for a preposition to be what you end a sentence with" (see what they did there?). The result: uproar, like this reply from a user going by the name of AJWarren74: "Absolutely do NOT end a sentence with a preposition!! It's like fingernails on a blackboard!! UGH."

Aah, that takes me back. Seems like just yesterday people were telling me I was wrong. Of course, correcting the publishers of one of the country's leading dictionaries — professional lexicographers with decades of study and hard-earned expertise under their belts — is another matter entirely. It's like telling your doctor that your liver is in your ear. I learned two things from Merriam's post and the ensuing uproar: 1. The myth about sentence-ending prepositions is alive and festering, and 2. Merriam's could use some backup. So what's this grammar



myth all about? The idea is that prepositions like "with," "about," "to," "at," "in" and "on" take objects — nouns or pronouns that complete the thought. You spoke with Linda. You think about pizza. You walked to the store. You yelled at him. You're grounded in reality. Your keys are on the table.

If you move any of those objects to an earlier position in the sentence and just leave the preposition parked at the end, the result could be a bad sentence. Linda is the person

See *Word*, page A10



Beverly Ray Parkhurst

June 30, 1936 - November 27, 2024

She was a woman of substance and style, independent and in charge of her own destiny. Beverly Ray, who with late husband William (Bill) Ray owned and led Newport's "Host of the Coast" Balboa Bay Club and Resort along with the Newport Beach Country Club and additional properties, passed away on November 27, 2024, at her home in Dallas, Texas at the age of 88, following a short illness.

"My years with the BBC were the most wonderful time of my life," previously shared the woman born and raised in Fort Worth.

Following graduation from Carter Riverside High School, Beverly attended University of Colorado at Boulder, transferring to Texas Christian University (TCU) earning a bachelor's degree in business administration.

Then it was off to New York City with a first professional job in public relations working for the Texas Pavilion at the 1965 World's Fair.

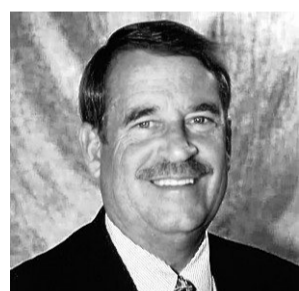
It was in New York that Beverly met Bill Ray, they married and settled in Connecticut. It was the start of a more than 40-year adventure that would take them back to California in 1971 where Bill Ray owned the Balboa Bay Club.

When Bill Ray passed in 1991 following a battle with cancer, Beverly took the helm of International Bay Clubs. In 2010 IBC was sold to Richard "Dick" Pickup and family today recognized as the premium hospitality business in Newport Beach.

Prior to the sale, Beverly was introduced to Texas businessman Arlis Parkhurst, who would become her second love story.

The couple would return to Texas, settling into a new home on a large partial of land, ideal for Beverly to indulge in her love of gardening, design, and sharing her spirited love for animals. Arlis Parkhurst passed away in 2020 and Beverly turned her attention to civic and charitable concerns including supporting Big Brothers/Big Sisters of OC and Inland Empire and its auxiliary Angelitos de Oro.

Donations may be made in Beverly's honor to The Balboa Bay Club's 1221 Student Scholarship Fund. Founded by Beverly, the fund has raised and donated more than \$2 million to local Newport-Mesa students bound for college. Send donations to "1221 Student Scholarship Fund", Balboa Bay Club, 1221 West Coast Highway, Newport Beach, CA 92663.



Frederick Darrell Starnes

June 12, 1941 - November 16, 2024

Frederick Darrell Starnes was one of seven children born to Tassie Otis Starnes and Felicia (Cockrell) Starnes in Ridgeway, Illinois, on June 12, 1941.

His family later moved to Oxford, Ohio, where Darrell attended McGuffey High School for his freshman year. He finished the rest of his high school education at Talawanda High School, where he excelled on both the football and basketball teams, and where he met who would become his beloved wife of 65 years, Judith Anne Hansel of Darrtown, Ohio. They soon welcomed their three children, Debbie, Rick and Scott.

Darrell attended electrical engineering school and worked for General Electric and Magnavox. In 1969, Darrell and Judy made the bold decision to move their young family to California to help Darrell's brother, Les, start up his orthodontic practice in Newport Beach. During their trek west in their new Ford Galaxy 500, with Triumph sports car in tow, the family stopped to take in many of the iconic sites along Route 66.

He subsequently launched his real estate and construction company in Corona del Mar, CA, having built several of the original homes in the Big Canyon, Spyglass Hill and Corona Del Mar communities. He was a devoted supporter of his children's sports teams, schools and extracurricular activities.

In 1981, Darrell and Judy moved to Coto de Caza, CA, and were among the very first families to build their home in "The Estates" division of the newly-budding community, long before Coto de Caza was fully planned and developed, and adjacent Rancho Santa Margarita was established.

Darrell continued building and designing homes in Coto de Caza with his son, Rick, as well as in other areas of Orange and Santa Barbara counties.

Darrell was one of the original members of the Coto de Caza Hunt Club, and enjoyed hunting with his son, Scott, as well as his brothers and friends. As a founding member of the Rotary Club, where he served multiple terms as president, Darrell spearheaded several major Rotary Club events in Coto de Caza to support local charitable organizations, including concerts by Willie Nelson, Charlie Daniels, Alabama and The Desert Rose Band. He was also an integral part of the teams that hosted Team Penning events and the Modern Pentathlon for the 1984 Olympics in Coto de Caza.

Darrell will be fondly remembered by his loving family and friends for his affectionate smile, generosity of time and spirit, and sincere interest in the lives of those he knew and loved.

Darrell passed away peacefully in his sleep on November 16, 2024, at the age of 83. He is survived by his wife, Judy; daughter, Debbie Martin of Costa Mesa, CA; son, Rick Starnes (Sheila) of Santa Barbara, CA; son, Scott Starnes of Coto de Caza, CA; brother, Les Starnes (Sally) of Costa Mesa, CA; sister, Darlene White (Jack) of Port St. Lucie, FL; sister, Sharon Hansel (Jack, deceased) (John) of Darrtown, OH; grandson, Michael Starnes of Santa Barbara, CA; and granddaughter, Jacqueline Starnes of San Diego, CA. He was predeceased by his parents, Tassie and Felicia; sister, Barbara Woods; brother, Raymond Starnes; and brother, David Starnes.

A Celebration of Life ceremony will be held at the Coto Valley Country Club at 1 p.m. on Saturday, Jan. 4, 2025. O'Connor Mortuary (949) 581-4300 www.oconnormortuary.com

MAILBAG

There's a dearth of winter shelters for Orange County's homeless

For over a decade, I have performed weekly volunteer outreach at the Fullerton Transportation Center in Fullerton — the site of the tragic and fatal police beating of homeless man Kelly Thomas in 2011.

Since the summer, I've repeatedly contacted the Fullerton city manager, chief of police, housing manager and various case management organizations, urgently requesting a temporary cold weather

homeless shelter. Unfortunately, I've only received empty promises and bureaucratic excuses as the city and county pass the responsibility back and forth, leaving vulnerable individuals at risk. The inaction is reckless.

With temperatures in Orange County expected to drop into the 40s this week, the National Weather Service warns that exposure and hypothermia can be fatal in such conditions. If it rains, the risk increases significantly.

It seems Fullerton and other cities in Orange County may be choosing to overlook the suffering of the homeless, opting for the easier route of letting the coroner handle the consequences of their negligence. All the necessary resources are available — the county has the funding, and several approved

SB2 zones are ready for temporary shelters. Operators are prepared to manage these shelters, so why is there a delay?

What's a homeless person's life or death worth in Orange County?

Leigh White
Costa Mesa

A wish for Newport City Council

Newport Beach's outgoing mayor is quoted in the Pilot this week as being optimistic about the future of Newport Beach. He relates the city's symbolically positive response a few years ago to a young girl who had requested that the city install ADA accessible equipment so children with disabilities could enjoy the playground as well as those without disabilities. The city offered the thoughtful solution to that young resident, no doubt making her life and that of other challenged children happier.

There have been many such positive additions to the city in the last several years, usually in the form of construction projects which have continued to add to the beauty of Newport Beach. No doubt the City Council has played a role in the creation of these improvements.

My wish for the Newport Beach City Council would be for it to form an independent panel to oversee the council elections, making sure that candidates abide by a set of rules that would make the elections more democratic instead of a source of embarrassment for many of its citizens.

The panel should be bestowed with the power to enforce election guidelines independent of the mayor's office. The already-existing rule about posting election signs on public property needs to be better enforced, council candidates' monetary contributions and expenditures should be closely scrutinized and, perhaps the most important of all, there should be oversight of election fliers, which is crucial because it is the most abused. Such scrutiny would include also the oversight of the use of social media as campaign material.

The Pilot makes some ado about the new council having a majority of women for the first time in the city's history but goes on to say that the new females elected "campaign on platforms that aligned with many of their new colleagues positions." That is not necessarily a good thing. I would think it would go more to the city's well being if the new members, be they male or female, be as objective as

See *Mailbag*, page A10

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Laguna Beach moves to comply with state on ADUs

The city brought its ordinance into compliance with a recent law going into effect on Jan. 1.

BY ANDREW TURNER

Laguna Beach City Council members seemed well aware of a pattern when an ordinance seeking to bring city regulations on accessory dwelling units into compliance with recently passed state law came before them yet again on Tuesday night.

“We keep chasing the state,” Councilwoman Sue Kempf said. “I don’t know how many iterations of our ADU ordinance we’ve been through — two or three.”

New legislation at the state level, Assembly Bill 2533, increased the pathways to permit existing but unpermitted ADUs, which are often referred to as “granny flats.” Junior accessory dwelling units are now eligible for legalization. The construction cut-off date for such dwellings was moved up from Jan. 1, 2018 to Jan. 1, 2020.

State Senate Bill 1211, which goes into effect at the start of the new year, prohibits a city from requiring replacement parking in the case of the demolition or displacement of a surface parking lot for a proposed ADU. It also allows for up to eight detached ADUs for an existing multifamily dwelling, provided that they do not exceed the total number of primary dwelling units on the lot.

Local regulations on ADUs continue to be largely shaped by the California Coastal Act.

Anthony Viera, the acting planning manager for Laguna Beach, pointed out that because the city has a certified local coastal program it must require a coastal development permit for most ADUs. The only exception is for a property owner who is converting already habitable



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

WITH THE passage of new state laws regarding accessory dwelling units, often called “granny flats,” the Laguna Beach City Council had to pass a new ordinance this month to be in compliance.

space into one of the units. Viera further explained that in order to stay consistent with the Coastal Act and the city’s own coastal program, there are some additional standards an applicant seeking to build an ADU would need to meet: compliance with the 25-foot coastal bluff and 25-foot watercourse setbacks, and “an additional building setback, which essentially requires that you step back the upper-floor levels of the structure. There is also a requirement for replacement parking for the primary dwelling unit in the coastal zone on a one-for-one basis.”

Laguna Beach must plan for 394 additional units, per its Regional Housing Needs Assessment allocation for the housing element cycle that began in 2021 and runs until 2029. View equity frequently looms large in matters of

development in the coastal community.

Mayor Alex Rounaghi said proposed state legislation introduced by Sen. Dave Min — Senate Bill 1055 — attempted to provide incentives such as local discretion on two-story ADUs if a city was on track to meet its required affordable housing stock. Min’s bill didn’t get a hearing.

“I do think that we absolutely need more housing, but what we have in Laguna Beach is a unique set of circumstances, where we have decades of view equity where people’s property value, a significant amount of it, is based on their views,” Rounaghi said. “When someone’s coming in with a 25-foot ADU that’s blocking 25 to 50% of their views, it’s not working, specifically in Laguna Beach. That’s why it’s unlikely the state would do anything about this ... because we

have such a specific design review process and view equity, and that’s sort of why we are where we are.”

City Atty. Megan Garibaldi said local control has been chipped away through the years as cities have found loopholes. “To the extent that we are

trying to maximize local control, there is almost no local control,” Garibaldi said. “Five or six years ago, there was more, and that’s why they have new bills every year. A city will figure out some little sliver and try to use it, and the Legislature responds.

“There isn’t local control for design, development [and] rental. ... I think we need to be clear, ... all we’re doing is achieving compliance with our CDP and nothing more.”

andrew.turner@latimes.com
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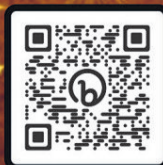
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APPETIZERS

- THE BUNGALOW EGG**
Chive smoked salmon scrambled egg topped with caviar. Served with a shot of Grey Goose Vodka 22
- COLOSSAL PRAWN COCKTAIL**
Spicy cocktail sauce with fresh horseradish & Tabasco then mixed with diced celery 26
- BUTTERNUT SQUASH RAVIOLI**
Sage brown butter, shaved Manchego, pistachios 20
- SWEET CHILI CALAMARI**
Tender calamari fried golden brown, sweet chili, bean sprouts, daikon sprouts, peanuts, carrots, Japanese dressing 20
- GRILLED ARTICHOKE**
Quarters of grilled artichoke, garlic olive oil marinade, ginger aioli 19

SOUPS & SALADS

- CORN CHOWDER**
Fresh corn, Applewood smoked bacon 14
- MEATBALL SOUP**
Pork & beef meatballs, beef stock, sautéed spinach, penne pasta 14
- HOLIDAY SALAD**
Cut romaine, Belgian endive, chives, watercress, Canadian coral bay shrimp, hard-boiled egg, tomato, ciabatta croutons, tossed in an olive oil, tarragon apple cider vinaigrette & a touch of Dijon mustard 22
- DUNGENESS CRAB & BAY SHRIMP LOUIE**
Juliened iceberg lettuce, sliced egg, asparagus spears, roasted red pepper, 1000 island dressing 30
- LIME-MARINATED CHICKEN SALAD**
Mixed greens, lime marinated grilled chicken, avocado, chopped grilled vegetables, tarragon vinaigrette 23
- BUNGALOW COBB SALAD**
Diced chicken, bacon, hard-boiled egg, avocado, tomato, scallions, bleu cheese, red wine vinaigrette 22
- SEARED AHI SALAD**
Seared rare, field greens, sweet peppers, Portobello mushrooms, toasted sesame seeds, wasabi-ginger vinaigrette 30

SANDWICHES

- STEAK SANDWICH**
Six ounce sliced filet mignon, onion strings, French baguette, French fries 33
- BEEF DIP SANDWICH**
Sliced thin, au jus, Swiss cheese, caramelized onions on a French roll. Served with creamy horseradish & French fries 25
- FILET MIGNON BURGER**
Ground filet mignon, cheddar cheese, lettuce, tomatoes, pickles, caramelized onions, 1000 island dressing & French fries 23

HOLIDAY FARE

- TRADITIONAL ROAST GOOSE WITH LINGONBERRY SAUCE**
Celery root mashed potatoes, warm gala apple compote & sweet sour red cabbage 44
- DI BELLA PASTA**
Penne pasta, marinara sauce, meatballs 27
- PEPPERED MEDALLIONS OF FILET**
Two medallions of pan-seared & pepper crusted filet mignon, topped with Diane sauce, seasonal vegetables 37
- MISO-MARINATED CHILEAN SEA BASS**
Soy glaze, coconut rice, stir fried vegetables, mushrooms, lemongrass ginger beurre blanc 39
- BLACKENED KING SALMON**
Yukon Gold mashed potatoes, avocado relish, honey jalapeño beurre blanc 33
- CALIFORNIA CHICKEN BREAST**
Pan-seared chicken breast, oven roasted tomatoes, avocado, Yukon Gold mashed potatoes 33

Split plate charge of five dollars for all entrees. Consuming raw or undercooked meats, poultry, seafood, shellfish or eggs may increase your risk of food-borne illness, especially if you have certain medical conditions. We have the right to refuse service to anyone. No more than two forms of payment per table, please. 20% Gratuity will be added to parties of eight or more. A 3% processing fee will be added to all credit card transactions. For guests that choose to pay with cash, the 3% fee will be waived.

La Vegana Mexicana closing at 4th Street Market

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

It has been seven years since Loreta Ruiz opened La Vegana Mexicana at 4th Street Market. Over time, her family-owned vegan Mexican food concept moved around the Santa Ana food hall, starting in the commissary kitchens when La Vegana was a pop-up, to a small space in the corner of the market, to one of the larger main food stalls.

But on Dec. 6, La Vegana announced via social media it would permanently close its brick-and-mortar location after the holidays.

"After seven unforgettable years, La Vegana Mexicana will be closing its doors. This journey has been nothing short of extraordinary and it's all because of you, our incredible community," the post on Instagram read. "From the bottom of our hearts we want to thank every single one of you who made this dream possible."

Making the decision to close is one Ruiz has been grappling with for the past year.

"I have been really stubborn in admitting that, financially, it is not sustainable," Ruiz said.

Ruiz was motivated to open La Vegana Mexicana by her daughter's struggle with an autoimmune disease and the specialized diet she had to adopt. When Ruiz saw a lack of vegan Mexican food options, she began veganizing her own family recipes. She made a name for herself as La Vegana Mexicana, selling vegan tamales. She replaced the traditional manteca, or lard made up of animal fat, with a combination of different vegetable oils, and they sold well at vegan festivals, bars and farmers markets. Then in 2017 she opened her business inside 4th Street Market, leaving her full-time job spreading Spanish-language healthcare



File Photos

AN ASSORTMENT of vegan Mexican food from La Vegana Mexicana in Santa Ana.

information at Latino Health Access.

While the plant-based eatery was popular, it faced many challenges.

First the COVID-19 pandemic forced 4th Street Market to shutter as locals sheltered in place. La Vegana Mexicana got by on takeout orders until it was permitted to reopen, but then OC Street Car construction closed the streets.

Now her business is feeling the effects of the rising cost of food, since many of its vegan ingredients are made in house. "Food in general is very expensive, but in our case we make our chorizo from scratch and it is labor intensive," Ruiz said. "Vegan cheese, we make it here and it takes five days to make, out of cashews, and cashews are super expensive."

In October 2023, Ruiz was one of the recipients of the Siete Family Foods' Siete Juntos Fund. The Hispanic-focused food and beverage brand committed

to awarding \$2 million over five years to businesses that empower and support Latino communities and Ruiz's business was awarded \$15,000. While the money was helpful, it went quickly with the high cost of operating a restaurant.

"Labor is the highest cost, payroll," said Ruiz. Ruiz has also noticed that veganism has fallen out of favor with diners.

"It's a funny thing, the word 'vegan' scares people away," said Ruiz. "They don't stop to take a look at what could be on the menu that is vegan but they are used to, like a mushroom taco, black beans, nopales."

She also notes some of the customers they attracted when they first opened are no longer following a vegan diet. Some have transitioned to vegetarianism while others have gone back to eating meat. Ruiz knows she isn't the only one feeling the effects of diners trending away from plant-based concepts.

"People are walking away from veganism, and there are many restaurants that have closed, restaurants that have been established for a good amount of time with great menus and good reviews," said Ruiz.

Local vegan food spots Gracia Madre in Newport Beach and Seabirds in Long Beach both shuttered this year. For years, Ruiz said people have suggested she add some non-vegan items to her menu, but she has resisted.

"I am so proud of the concept of La Vegana Mexicana, and I don't want to taint it with anything else. I would rather close it and give it its honors," she said.

She has considered rebranding the concept, but the menu would continue to serve vegan items.

"We want to keep serving those who have supported us that have a vegan diet," Ruiz said.

Since announcing the closing, the restaurant has seen an influx of customers, some Ruiz said she



LORETA RUIZ in front of La Vegana Mexicana in Santa Ana.

hasn't seen in years. She feels gratitude toward all the customers that have supported La Vegana in ways both big and small.

"I have to be thankful, because not knowing anything I was able to create something very unique, something that I am very proud of," said Ruiz. "I am thankful I was able to serve so many people that had a special diet and I am thankful I was able to share the space and time with my kids."

La Vegana Mexicana will have one last Tamalada, selling Christmas tamales for the holiday season to give her customers a chance to bring the tradition to their table one more time.

The vegan tamales are made with lard-free masa

and are sold in half dozens only. They are available in flavors like vegan cheese and jalapeño, black bean and mole, vegetarian cheese and red salsa and guava.

For Ruiz, it seems fitting to close out her La Vegana Mexicana chapter with the dish that started it all for her.

"The tamales have always been popular," said Ruiz.

La Vegana Mexicana's last day of service with the full menu is tomorrow. To order tamales, email la.vegana.mexicana.oc@gmail.com. The last day to order is Dec. 20.

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Stephen Huo, M.D.,
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MOTEL

Continued from page A1

organization contracted to perform outreach for Newport Beach, found as few as 11 people living on the street or in cars in the city. A similar census done around the same time last year identified as many as 70. Last year's count was run by City Net, which is no longer contracted by Newport Beach.

In August the city also cut ties with Be Well, the non-profit that had been operating a mobile mental health response team for them since 2021. That non-profit recently lost its position as the operator of Orange County's Mental Health and Wellness Campus in Orange, and has come under scrutiny for entering into a \$275,000 contract with a friend of embattled County Supervisor Andrew Do for services that were never delivered, as reported by LAist.



Eric Licas

A STUDIO APARTMENT at Clara Vista in Stanton, which was converted from a motel under Project Homekey. Newport Beach is working to convert a former Travelodge.

CITY'S HOMELESS MANAGEMENT

Newport Beach shifted to a strategy placing a greater emphasis on its police de-

partment and a recently bolstered anti-camping ordinance to compel people living on the street into shelter and support serv-

ices. That change came in light of a U.S. Supreme Court decision that allows municipalities to enforce such laws and public calls

from Gov. Gavin Newsom to clear encampments.

"Newport Beach's anti-camping laws are clearly having a positive effect in moving people off the streets," outgoing Mayor Will O'Neill said in a statement last month. "The new ordinance is prompting more unhoused individuals to accept shelter and services as an alternative to citations or arrest."

Between Oct. 10 and Nov. 19, Newport Beach police arrested 58 people and issued 10 citations to people while responding to 154 calls involving homeless people, city officials said in a news release.

Critics of a law enforcement-based approach to homelessness say it criminalizes those most severely impacted by a nationwide housing crisis, and maintain that wrapping people up in the criminal justice system adds additional barriers to getting off of the street. Many advocates for homeless people urge com-

munities to prioritize building housing while developing a network of mental health, substance abuse, training and other services to address the underlying issues that keep people from reaching housing security.

Kleiman joined her City Council colleagues when they voted unanimously in August to hire more police to handle calls involving homeless people. But in an email to the Daily Pilot Thursday, she acknowledged that "housing navigation can be challenging for these vulnerable populations, so permanent supportive housing is a critical component to a comprehensive program. My interest is ensuring best practices for the management of the project and the seamless transition of individuals into the right type of housing and support for their needs."

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Twitter: @EricLicas

MAILBAG

Continued from page A6

possible. They need to remember their role is to represent their district, not to please their colleagues.

Lynn Lorenz
Newport Beach

Message to H.B. council: Address problems

The newly elected Huntington Beach City Council members now face a criti-

cal mandate: fix Huntington Beach. The community demands real action — keep us financially above water, repair crumbling roads and close the city divisions that were created by the past majority.

Genuinely protect our libraries, not just pay lip service.

This is no stage for grandstanding over national issues like the new council members previously conducted before they came into office. This is not a "Face the Nation" show. It's a council seat

with real responsibilities to all Huntington Beach residents.

Campaign slogans like Butch Twining's "Save Our Library" ring hollow when past statements — like calling libraries "lousy" on August 13, 2024 in a Facebook post. Twining has also been seen vaping during a public meeting. This lack of professionalism and violation of California health laws are very troubling and lacks common sense.

Finally, true leadership needs independent judgment and accountability,

not a group think mentality. The community is watching, excuses will not suffice. The choice to lead, and heal this community is now yours.

Andrew Einhorn
Huntington Beach

Next week is the first full meeting of the Huntington Beach City Council with its new 7-0 MAGA majority, and while our electeds may feel bulletproof from local opposition, there is not enough Kevlar in the county to protect them from being gunned down

by Sacramento and subjected to lawsuits, penalties, restrictions and other negative impacts in areas like housing, voting rights and environmental issues. You don't bring a knife to a gunfight.

The stakes for Surf City are incredibly high. Michael Gates, our pugnacious elected city attorney, is leading what amounts to a "Charge of the Light Brigade" against overwhelming odds. You don't need to be a history student to guess how that foolhardy move 170 years

ago turned out. All the partisan patronage behind the "Seven Zeroes" will not stand up when the state huffs and puffs and blows our house down.

The best course for the new City Council is to jettison its grievance-filled agenda and concentrate on solving problems, addressing issues and serving the citizenry by listening to all of its residents. That is what representation is all about.

Tim Geddes
Huntington Beach

WORD

Continued from page A6

you spoke with. Pizza is what you think about. The store is where you walked to. He is who you yelled at. Reality is what you're grounded in. The table is the thing your keys are on.

If you tell someone that a preposition at the end makes for a bad sentence, you'll be right in a lot of

cases, as the examples above prove. But not always. And if you tell people that this is a grammar rule they must follow, you're not just giving them bad information — you're telling them not to trust the instincts that lead English speakers to use prepositions well every day.

But you don't have to take my word for it. You don't even have to take the word of Merriam's lexicog-

raphers. Every major grammar authority agrees, including the conservative ones.

"Not only is the preposition acceptable at the end, sometimes it is more effective in that spot than anywhere else," advises Strunk and White's "The Elements of Style." Strunk and White argue persuasively that "A claw hammer, not an ax, was the tool he murdered her with" is superior to "A

claw hammer, not an ax, was the tool with which he murdered her." It sounds more natural and, as the authors argue, it's more effective "because it sounds more violent."

Or consider the words of one of the most conservative language authorities I know, Fowler's Modern English Usage: "In most circumstances, especially in formal writing, it is desirable to avoid placing a

preposition at the end of a clause or sentence," the guide writes. "But there are many circumstances in which a preposition may or even must be placed late ... and others where the degree of formality required governs the placing."

Finally, consider this snarky example long misattributed to Winston Churchill (which researchers have since learned probably wasn't Churchill

at all but some unknown writer) about a sentence clumsily rewritten to move a preposition from the end: "This is the type of English up with which I will not put!"

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.

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