

Daily Pilot

SUNDAY, JULY 11, 2021 /// Now including Coastline Pilot and Huntington Beach Independent /// dailypilot.com

Cooling off



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

THE FOUNTAINS come alive for walkers around TeWinkle Park on a recent hot afternoon in Costa Mesa.



Mark Boster | Los Angeles Times

THE GENERAL PLAN update is back up for discussion again when the Newport Beach City Council meets this Tuesday.

Newport housing update review

The City Council will take another look at the general plan when it meets in a study session on Tuesday.

BY LILLY NGUYEN

Newport Beach city officials will be taking another look at the general plan housing element update during a study session Tuesday.

The housing element update is a comprehensive document that details housing plans and policies in the general plan.

Local jurisdictions are required to update their housing element every five years to eight years by the state and the update is supposed to be adopted by mid-October.

The state does, however, provide a 120-day grace period, meaning that the city technically has until Feb. 22 of next year to complete the process without facing penalties.

Initial drafts were presented in April and city staff returned twice in June for study sessions that provided updated scenarios

See **Housing**, page A2

Art-A-Fair's return brings out lots of smiles

BY ANDREW TURNER

The months leading up to the summer festival season last year were frustrating and worrisome for art festival organizers in Laguna Beach.

Michael Cahill, the president of the board of directors for Art-A-Fair, could attest to that. Cahill has served in that role for more than a decade.

No year challenged him like the last one, when three variations — each successively more scaled down — were created in the hopes that the show could go on.

The coronavirus pandemic only got worse

See **Art-A-Fair**, page A2



ARTIST SANDY CLARK, right, joins others during a "pour paint" workshop at the Laguna Art-A-Fair show on Friday.

Don Leach
Staff Photographer

O.C. man charged with plan to defraud buyers of gloves during pandemic

BY CITY NEWS SERVICE

An Orange County man pleaded not guilty Friday of defrauding victims who paid for COVID-related medical protective equipment that was never delivered, causing nearly \$3 million in losses.

Christopher John Badsey, 60, of Lake Forest was arrested by FBI agents Thursday on four counts of wire fraud and two counts of money laundering, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office.

An indictment returned Wednesday by a Los Angeles federal grand jury alleges that Badsey falsely represented that he had access to millions of boxes of medical-grade nitrile gloves through his Irvine-based company, First Defense International Security Services Corp. This type of personal protective equipment was in high demand and short supply during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Badsey allegedly entered into contractual agreements with victims, whom he required to

provide a money deposit to inspect the gloves before delivery.

After receiving the deposits, Badsey allegedly instructed victims to travel to the Los Angeles area, where he claimed the gloves were stored in a warehouse. However, when victims attempted to visit the warehouse, Badsey and other FDI employees allegedly provided excuses as to why the gloves could neither be inspected, nor delivered, to the victims.

Nitrile gloves were never provided to the victims, and Badsey is alleged to have absconded with the deposit money totaling nearly \$3 million. After obtaining the victims' wire deposits, Badsey and others are believed to have used those funds to make lavish purchases for their personal benefit.

If convicted of all charges in the six-count indictment, Badsey would face up to 100 years in federal prison, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office.

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Scott Smeltzer | Staff Photographer

ALSO FROM THE DAILY PILOT:

CDM WRESTLER LUKE VILLALUZ COMMITS TO CAL POLY, SAN LUIS OBISPO PAGE A6

AROUND TOWN: UC IRVINE HEALTH PROFESSOR RECEIVES NATIONAL AWARD PAGE A2

APODACA: HIGH COURT'S FREE SPEECH RULING LEAVES ROOM FOR STUDENT DISCIPLINE PAGE A4

WATER POLO

Lori Verdegaal a force behind the scenes

BY MATT SZABO

Lori Verdegaal may sometimes fulfill the "team mom" role for the United States senior national men's water polo team, but it's not like she's standing on the sidelines with orange slices and pats on the back.

As the team manager, the Newport Beach resident is the one who organizes the team's travel and many of their day-to-day activities. She communicates with FINA, the sport's governing body, while coordinating passports and pool time. Verdegaal stays in communication with head coach Dejan Udovicic, who relays the team's needs.

"I'm a total Type-A person," she said with a smile. "Spreadsheets galore, organization for sure ... The guys will come to me when they need stuff. It's a very comfortable environment for them. Everybody's like, 'Oh,

See **Verdegaal**, page A6



Kevin Chang | Staff Photographer

NEWPORT BEACH resident Lori Verdegaal is team manager for the U.S. Olympic men's water polo team.



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AROUND TOWN

Virtual job fair Wednesday morning for OptumRx

OptumRx, one of the Optum companies of UnitedHealth Group, will host a virtual job fair from 9 to 11 a.m. Wednesday to fill more than 250 customer service representative positions.

The positions will be based at the Optum office at 3515 Harbor Blvd., Costa Mesa.

New employees will receive seven weeks of onsite training. After completing the training they will be given telecommuter status.

Interested candidates can visit the UnitedHealth Group Careers website to learn more about the openings before the job fair.

UC Irvine health professor receives national award

Joyce Yu-Chia Lee, clinical professor of health sciences at UC Irvine, has received the 2021 Clinical Practice Award from the American College of Clinical Pharmacy, it

was announced by the university July 7.

Lee is a founding faculty member of UCI's School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences and the first to earn the recognition.

She was nominated by Alexandre Chan, UCI chair and professor of clinical pharmacy practice.

"Joyce came to UCI in 2020 after an 11-year stint in Asia, where she was a trailblazer who successfully changed the landscape of clinical pharmacy practice by establishing and expanding services and systems that did not previously exist," Chan stated in the UCI news release.

"She developed and directed numerous training programs, including the first pharmacy residency program in ambulatory care in Singapore and chronic disease certification courses made accessible to countries across the Asia-Pacific region.

"She also instrumentally developed and implemented practice algorithms to address diversity, equity and inclusion in patient care."

— From staff reports

HOUSING

Continued from page A1

that could account for the required growth of 4,845 housing units.

The city of Newport Beach is not responsible for the construction of those homes, but must at least zone for them on paper, per the Southern California Assn. of Governments, which assigns the Regional Housing Needs Assessment numbers for Orange, Los Angeles and four other Southern California counties.

Following Tuesday's study session, according to

city staff, requested final edits will be added to the draft before it will be submitted to the state department of housing and community development for a 60-day mandatory review period with the council's approval.

The process to update the general plan began in 2019.

The City Council is also expected to take action on a set of resolutions that will continue to allow business owners in the Balboa Village area to dispose of commercial solid waste at Washington Street and Easy Bay Avenue.

The updated resolution

will identify specific business addresses eligible to use the bin and establishing a fee to be paid by the property owner to do so as opposed to listing businesses by name, according to a staff report.

The council will also be considering a second substantial amendment to its 2020-21 annual action plan for the Federal Community Development Block Grant Program to fund activities and projects that prevent, prepare for or respond to COVID-19.

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ART-A-FAIR

Continued from page A1

as the festival season drew nearer, ultimately preventing Art-A-Fair from happening in its entirety.

"This is my 11th year as president now, which is insane, especially after last year," Cahill said. "It almost makes it worth it right now just to see this thing come together this year the way it has after the fiasco that was last year."

Beginning Fourth of July weekend, Art-A-Fair reopened to the public to take in and shop for the work of its roughly 110 fine artists.

Eren Alptekin's booth was near the front entrance. Displayed on her wall were an array of abstract paintings, some of which included colorful representations of iconic downtown Los Angeles buildings such as the Walt Disney Concert Hall and the Broad Museum.

"I feel very fortunate about coming again this year," said Alptekin, a Newport Beach artist. "This is my sixth year in this show, and every year, I feel very fortunate to be a part of this show. So far, I think this is the best year for everybody."

"The quality of art became so well since the year 2019, and all the variety of different mediums and different artists with different subject matter is excellent this year."

Art-A-Fair has no residency requirements, but it is a juried show.

Cahill said the jury looks for excellence in concep-



Photos by Don Leach | Staff Photographer

ART INSTRUCTOR and watercolorist Emilee Reed helps a participant during a "pour paint" workshop on Friday.

tion, execution and presentation, with an expectation of a high level of performance in creativity and technical competence.

Lynleigh Love was juried into the show for the first time. Her creations were made from sheet glass. She said she burst into tears when she was told that she got into the show.

"It's an honor," Love said. "I mean, I grew up in Irvine, so I was coming down here every year to the Festival of Arts, to this show, to the Sawdust, and this is where the artists were, so when I got into this, it was magical."

At Marie Lavallee's station, she used mixed media like Scrabble letters, coinage and stamps. The coins were incorporated into the creation of artwork featuring birds.

"I go to the bank to get my coins, and they see me coming because I come with a ... bag, and I'll say, I

want 30 rolls of pennies and 30 rolls of dimes,' and they go, 'Her again,'" Lavallee said.

"Actually, I was asked once, 'What do you do with all these pennies,' and I said, 'If you really want to know, you can't snatch because I want to be able to come back,' and I said, 'I make art with them,' and they went, 'What?'"

Jeff Nadler, a wildlife photographer from Ocean-side, brought a number of images that largely gave the viewer the opportunity to peer into the eyes of animals.

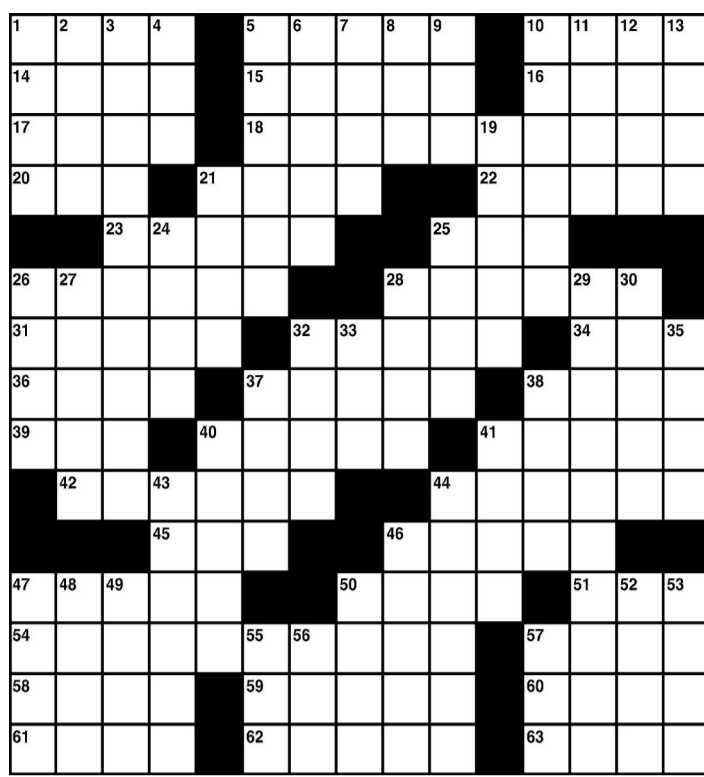
He said he has traveled to several continents to capture his shots.

"I really try to ... show the personalities, really the souls of the animals," Nadler said. "My whole purpose of my photography is to try to create a connection for people, so that with wildlife, they see that animal, they connect with

THE DAILY COMMUTER PUZZLE

By Jacqueline E. Mathews

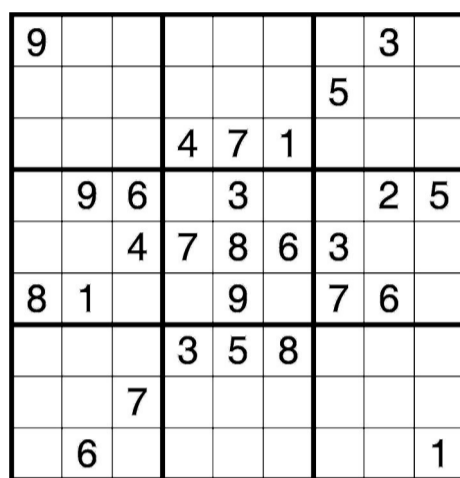
ACROSS 1 Just; equitable
5 Refrigerator brand
10 Job opening
14 Peru's capital
15 Flies alone
16 Producer Norman —
17 Award for "Cheers"
18 Colgate, for one
20 As flat — pancake
21 Football kick
22 "Casey — Bat"
23 " — Amore"; Dean Martin song
25 Complete
26 Actor Tom
28 Neighbor of Colorado
31 Antlers
32 Liquid measures
34 Police officer
36 Skip over
37 Shoe parts
38 Indelible mark
39 Hound or hamster
40 Took illegally
41 Skier's surface
42 Seafood in a shell
44 Opposite of sturdy
45 Rest
46 Vise
47 Skirt fold
50 Marching band instrument
51 Building site
54 Able to withstand a temblor
57 — it up; have a ball
58 Seldom seen
59 — breath; panting
60 Like yummy cinnamon rolls
61 NBA team
62 Irsksome
63 Savage & Stiller



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 A3.

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 3 Childishness | cigar |
| 4 Charles or Liotta | 10 Items for pioneer schoolkids |
| 5 Shrewd | 11 For fear that |
| 6 Planet orbiters | 12 Pledge |
| 7 " — Like Love"; Amanda Peet film | 13 Pine or palm |
| 8 TV's "What _ to Wear" | 19 Arthritis symptoms |
| 9 Speck from a | |

- 21 Go by
- 24 Indirect suggestion
- 25 Large tubs
- 26 Coleslaw recipe verb
- 27 Shakespearean lover
- 28 Word attached to cap or pad
- 29 Criminal's associate
- 30 Ivory & Dial
- 32 Needy
- 33 Ailing
- 35 Hunter's victim
- 37 Ladder rung
- 38 Slender
- 40 Washington, for one
- 41 Close angrily
- 43 Desert reptiles
- 44 Adjective in a pillow ad
- 46 Thief
- 47 O's followers
- 48 Lanai feast
- 49 Merit
- 50 Decimal points
- 52 Baker's need
- 53 Kennedy & Cruz
- 55 Soft drink
- 56 Feel sorry about
- 57 Ad _; wing it

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WILDLIFE ARTIST
Laura Curtain stands with her trademark pink elephants.

it, and they feel that it's worth preserving. My whole purpose really is conservation."

One image that did not incorporate the eyes of the creature saw a spirit bear dive into a river in British Columbia in an attempt to catch itself a meal. Nadler gave the shot a humorous title.

"I called it, 'Swan Dive,' even though it was really a belly flop," he recalled.

Across the aisle, Saeid Gholibeik also included animals in his acrylic paintings, often pairing them with children. He said he aimed to show the special connection that a child could make with animals through the power of imagination.

Some of his work also paid homage to various cultures, and he stressed the importance of respecting each other.

"The cultures in this world that we share, every culture is just like a little, beautiful flower in a garden, and we should never, ever ignore or neglect one of those," Gholibeik said.

"We don't want everything to be roses. We don't want everything to be orchids. We love all the combinations of the cultures."

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High court's free speech ruling leaves room for student discipline

The U.S. Supreme Court's recent decision regarding a school's punishment of a student for off-campus speech was a ruling that administrators across the country had looked to for some added clarity regarding how far their responsibilities extend in this complex age of digital media dominance.

The case involved a Pennsylvania high school student who was suspended from the junior varsity cheerleading squad for posting a profanity-laced rant on Snapchat after she didn't get a spot on the varsity team.

It was significant in part because it was the high court's first ruling on student free speech since 1969. In that earlier case the court ruled that an Iowa school could not prohibit students from wearing black arm bands to protest the Vietnam War. Students' language must pose a "substantial" disruption to the learning environment for a school to take disciplinary action, it said at the time.

But much has changed since then. In the past, schools were held responsible for students "door to door," which was defined as the time kids left home to attend school or school-related functions, until they returned home. The emergence and proliferation of social media muddied that narrative by fundamentally altering the way students communicate.

Social media posts can be entered anywhere, and they follow students around all day, in and out of school. This altered

landscape has posed enormous challenges for schools trying to determine whether, and how, to intervene when students make problematic posts that are widely shared.

Like the earlier Supreme Court ruling, last month's 8-1 decision erred on the side of free speech. The court ruled in the student's favor, saying that schools cannot punish a student for off-campus speech unless it "materially disrupts classwork or involved substantial disorder or invasion of the rights of others."

As Justice Stephen Breyer, writing for the majority, so aptly put it, "Sometimes it is necessary to protect the superfluous in order to preserve the necessary."

He laid out three general principles for student free-speech protections and the limitations of schools. The first is that schools rarely stand "in loco parentis" — in place of parents or legal guardians — when it comes to the monitoring of students' off-campus speech.

Second, he wrote, taken together a student's on-campus and off-campus speech would encompass all of a student's speech 24 hours a day. Therefore, "courts must be more skeptical of a school's efforts to regulate off-campus speech, for doing so may mean the student cannot engage in that kind of speech at all."

And third, he emphasized that schools should seek to protect student speech, even if unpopular, "because America's public schools are the nurseries of democracy."

So the decision provided some new clarity on where the boundaries exist, but not so much that schools won't still have some difficult calls to make.

"I think certain people wanted a bright line, but I don't think that's what they got out of this decision," said Dr. Phil D'Agostino, the director of Student and Community Services at Newport-Mesa Unified School District.

"While it certainly limits schools' ability to discipline students for speech that occurs off campus, it didn't negate the broader rule. They left the door open to discipline students for off-campus speech if it relates to bullying and threats."

While that might seem to be a reasonable standard, the challenge lies in determining what kind of speech and behavior falls into those categories. When is the line crossed from speech that some might consider rude or objectionable into cyber bullying or hate speech?

And if a school district decides that it must respond in some fashion, what exactly should that response encompass?

Fortunately, here in California we have a better understanding thanks to a years-long trend of downplaying old-school disciplinary measures and instead favoring concepts such as restorative justice that emphasize prevention and intervention strategies.

In keeping with that trend, since last year the state has banned suspensions in grades K-8 for

See *Apodaca*, page A5

MAILBAG

Laguna Beach High School grad needs help after accident

My sister Brigitte Naughton (who is 20 years younger than me) was born and raised in Laguna Beach. Brigitte went through the whole Laguna school system, from El Morro to Thurston to Laguna Beach High, where she graduated with multiple academic scholarships.

She received her undergraduate degree with honors in biochemistry and molecular biology at UC Santa Barbara, along with a minor in English Literature, and was the science editor of the university newspaper. The head of the English department at UCSB offered to sponsor her for a doctorate. After graduating, Brigitte was hired at Pfizer Oncology in San Diego, where she performed research on cancer therapies to pay off her student loan debt. She was quickly promoted to senior associate researcher. Her coworkers at Pfizer encouraged her to apply to graduate school in order to reach her full potential.

She applied to the top graduate schools in her field and was accepted to eight highly competitive programs. She is now going into her third year at Yale University, working toward a doctorate in molecular biophysics and biochemistry.

Brigitte exemplifies what students from the Laguna Beach School District can achieve. And now, due to a terrible accident, Brigitte needs our help.

Brigitte was on a small boat with friends recently when a line for wakeboarding snapped and a large metal piece hit her face, the force of it shattering her jaw, knocking out teeth and splitting her tongue. She is dealing with major reconstructive surgeries on her jaw and teeth, nerve damage to her mouth, and complicated surgical procedures involving internal stitches and two permanent metal plates placed in her jaw. The ambulance, the first emergency room she was



Courtesy of Celine Macmillan

LAGUNA BEACH High School graduate Brigitte Naughton uses a microscope in the lab at Yale. She was recently in a boating accident that injured her mouth and jaw and will require major reconstructive surgery.

taken to and all the future dental work — including efforts to realign her bite, braces, implants, root canals on injured teeth, and potential crowns — are not covered by her Yale insurance.

In spite of everything, Brigitte remains focused on her academic goals at Yale. Her professors are helping her on the academic front; let's help her on the financial front.

From Brigitte: "I am so appreciative of the donations received. I was in the hospital for two days and underwent major reconstructive surgery to repair my shattered jaw. I had two metal plates permanently inserted to fix my fractured jaw, in addition to sutures to repair my tongue that was split in half and my chin that was cut through. I am lacking sensation in my lower left chin and lip, but the doctor is optimistic that because the nerve was not severed, I may regain feeling in this area. It's been a really challenging time, worrying about whether I can afford the care I need while focusing on my studies and lab work. I hope to be able to continue my PhD and regain the ability to eat and talk normally. I cannot overstate how grateful I am to those who have helped."

Here is the link to Brigitte's GoFundMe page:

[gofundme.com/f/help-brigitte-naughton-pay-her-medical-bills](https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-brigitte-naughton-pay-her-medical-bills).

Celine Macmillan
Laguna Beach

Re: Woman arrested on suspicion of vandalism, assaulting officer after breaking Costa Mesa PD window, Daily Pilot, June 30. A drunk, 20-year-old woman throws a rock with such force and accuracy that she breaks a second-floor window in the police station! Seriously she should be PITCHING for a baseball team.

Kim Hadj Hamou
Huntington Beach

Due to the massive fireworks on the Fourth of July, about 120 animals were taken to the Huntington Beach Wetlands and Wildlife Care Center, Daily Pilot, July 7. Animals such as a peregrine falcon, a black-crowned night heron chick and a gray fox hit by a car were some of the helpless creatures scared and hurt by the fireworks and noise in the sky. It is readily apparent that only humans seem to enjoy fireworks on the Fourth.

If Dr. Doolittle could be summoned he might hear some of the comments by the animals such as: "Who do I have to bite to make a dent in the chain of com-

See *Mailbag*, page A5

A WORD, PLEASE | **JUNE CASAGRANDE**

LAPD tweet about fireworks explosion buried the lede

Our Bomb Squad officers were in the process of seizing over 5,000 pounds of illegal fireworks in the area of 27th Street and San Pedro. Some of the fireworks were being stored in our Bomb Squad trailer as a precautionary measure. Unknown at this time what caused an explosion."

That was the only tweet from the Los Angeles Police Department's @LAPDHQ account reporting a June 30 explosion in a residential neighborhood that happened after officers had

taken steps to prevent an explosion.

The weaselly language of the LAPD's announcement didn't go over well in the Twitterverse.

"How is 'explosion' the last word in this tweet and not the first word in this tweet?" asked @Darth, an anonymous and wildly popular Twitter user best known for posting pictures of adorable dogs. "This is like one of those 'a gun went off' explanations that tries to obfuscate (sic) that someone actually pulled the [expletive deleted] trigger."

Darth has a point. To someone who values transparency and accountability, the LAPD's announcement is maddening. But to a language geek, it's also kind

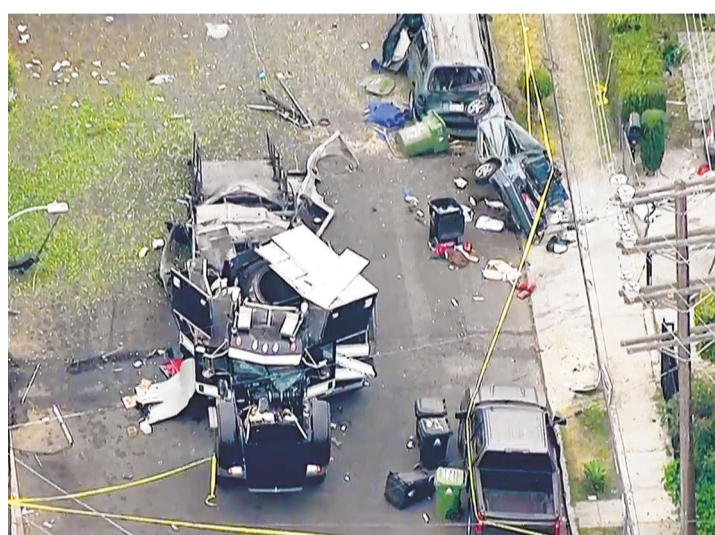
of exciting. The tweet illustrates just how powerful syntax can be to shape your message, for good or for ill.

For example, here's how the headline writers at the Los Angeles Times reported the news: "Terror, panic as explosion rocks L.A. block."

Notice the operative subject and verb here: "explosion rocks." There's real action taking place in this clause — not just a watered-down reference to an action.

"Explosion" is a nominalization, which I discussed in this space recently. Usually, a nominalization means a verb in its noun form — a dynamic action turned into a static object or abstract concept. For example, "The truck exploded" is a much more action-oriented wording than the nominalized alternative: "The truck experienced an explosion."

But that's not the only way the LAPD's social media team downplayed officers' potential responsibility for the blast that injured



AERIAL IMAGE shows the remains of an armored Los Angeles Police Department tractor-trailer after fireworks exploded June 30.

KTLA

17 people and shattered windows in homes, cars and a laundromat. Just by putting "explosion" at the end of the statement, the department deftly buried the lede. You have to slog through 52 boring words like "in process" and "as a precautionary measure" to get to the kaboom.

But there's another thing happening here that I find particularly irksome — a thing that comes up a lot in

my work editing writers who aren't great at explaining things: making reference to a thing, in this case, an explosion, without first telling the reader the thing exists.

In most cases, these writers' weapon of choice is the definite article "the."

Consider the sentence "Katie screamed and grabbed the diary." It's perfectly grammatical. Nothing wrong with that at all — unless you've failed to mention at some point that there exists a diary.

Here's how I put it in my book "It Was the Best of Sentences, It Was the Worst of Sentences": "Ever stop to think about the word 'the'? It's a tiny word, yet it's huge. It carries so much responsibility. It leans so heavily on your reader. It says, 'You're expected to know what I'm talking about.'"

The LAPD tweet doesn't use the indefinite article. It uses an indefinite article, "an," to commit the same crime against the reader. "Unknown at this time

what caused an explosion" is a reference to an explosion.

It's not the same as reporting that there has been an explosion. Even wet-blanket wording like "an explosion occurred Wednesday" would have been sufficient to tell the reader what had happened. Obviously, official police department statements shouldn't aim to grab the reader the way newspaper headlines do. But this tweet's buffering of the news went too far.

By making reference to "an explosion" instead of stating that there was an explosion, LAPD not only downplayed the blast but also downplayed the fact that the injuries and property damage may have been caused by their own screw-up.

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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MAILBAG

Continued from page A4

mand that has the authority to get this holiday off the books?" "Could the person in charge of all these loud noises and colors move their stupid show about 100 miles out to sea and let the sharks and whales have their turn for a while?"

And lastly, "If the inconsiderate humans have to have this holiday, have them put a mute on all the sounds, black out all the bright colors and get rid of the horrible smells we have to endure from the stuff that makes them go boom, boom." "Other than that ... we are willing to share our home with you guys."

Bill Spitalnick
Newport Beach

An archaic Municipal Improvement Act of 1913, meant as a vehicle for beneficial community development in the pre-World War I era, has silently morphed into a stealth, "under the radar" strategy

HOW TO GET PUBLISHED

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

to levy tens of millions of dollars in property taxes without the normal rigid safeguards and procedures for voter approval. The city of Newport Beach has mastered the use of this Municipal Act specifically to under-ground utilities over the past 20-plus years. The strategy is to divvy up each project as a small Assessment District affecting several hundred property owners at a time without attracting too much unwanted attention. To date, per the data available on the city's website, it has been accomplished over 60 times. Due to its impact on a small number of properties at any one time, it gets scant attention from the public at large and protests by the scattered opposition

are ignored by the city or drowned out in the cacophony of absurdities spouted on NextDoor.

One such project, Assessment District 124, is scheduled for a so-called vote on July 27. Unlike the others, this is an unusually large \$32,815,700 project affecting 966 properties on Balboa Island. The average cost (a property tax euphemistically called an "assessment" under the California Constitution) amounts to a staggering \$34,000 per parcel, if paid as a lump sum. However, by my calculations, if paid over 20 years the total payment could be as high as \$54,000 depending on the bond interest rate in 2023 or 2024.

Now to the upcoming

Balboa Island vote on July 27. The ballots, mailed out around June 10, are 100% by mail; the ballot roster is managed by a contractor hired by the city.

Four weeks after the mailing, it was determined during a private meeting that a number of voters have not yet received their ballots and may not even be aware of the assessment about to befall them. This has been a recurring pattern on past such ballots — as little as 70% voter participation in many cases — leading to passage with way less than 50% of affected property owners approving. Furthermore, the city has no methodology for checking signatures on the mail-in ballots, relying solely on the penalty of perjury. The vote, by design and I am told by statute via Article II of the California Constitution, is a matter of public record subjecting participants to potential intimidation and peer pressure.

The city has provided several informational attachments along with the

ballots. Missing in the attachments are the customary pleadings for and against the initiative from each of the two camps so that the voters can make an informed choice. No opposing view has been provided with the ballots. There have been no hearings or informational meetings held by the city on this huge four-years-long project. We have been told by the city that this obvious lack of transparency and ballot integrity is sanctioned by the Municipal Improvement Act of 1913.

But the city continues to

present itself as an independent, honest arbiter in an unpleasant feud of its own making, between dueling neighbors.

It is high time for the city to step in and protect the residents. But will it do so?

Highly unlikely given the creative approach (having property owners seemingly opt into higher taxes voluntarily) provides them with a convenient and healthy subsidy to what is in essence city and utility infrastructure projects.

Jamshed Dastur
Balboa Island

CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU ANSWERS

F	A	I	R	A	M	A	N	A	S	L	O	T
L	I	M	A	S	O	L	O	S	L	E	A	R
E	M	M	Y	T	O	O	T	H	P	A	S	T
A	S	A	P	U	N	T	A	T	T	H	E	
			T	H	A	T	S	V	I	E		
C	R	U	I	S	E	K	A	N	S	A	S	
H	O	R	N	S	P	I	N	T	S	C	O	P
O	M	I	T	S	O	L	E	S	S	C	A	R
P	E	T	S	T	O	L	E	S	L	O	P	E
			O	Y	S	T	E	R	F	L	I	M
				N	A	P	C	L	A	M	P	
P	L	E	A	T	D	R	U	M	L	O	T	
Q	U	A	K	E	P	R	O	O	F	L	I	V
R	A	R	E	O	U	T	O	F	I	C	E	D
S	U	N	S	P	E	S	K	Y	B	E	N	S

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

APODACA

Continued from page A4

"willful defiance," a category of speech and behavior that had been widely criticized for being vague and overused.

In Newport-Mesa, "we apply a restorative approach," D'Agostino said.

The words "discipline" and "disciple" derive from the same root word, he noted. The discipline of students "should be a teachable moment and not just punitive. We want them to grow as human beings."

A high-profile example of that strategy emerged in 2019 after a group of students from Newport Harbor, Costa Mesa and Es-tancia high schools were seen in a social media post giving a Nazi salute in front of red plastic cups arranged in the shape of a swastika.

The incident, which generated news reports

across the country, led to the creation of a districtwide human relations task force, with the goal of promoting a more positive and inclusive environment and improving curriculum.

The district also held community meetings, and brought in Holocaust survivor Eva Schloss, Anne Frank's stepsister, to speak to students about her experiences. Student discipline continues to be a tricky business plagued by blurred lines, changing norms and the increasing prevalence of social media.

Nonetheless, the decision to protect free speech and the growing embrace of restorative justice are moves in the right direction.

PATRICE APODACA is a former Los Angeles Times staff writer and is coauthor of "A Boy Named Courage: A Surgeon's Memoir of Apartheid." She lives in Newport Beach.

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HIGH SCHOOL WRESTLING

CdM's Luke Villaluz commits to Cal Poly program

BY ANDREW TURNER

The recruiting process has been far from traditional, for some, due to fallout from the coronavirus pandemic.

Corona del Mar High School's Luke Villaluz recently committed to the Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo wrestling program, but the road was packed with nervous moments and uncertainty.

Villaluz moved from Connecticut and joined the Sea Kings program just in time to help CdM win a CIF Southern Section dual meet wrestling championship in Division 6 in 2020, which was the first dual meet title for the program.

As a sophomore, Villaluz went 37-8 for the Sea Kings. And yet, he was still unsure of how to capture the attention of college coaches.

In January, Villaluz and his father visited the Cal Poly campus, where they had a chance encounter with an assistant coach of the wrestling program.

Villaluz indicated his interest in wrestling in college, and the question that stuck with him was one inquiring about how he had performed in the CIF State wrestling championships; he had

not qualified.

"I'm thinking from then on, 'I'm going to do whatever it takes to get there,'" Villaluz said. "I'll sacrifice everything. I'm going to work my butt off in school, work my butt off on the mat, and really make wrestling as much of a priority as school now — both equivalent and working super hard in both."

The pandemic did not result in the outright loss of a high school wrestling season, but it existed only in the form of dual meets. The opportunity to post big individual wins at tournaments had been wiped away.

Villaluz, who weighs in at 5-foot-10, 144 pounds, did what he could with the chances provided.

He went 12-0 in his junior season for the Sea Kings, helping his team advance to a second consecutive Division 6 finals appearance. Western won the team title this time, beating CdM 40-21.

"Being around a bunch of people that want to work hard, you almost can't not want to work hard," Villaluz said of wrestling for CdM.

"When you're around that many people that want to work hard, you want to do what they do, and that was really motivat-



Scott Smeltzer | Staff Photographer

CORONA DEL MAR HIGH wrestler Luke Villaluz went 12-0 as a junior.

ing for me."

The next thing that Villaluz did was return to Cal Poly for a wrestling camp in June. As the camp neared its end, the assistant he had run into on his first trip, Chris Chionuma, asked him if he would be able to stick around to tour the campus.

He then had a Zoom meeting scheduled with the coaching staff after the weekend, and at the end of it, Villaluz was asked if he wanted to commit to the spot.

"I was just in shock," said Villaluz, who made his commitment on June 28. "I literally did not know what to say, and I said, 'Uh,

yes, yes!'

"The Zoom call ends, and I drive to Habit Burger with my dad, and we're just in shock. A week ago, we would not have thought that I would be committed, and here we are this Monday, we're committed."

Corona del Mar also had another college-bound wrestler on last year's team in Cal Baptist signee Emilio Franco, who competed in the heavyweight division.

"Luke moved to Newport Beach as an already highly-skilled wrestler," Sea Kings coach Mark Alex said. "In addition to wrestling, he is an outstanding overall athlete. Luke continuously works hard to improve his wrestling skills. I'm very proud that he has committed to Cal Poly, which has a great wrestling tradition and will provide an excellent education."

"Luke is a great team leader and really helps motivate his teammates. With Luke's skills and work ethic, I know he would have been competing at the state championships last season, if they weren't canceled."

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VERDEGAAL

Continued from page A1

you're the team mom.' It's like, 'Well, kind of, in an elevated form.'"

Verdegaal and Team USA leave Sunday for Hawaii, where they will participate in common training with the Australian national team.

They arrive in Tokyo on July 20, and their first game at the Olympics is on July 25 against host Japan.

Verdegaal said she is thrilled to be going to her first Olympics, especially in a staff role.

Due to COVID-19 regulations, though, she won't be able to view other sports, and staff will not walk in the opening ceremonies. It was also announced this week that fans won't be able to attend.

"I'm still excited to get in the village and see all of the other athletes there," she said. "It's just such a high level of competition and a high level of athletes there. Even just mixing in and being with them is going to be an amazing thing to do. Even with restrictions, I'm going to the Olympics, and that's amazing. How many people can say that?"

Verdegaal, who started working for USA Water Polo with the pipeline teams in 2013, became the team manager after the 2016 Olympic Games.

Her background wasn't always in water polo; the mother of three boys was a triathlon runner, which eventually led to her becoming a swim coach.

She moved into water polo as her children became involved in the sport. Her youngest son, Gage, is an incoming senior left-

hander on the Newport Harbor High boys' water polo team.

Lori and Gage moved to Newport Beach in 2018, from the Central Valley. Lori has a long-distance relationship with her husband, Darren, who remains in Kings County as a building official.

She is an important part of the team, said two-time Olympian Luca Cupido, who has his own connection to Newport Harbor. Cupido graduated in 2014 after moving to California from Italy prior to his senior year.

"It's definitely important to have someone directing all of the chaos that can go on, especially on travel days," Cupido said. "There's a lot of stuff behind the scenes that maybe we take for granted, but it's a lot of work and it's very much appreciated. We have a very diversified staff, so it's

good to have a female, the 'mom' of the group. That's definitely good to have that different perspective on things."

Verdegaal said she doesn't mind being the female figure for the players sometimes. Some of her most difficult work has been during the pandemic, figuring out rules and regulations for the different countries the team will be playing in. Team USA had a month-long trip to Greece, Montenegro, Serbia, Croatia and Italy during January and February.

"I was just trying to make sure we could get through every airport and on every flight, and we didn't miss something going through," she said. "That was my biggest worry, that somebody is not going to have the right test or the right paperwork to get through an airport."

It went off smoothly, which is a

credit to Verdegaal as much as anything.

She said she is lucky to be part of a staff that includes Udovicic, assistant coaches Gavin Arroyo and Alex Rodriguez, sport medicine manager Chris Bates and video coordinator Matt Ustaszewski.

Verdegaal said she shared a light moment with some of the players in Italy.

"One of the athletes said something, and I kind of pulled the mom thing and said their first and middle name," she said. "He was like, 'You know my middle name?' I said, 'I've booked flights for you, hundreds of them. I know every one of your middle names.' You just get to know everything about each other as you travel."

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