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Irvine seniors stand up for racial justice

In the weeks after George Floyd's death, the group took a stand against the unjust police killings of Black Americans.

BY BEN BRAZIL

In the weeks after George Floyd died while a Minneapolis police officer knelt on his neck, a group of Orange County seniors formed a racial justice advocacy group and organized a series of vigils to draw attention to the unjust police killings of Black Americans.

With the threat of a deadly virus in the air, the elderly group gathered on a street corner, some in wheelchairs, others with walkers in-hand and caregivers nearby, and they held up signs that read "Silence is Violence" and "Seniors for Racial Justice."

People who drove by honked in support and gave thumbs up.

The sight was irregular. Usually, protesters are much younger.

"They were just pleased to see us taking a stand for something instead of just sitting and playing bingo," said Vivian Johnson, 85. "We just decided we needed to do something, and we couldn't just sit and listen to the news."

The eight founding members of Seniors for Racial Justice live in the Regents Point senior community in Irvine. Johnson said about 60 people from the community took part in the vigils.

Following the Floyd demonstrations, the seniors teamed up with the organization Vote Forward to write more than 400 letters encouraging people to vote in the presidential election.

The group is also looking to partner with the local National Assn. for the Advancement of Colored People to provide youth mentorship.

"Many of us feel we want to continue to make a contribution to society in spite of being elderly," Johnson said.

Amid increased reports of rising racism and violence against Asian Americans throughout the country, the group is currently working on plans to support the local Asian American community.

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Photos courtesy of OC Día del Niño

MARIACHI LOS SANTOS de Santa Ana High School students virtually perform traditional Mexican hits.

For the children

OC. Día del Niño festival returns this month with arts and music with programming scheduled through July.

BY VERA CASTANEDA

If you're parenting a preschooler nowadays, you might be their only playmate. A DVR list of cartoons might have become the only way to take a much-needed break, and neighborhood walks might be one of the few ways to tire out your toddler before bedtime.

Now you can add Imagination Celebration, an annual six-week countywide festival of arts for children, to the list of kid's programming.

It returns on April 17 through May 30 with a mix of low-cost and free, in-person and virtual activities like OC Día del Niño, a Latin American holiday honoring the role of the child in the family and society.

OC Día del Niño typically takes place at the OC Fair & Events Center but returns virtually from April 19 with online programming available through July 31.

"The workshops are designed for parents and kids to do together to develop a lifelong appreciation and participation in art," said Victor Payan, co-founder of Media Arts Santa Ana. "Studies have shown that participation in the arts is helpful for children academically, emotionally. It really helps them to develop."

Prerecorded performances, between 15 to 45 minutes, include the Lucky Band, Twinkle Time and Ellas as well as

See *Children*, page R4



GRAMMY-WINNING the Lucky Band headlines the OC Día del Niño festival with bilingual songs and animated music videos.



ARTIST JOESE GLORIA HERNANDEZ will teach kids how to make puppets from paper bags during OC Día del Niño.

Council on Aging community liaison surprised by award

BY SUSAN HOFFMAN

Susan Papiri had no idea people knew what she did.

The community liaison for the Council on Aging - Southern California Concierge Care Navigators program is the first recipient of the quarterly 2021 Oliver Halsell award for compassionate and devoted caregivers in Orange County, but she didn't expect to be recognized.

"I was flabbergasted that I won this [award]," Papiri said. "I didn't consider myself in that category."

Officials at Fairhaven Memorial Park & Mortuary in Santa Ana created the Halsell Care Awards in 2012 to honor people who have demonstrated exceptional care in their profession and community.

The award is named after Oliver Halsell, who founded Fairhaven

in 1911. Among the devoted caregivers that the Oliver Halsell award pays tribute to are Orange County nurses, social workers, volunteers, medical providers, counselors and hospice workers.

According to General Manager Greg Morones, Papiri's extensive involvement in the senior care concierge program caught their attention. "Our connection as a [Senior Care Hero Awards] sponsor and seeing Susan out in the community, we recognized and wanted to give back to her," Morones said. "Susan has a heart for serving others, and we wanted to honor her by recognizing what she's done to help others."

Papiri, a La Habra resident and married mother of two daughters, has worked in the field of skilled

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SUSAN PAPIRI, community liaison for Council on Aging Southern California Concierge Care Navigators Program, is winner of the Oliver Halsell award.

Susan Hoffman

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ROIC



Majority of sex, human trafficking victims in O.C. are Black and Latino, report says

BY BEN BRAZIL

The majority of victims of human and sex trafficking identified by the Orange County Human Trafficking Task Force between 2016 and 2020 were Black and Latino, according to a recent report issued by the task force.

Each group accounted for 30% of the victims the task force assisted. White people accounted for 19%, Asian and Pacific Island people for 10% and those of "other" or mixed races for 11%.

"Human trafficking crosses all racial, ethnic, gender, socioeconomic and cultural lines," the report says. "Human trafficking is about profit and abuse, it does not discriminate as long as it can sell. While it is important to emphasize that anyone can be a victim of trafficking or a targeted demographic based on their background, it is equally important to understand how racial and cultural dynamics intersect with human trafficking."

The report highlights the last decade of work from the task force, which has grown to include more than 60 law enforcement agencies, victim service providers, nonprofits and other groups.

The task force was formed to combat human and sex trafficking in Orange County, which attracts the crime with its high tourism and affluent communities.

The report also states the COVID-19 pandemic made it difficult for the task force to assist victims last year. Officials in the task force said that may have resulted in fewer victims being identified than in previous years.

The task force assisted 357 sex and labor trafficking victims in 2019 and 2020. Of those victims, 330 were females and 101 victims were minors. The total number of victims is lower



POLICE CHIEF Jorge Cisneros, left, speaks during a news conference for the Orange County Human Trafficking Task Force. A recent report from the task force highlights its last decade of advocacy work.

than the 415 victims the task force aided in the prior two years.

The lower number doesn't necessarily reflect that the crime has declined. Officials in the task force stressed at a Monday news conference that the crime is still taking place in Orange County.

"The city of Anaheim and the county of Orange is a destination for numerous individuals that come here and during the pandemic period, obviously, everything was at a standstill," Anaheim Police Chief Jorge Cisneros said at the news conference.

"But human trafficking is a lot more than just our visitors, so we continue to have the issue here."

"While the numbers may have decreased, we still have an issue that your lo-

cal police departments are looking at and will continue to eradicate from our county...Yes, we are obvi-

"COVID-19 did have a direct impact on our ability as a victim service provider to be able to reach those victims that are in need of our services."

Michelle Heater

Program director for Waymakers' Victim Assistance Programs

ously a destination location, definitely the numbers dwindled as far as visitors, but human trafficking continues to occur in our communities regardless of the pandemic."

In response to a question from a member of the me-

dia at the news conference, Orange County Dist. Atty. Todd Spitzer said the decreased number of aided

to go after it," Spitzer said.

The report also states that Waymakers and the Salvation Army had a difficult time providing services to victims due to the pandemic because they had to adapt their service models to comply with public health orders. For example, support groups for victims were moved online.

Waymakers and the Salvation Army are both on-call 24/7 to provide support to victims of sex and human trafficking.

"COVID-19 did have a direct impact on our ability as a victim service provider to be able to reach those victims that are in need of our services," said Michelle Heater, program director for Waymakers' Victim Assistance Programs.

In the past, prostitutes were targeted by law en-

forcement and put in jail for days. Now, authorities view sex workers as victims.

Spitzer said it became clear to authorities and the public that targeting consumers of sex work, also known as "johns," and the people who control sex workers, known as "pimps," are the best way to curb sex and human trafficking.

"We were caught up in that thought of putting people into the carceral system, and thinking that we would change behavior," Spitzer said.

Heater said the task force takes a victim-centered, trauma-informed approach. Waymakers advocates work to connect with victims throughout the case.

"These adults that I have spoken to at all hours when called upon by law enforcement had dreams of being engineers, veterinarians and being people that helped others," Heater said.

An unidentified victim was quoted in the task force's report, stating that he or she was robbed of a childhood.

"Instead of going to school dances and having my first boyfriend, I was half naked on your local street corner," the unidentified victim said. "I was exposed to domestic violence, drugs, and put my health at risk. I was a sophomore with a B average. My life took a plunge for the worse when I met the defendant."

"I remember him being very angry and often times displaced his aggression on the other female. I remember being scared to tell my honest and truthful opinion to the defendant in fear that I too would be beaten. There were times when the defendant would have sexual intercourse with me. Even if I was too tired to engage I would submit to him in fear of being beaten."

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Kevin Chang | Staff Photographer

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Raul Roa | Staff Photographer

A CANDLELIGHT VIGIL against gun violence and hate crimes against Asian Americans took place at Community Center Park in Garden Grove on March 23.

Santa Ana police will post hate crime data to website

BY BEN BRAZIL

Santa Ana police will now post monthly reports of hate crime data to the department's website after the City Council showed unanimous support for the proposal at a Tuesday night meeting.

The item was brought forward by council members Thai Viet Phan, the first Vietnamese American woman elected to the council, and Phil Bacerra as the country reckons with increased reports of rising racism and violence against Asian Americans.

The item did not require a vote. Council members expressed their support and City Manager Kristine Ridge and Police Chief David Valentin indicated at the meeting that the data would be put online.

"We need to know what's going on so that we can address it, so we can look at what we need in our police departments so that people feel comfortable discussing this with our law enforce-

ment," Phan said. "Is it because we need to hire more officers who speak Vietnamese in the community or speak Chinese? What do we need?"

Bacerra echoed Phan's comments.

"In addressing a problem, the first thing you have to do is assess it and diagnose it," Bacerra said. "And I think what's appropriate here is because as we're talking about hate crimes against the Asian community, I think it's very important that we understand how many hate crimes are being committed here in our city. We don't get that data as instantaneously as we should or as we would like."

Also on Tuesday night, the council unanimously approved a resolution condemning racism and hate against Asian Americans. The item was requested by Phan, and she assisted city staff in developing the resolution. Bacerra also worked on the resolution.

"I personally have ex-

perienced racism and xenophobia growing up here in Santa Ana," Phan said at the meeting, pointing out that about 40,000 people in Santa Ana are Asian American or Pacific Islander.

"So we can't think that xenophobia is only happening in other cities, in south county or in other states, it's happening here at home. And we really have to reconcile that with the fact that even though I speak English, even though I'm a council member, I was a victim of racism even during the campaign."

Phan and Bacerra spoke about the city's racist past, referencing how Santa Ana once had a Chinatown more than a century ago. Asian residents were treated with derision by racist community members and city officials until the Chinatown was deliberately burned down.

"Our city, like our country, hasn't always respected

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Judge grants attorney's bid to use deputy's criminal case

BY MEGHANN M. CUNIFF

When prosecutors announced perjury and report falsification charges against an Orange County sheriff's deputy in February, a lawyer for a homeless veteran in a separate civil rights lawsuit took particular interest.

Not only was the deputy, Chad Renegar, the same deputy who confronted Narine Mkrtychyan's client, Jeremy Holloway, at O'Neill Regional Park in January 2018, Mkrtychyan told TimesOC last month that the criminal charges lodged against him were similar to what she believed happened to Holloway.

Now, under a new order from a federal judge, Mkrtychyan is allowed full access to the Orange County district attorney's office criminal file against Renegar. And not only can she review everything, she can try to incorporate it into her own case against Renegar and the county.

"Now I can actually freely discuss it in a public forum," Mkrtychyan said in an interview.

Legally, it's not a particularly remarkable federal court order: U.S. District Judge David O. Carter simply removed a protective order that was put in place when the criminal investigation into Renegar hadn't yet resulted in charges.

But it also comes amid similar legal battles in Orange County Superior Court over sheriff's records related to the mishandling of evidence by deputies, some of whom have been charged criminally. And it gives Mkrtychyan more chances

to challenge Renegar's credibility if the case goes to trial as it's scheduled to next month.

"This is very relevant, and I'm happy that the judge recognized that," Mkrtychyan said.

Mkrtychyan believes Renegar falsified reports about his encounter with Holloway, which stemmed from a domestic violence investigation and ended with Holloway being repeatedly shocked with a Taser.

A Marine veteran who served in Iraq, Holloway still experiences vision loss, headaches, a backache and emotional distress from the encounter with Renegar, according to the lawsuit, which names as defendants six other sheriff's deputies in addition to Renegar.

The district attorney's office announced the criminal case against Renegar in a Feb. 9, 2021, news release that said he'd forged a victim's signature in 2019 while falsifying a report about a stolen license plate. According to prosecutors, a sergeant rejected the original report because it said the plate had been stolen in Santa Monica, so Renegar wrote a new report that said it had been stolen in Rancho Santa Margarita. He's to be arraigned on the two felony charges April 23.

Meanwhile, lawyers defending Renegar and the county against Mkrtychyan and Holloway's lawsuit opposed their request to lift the protective order on Holloway's criminal file. That put the county in the unusual position of advocating for Renegar's criminal conviction through the district attorney's office

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Scott Smeltzer | Staff Photographer

THE CONTROL TOWER at the Los Alamitos Joint Forces Training Base, where four passenger jets will be relocated from Texas.

U.S. Army Reserve jets set for move from Fort Hood to Los Alamitos base

BY DANIEL LANGHORNE

The U.S. Army Reserve is planning to permanently relocate four passenger jets to Joint Forces Training Base Los Alamitos by this summer, adding about 200 takeoffs and landings per year.

The fleet of UC-35A Cessna Citation Ultras will move from Fort Hood, Texas, with 18 soldiers assigned to 6th Battalion, 52nd Aviation Unit, according to a notice from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The aircraft are used by U.S. Transportation Command to fly military personnel and Department of Defense civilians on official business within the continental U.S.

Most of the UC-35A pilots work for commercial airlines and must commute across the country to perform their Army Reserve duties, according to the Corps. Fort Hood is serviced by a small regional airport that offers a limited number of flights.

"Relocating personnel and UC-35A aircraft near multiple large travel hubs will provide multiple commuter options and more frequent commercial flights, enabling pilots to efficiently commute to perform their USAR duties," the Corps said in an environmental assessment.

The passenger jets don't produce the same roar as visiting fighter jets that occasionally land to refuel in Los Alamitos. However, any additional sorties brings concerns about addi-

tional air and noise pollution over West Orange County, which already sees heavy air traffic from Long Beach Airport.

The Army Corps' environmental review found the additional 200 annual flights would contribute to increased emissions, but impacts would be minor and no mitigation measures are required. The future flight operations would increase noise levels at and around the Los Alamitos base but the noise levels would be within existing parameters. California National Guard policy already requires minimum flight altitudes and designated no-fly areas to minimize the effects of aircraft noise.

Residents of Los Alamitos, Cypress, Seal Beach, Rossmoor and West Garden Grove have historically offered mixed reviews of aviation missions, particularly in the evening hours.

But Orange County's substantial number of veteran and military-connected households have long provided strong support for base operations. Joint Forces Training Base Los Alamitos' history of hosting the Drive-Up 4th of July Fireworks show and Great Pacific Air Show have also helped further cement its community relations.

The South Coast Air Quality Management District was recently notified about plans to relocate the passenger jets and is in the early stages of review, district spokesperson Bradley White wrote in an email. The district

declined to comment Wednesday on possible environmental impacts.

A handful of Cessna Citations with the 63rd Readiness Division are already based in Los Alamitos. The Army Reserve also maintains a fleet of propeller-driven Beechcraft C-12 Hurons, which are also used to move service members and defense officials around the continental United States.

"The number of UC-35A pilots is extremely limited," the Corps said in its environmental assessment. "These pilots must first be proficient C-12 pilots before they can become UC-35A pilots."

In addition to these fixed-wing aircraft, the Army Reserve and California National Guard also operate UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter fleets from the flight line at Los Alamitos Army Airfield.

The UC-35A passenger jets would be serviced at an existing hanger already used by the Army Reserve so no additional construction would be necessary.

A 30-day comment period on the proposal will close on May 3. Community members interested in offering comments on the plan or learning more details about the environmental review should visit losalamitosea.com or email losalamitoscomments@irsfederal.com.

DANIEL LANGHORNE is a contributor to TimesOC.

O.C. man who placed wife's body in front of children at Christmas is guilty of murder

ASSOCIATED PRESS

A man who killed his wife and propped up her body on a sofa as her children opened Christmas presents was convicted Wednesday of second-degree murder.

William Wallace, 39, of Anaheim could face 15 years to life in prison when he is sentenced in June, the Orange County district attorney's office said in a statement.

Za'Zell Preston, 26, was taking college classes in hopes of becoming a do-

mestic violence counselor when she was fatally beaten on Dec. 24 or early Dec. 25 in 2011 by Wallace, who already had served jail time for beating her, the statement said.

Prosecutors said the couple had gone to a neighbor's Christmas Eve party, and a neighbor described hearing an argument later that night.

The next morning, according to the prosecution, Wallace dragged his wife's body from the bedroom to the living room couch, placed sunglasses on her

and told the children: "Mommy ruined Christmas, she got drunk and ruined Christmas."

He then had them open their Christmas presents, authorities said.

Wallace's attorney argued that Preston died from injuries after she drunkenly tripped and fell into a glass table, shattering it.

Preston was slumped over on the couch when paramedics arrived. She left a 7-week-old son and two daughters from a previous relationship, who were then 3 and 8 years old.

DATA

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and treated our Asian brothers and sisters with the respect they deserve," Bacerra said. "But as history has shown, our city's evolved and has made great strides and progress towards standing against racism in all its forms. Today with this resolution, we're standing with our AAPI community because of the increase in hate crimes that we're witnessing throughout the country that have been committed."

Mayor Vicente Sarmiento said that while he agreed with the resolution, he hopes the council will do more to advance the ideas the resolution espouses.

He said that the council has to right the wrongs of Santa Ana's racist past, specifically pointing out that Little Saigon was born in Santa Ana, yet the community has left the area.

"I just briefly want to say, obviously all of us are in support of this," Sarmiento said. "To me a resolution just doesn't seem strong enough. I support it but I almost think is it a hollow

gesture because it's a non-binding, intent document. And I know all of us feel so strongly about this issue.

"We have to ask ourselves, why has Little Saigon moved west, away from Santa Ana? There is an economic nexus we have to figure out. Why is the community moving away from us rather than becoming more embedded in Santa Ana? That is something that is very tangible, that is something quantifiable, that I think we can tackle."

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Meet Orange County's 2021 Poetry Out Loud champion

BY VERA CASTANEDA

Elora Sparnicht, an Orange County School of Arts sophomore, said she likes to do it all when it comes to creative writing. This year she performed poetry to camera and won the O.C. Poetry Out Loud champion title from the confines of her bedroom.

When participating in Poetry Out Loud became an option through one of her classes at the arts-focused charter school, she was happy to sign up.

"I'm not the typical introverted writer. I'm excited that there's a competition like Poetry Out Loud out there," Sparnicht said.

The program, which began in 2005 in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation, offers free educational materials for high schools across the country.

The format of the competition comes in three rounds: classroom and schoolwide contest, regional and state level com-

petition and national finals. Students choose poems by authors within the program's anthology to recite from memory.

"You have to understand what the message and theme is but you also have to get every word right because it isn't your work to alter or to mess up," Sparnicht said. "A lot of times, authors have passed away, so you're bringing it back to life for them, which is definitely an important task."

Sparnicht chose to recite Margaret Atwood's "Backdrop addresses cowboy" and Ted Kooser's "Abandoned Farmhouse." She won the Orange County title on Feb. 25 and moved to perform in the state finals in March, where Delali Bruce from Santa Clara County won first place. The national finals are set to take place in May.

The latest Poetry Out Loud turned virtual — a video submission-based competition scored on physical presence, voice and articulation, dramatic appropriateness, evidence



Courtesy of Elora Sparnicht

ELORA SPARNICHT, a sophomore at Orange County School of Arts, won the champion title for Poetry Out Loud.

of understanding, overall performance and accuracy.

"There is something to be said about performing something, getting as many takes as you need and being in the comfort of your own home," Sparnicht said. "But I definitely did miss the thrill of performing in front of a live audience."

Marcus Omari, a poet and writer who teaches throughout O.C. public school districts and OCSA's Creative Writing Conservatory, saw this year's competition open up to the community in efforts to keep up the momentum during a difficult pandemic year.

Students typically have to participate through their respective schools. As a Poetry Out Loud coordinator, Omari was able to reach out to local organizations and libraries to spread the word.

Last year the program received about 12 to 15 final county competitors, and in 2021 the number dropped to six competitors coming from OSCA, Kianna Gonzalez of Cesar Chavez High

School, Alyssa Johnson of Mater Dei High School, Stella Nguyen of La Quinta High School, Preston Veranich of South Coast Repertory and Jennifer Phung of OC Public Libraries.

Part of Poetry Out Loud's mission is to inspire students' confidence, and Omari's involvement in the county's arts youth education is similar.

"There's such a legacy of writers, performers and art [in O.C.]," Omari said. "What if those who are really digging in making waves and continue to leave to go to Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco — then what happens to the kids who are here? ... That's part of why I chose to stay. I see an opportunity to dig in and give the youth something that I wish I had when I was back in Wisconsin. I wish I had a program like Poetry Out Loud. Maybe I wouldn't have been so quiet about my poetry when I was younger."

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CHILDREN

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local ballet folklórico, mariachi and theater student groups from Heninger Elementary School and Santa Ana High School.

A variety of workshops, ranging between five and 10 minutes, teach kids interactive arts like creating a painting with watercolor wax of Kukulcan and Maya numbers with artist Yenny Bernal or making puppets out of paper bags with artist Josee Gloria Hernandez.

Some workshops put an emphasis on the more therapeutic aspects of artmaking like creating an accordion-style curandero book out of cardboard, paper and glue with artist Carlos Nieto III.

The idea is that kids will draw images of things that

make them happy to look through when they feel sad. Another workshop shows how to make Guatemalan worry dolls, while hearing folk tales from artist and Bowers Kidseum staff Maria Lopez.

"In 2019, we had an estimated 10,000 attendees over two days," Richard Stein, Arts O.C. president and CEO, said. "It was lively, engaging and festive. This a year into the pandemic, seeing more videos is not going to replicate the full experience of the festival. But it will definitely show the wide variety of talents and extraordinary, rich, artistic community we have here."

Last year, the festival was canceled one month prior due to coronavirus-related shutdowns, and all performers and workshop artists were paid in full.



Courtesy of OC Día del Niño

ARTIST YENNY BERNAL shows how to use watercolor wax to paint an image of Kuku.

Artist couple Lucky Diaz and Alisha Gaddis of the Grammy-winning the Lucky Band, who were on the festival's lineup last year and in previous years, came back to Los Angeles from a six-week tour in China in January 2020. They thought they had narrowly escaped coronavirus. Instead, their

scheduled tours for the rest of the year were canceled.

In 2020, they worked on bilingual music videos with performances and animation as well as how-to videos featuring their 5-year-old daughter.

"Alisha always says that we need to give ourselves permission to have more

fun, and I think that's what our music is all about," Diaz said. "To me it's really a very important cultural experience that I get to share with my own girls — the code switching, Spanglish, Chicano kind of vibe. The work I get to do is special and it comes from a sincere place."

Alitah Weiner Navarro Dallas of Twinkle Time had more than 300 shows canceled in 2020. The Peruvian American performer's livelihood depends on local and international touring.

"Did I cry for two weeks straight? Yeah," Dallas said. "It took me five years to get a two-week booking in China. You put in so much time and all of a sudden your world just screeches to a halt."

She decided to create a daily livestream Monday through Friday on YouTube

focusing on bilingual and educational music for children and families in more of a solo performance since the entire band can't fit into one space.

"It got me up every day in the morning and made me be creative and stay active," Dallas said.

She also had time to complete projects she'd been thinking about for a while like an upcoming Spanish-language album with the title "A Mi Me Gusta Ser Yo."

"I think what [OC Día del Niño] is doing is wonderful — they're giving an outlet to musicians but also highlighting people in the community," Dallas said. "I love that for kids and I also love that we're amplifying Latino voices."

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JUSTICE

Continued from page R1

The group will be meeting Monday to discuss a vigil in honor of the Asian American community.

"One purpose is to educate ourselves and our community regarding our inherent racial bias," Johnson said. "Our biases result in injustice, so we needed to really take a look at our own biases, and we would encourage others to do likewise. And I have a belief that when there is an unjust system, being kind is not enough."

"People can say, 'Oh I haven't done any harm to people of color, it's not my fault that there's injustice.' But being kind is not enough when you have an unjust system. To claim to be politically neutral in the face of injustice is actually a very political position, because it upholds the status quo. And it's on the side of oppression."

Johnson's husband, George, passed away in October. But before his death, George took part in all four vigils following Floyd's killing, despite being ill with Alzheimer's and kidney disease and bound to a wheelchair.

"He said, 'It's the right thing to do, I must do it,'" Johnson said of her hus-



Kevin Chang | Staff Photographer

IRVINE RESIDENTS, from left, Jan Wilson, 74, Vivian Johnson, 85, and Francesca Cancian, 83, are three of the eight founding members of Seniors for Racial Justice. The Irvine-based group of seniors organize protests and other actions in support of racial justice.

band.

George was a Lutheran minister. In his 40s, he became so concerned with helping the disenfranchised, he became director of the World Hunger Program for the entire Lutheran church, Johnson said.

Johnson and George were exposed to poverty all around the world, many times living among the impoverished. In the 1990s, Johnson and her husband

witnessed the injustices of South Africa during the apartheid era.

All of these experiences influenced Johnson.

"It's no wonder that I feel very strongly about these issues," she said.

Johnson and another member of the group, Jan Wilson, are both part of the Irvine United Congregational Church, which Wilson said is a progressive church that aims to fight for dignity and equity within

the community.

Wilson, 74, said her family was influential in forming her drive for social justice. In particular, her mother was involved in fair housing issues in San Gabriel Valley and advocated for farmworkers' rights.

Wilson grew up in a predominately white community in Arcadia, or as she put it, "a bubble." She said it was made that way through real estate covenants, which were used to



Jim Mone | Associated Press

A MURAL OF George Floyd is seen in Minneapolis.

deny housing to nonwhite people.

She now sees the bubble for what it was. She said the Santa Anita racetrack, where proms were held and teenagers learned to drive in the parking lot, was once a massive internment camp. Thousands of Japanese Americans were forced to live in converted horse stalls for six months during World War II.

"Nowhere in our education did it ever mention this," she said. "It was totally omitted from our history."

Wilson, who worked as a librarian mostly at the collegiate level, came of age in the 1960s, so she was involved with the anti-Viet-

nam War movement.

In her college years, she volunteered for a few summers at a community center in Watts, one of the most impoverished neighborhoods in Los Angeles and a site of historic protests and racial tension.

"I think more of us white people are really honing in on the idea of white privilege and our part in it," Wilson said.

"It's not enough just to try to do nice social programs, we need to really understand the systemic nature of it, and try to use what influence we have to influence that."

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LIAISON

Continued from page R1

nursing for most of her 25-year career, during which she helped launch the Senior Care Hero Awards that partnered with Meals On Wheels. For eight years, she hosted the event that recognizes unsung heroes of senior care, an honor Papiri said is "like the Oscars of the senior industry."

Papiri's role as community liaison for the Council on Aging - Southern California's Concierge Care Navigators Program is to educate anyone who interacts with families or seniors about the benefits of seeking assistance with coordinated care management. That includes referrals to nurses, doctors, hospice and wealth and estate planning.

Papiri explained the complexities involved in trying to navigate the bureaucratic maze of elder care, especially during a critical health issue. "If I had known about this program when I was going through trying to navigate



my dad's care, I would have paid any amount to have an expert guide me through," Papiri said. "It sure would have helped me sleep at night."

"We plan for vacations so that we can reduce stress and have fun," Papiri said. "But we don't plan for aging, which can lead to the same thing by reducing stress."

Concierge Care Navigators,

which has been operating for a year, is the fee-for-service program under the umbrella of the Council on Aging. "It is a web-based platform with an RN-supervised care plan, so that they can look at the whole situation," Papiri explained. "Without preplanning, when a crisis or accident occurs with hospitalization, the family doesn't always know what to do."

For example, instead of driving four hours to Henderson, Nev., to handle things for a parent, as Papiri did, the program's RN expert provides a care plan. "She's your hand-holder partner, 24-hour access," Papiri said.

"This is so needed in the community with seniors' population growing faster than national average," she said.

According to the U.S. Census

THE OFFICE OF Southern California, located in Irvine, helps seniors remain healthy, connected and protected.

Bureau, the age group of 85 and older is the fastest-growing segment of the U.S. population. California's population aged 85 and older will increase 489% during the period of 2010 to 2060, with Orange County's rising 486.68%, according to the California Department of Aging.

Jamie Cansler, director of development and community outreach, said feedback on the Concierge Care Navigators program has been positive. "We have received heartfelt reaction of family members," Cansler said.

The Oliver Halsell award ceremony will be held in November for all of the 2021 recipients with families invited to participate in the celebration.

Papiri explained that her husband and two adult daughters are proud of all the work she does, and her husband has supported her every step of the way, attending every senior care hero award event and always donating too.

SUSAN HOFFMAN is a contributor to TimesOC.

Skirting along in Surf City



Raul Roa | Staff Photographer

A BOXER NAMED LILLY from San Juan Capistrano strikes a pose in her pink tutu at Pacific City oceanfront mall in Huntington Beach on March 27.

CASE

Continued from page R3

while simultaneously arguing his conduct was irrelevant to the civil suit against him.

The lawyers fighting Mkrtyan's bid for Renegar's criminal file also questioned Mkrtyan's and Holloway's motives.

"It appears Plaintiff's true reason for wanting to lift the protective order on these documents is for the purposes of trying this case in the court of public media by making the documents public," according to a court filing from Tamara M. Heathcote, an attorney with the Santa Ana-based firm

Lynberg & Watkins. The firm frequently represents the county of Orange in lawsuits.

The judge disagreed with Heathcote's assertion, saying Holloway has "provided valid reasons for his request."

"The Court cannot deny this request by simply assuming that the Plaintiff may have some malicious intent in making such a request," Carter wrote.

Heathcote's opposition to Mkrtyan's request offered a different view of Holloway's encounter with Renegar. According to her, Holloway "unconvincingly denied" allegations from campers' that he'd assaulted a woman, but be-

cause the woman had fled, he wasn't arrested.

"Holloway thereafter pressed his luck by threatening the campground witnesses against him as soon as officers departed the scene," according to the document. "When deputies returned in response to frightened campers' latest '911' calls, Holloway was subdued and arrested. After warrants subsequently issued for Holloway's arrest, he responded by: (1) filing this pestiferous litigation, and (2) by fleeing California for the East Coast."

Trial is scheduled to begin May 25.

MEGHANN M. CUNIFF is a contributor to TimesOC.



Photos by Don Leach | Staff Photographer

CASA ROMANTICA in San Clemente during "An Evening of Dvorak and Mozart."

Casa Romantica Cultural Center and Gardens kicks off reopening

After reopening fully on March 16, Casa Romantica Cultural Center and Gardens in San Clemente resumed its indoor events this week in time for spring break.

The nonprofit's gardens remained open during the coronavirus pandemic at reduced capacity, and the venue relied on virtual programming to share performances and events. However the historic Spanish-style home, typically open for self-guided tours, performances and art exhibits, was closed.

Since the center moved or postponed events from last year, the upcoming spring and summer months are packed with more events than it would normally offer.

Safety protocols include face masks and social distancing for visitors and staff. Temperature checks and hand sanitation are enforced upon entry and capacity is limited. Advance ticketing is required for most events rather than purchasing at the door.

"Our community was so appreciative of the content that we created to bring art and culture into their homes during the COVID-19 pandemic. Now that we have fully re-



AGNIESZKA BORZUCHOWSKI ends a Mozart piece at Casa Romantica in San Clemente on Wednesday.

opened, we're adapting the best parts of our on-line experiences to enhance in-person experiences — not just for our cultural programs but also for daily visitors," said Casa Romantica Executive Director Amy Behrens in a statement. "It's about recognizing more holistically what Casa Romantica represents — preserving a record of culture that has shaped us as a stage for contemporary cultural experiences in a beautiful and welcoming home."


The first event after the reopening was a free screening of Charlie Chaplin's "The Kid" on Tuesday evening to cele-

brate the 100th anniversary of the film.

On Wednesday night, a quintet orchestra played indoors at the center's main salon with an opening performance from the center's Summer Music Festival & Academy alumni with "An Evening of Dvorak and Mozart."

Next performances will feature live tango with Miriam Larici and Leonardo Barrionuevo on April 22 and 23, Shakespeare plays starting on April 29 through the summer and "Opera Through the Seasons" featuring sopranos Liv Redpath and Andrea Zomorodian on May 13 and 14.

— TCN Staff Reports



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