

# Daily Pilot

SUNDAY, MAY 9, 2021 /// Now including Coastline Pilot and Huntington Beach Independent /// [dailypilot.com](http://dailypilot.com)



Photos by Kevin Chang | Staff Photographer

**CANCER SURVIVOR** Frank Di Bella, right, stands with artist Leonardo Cruz Melo in front of a painting created by Cruz Melo at City of Hope Newport Beach. “Hopefully, it makes [the patients] feel good and brings them peace,” Cruz Melo said.

## Donation by local artist renders hope in Newport

Frank Di Bella enlisted a friend to help decorate the walls at City of Hope Newport Beach.

BY MATT SZABO

City of Hope Newport Beach is just a couple of blocks away from Fleming’s Steakhouse at Fashion Island.

The two places are more connected than one might think.

Now 40, Leonardo Cruz Melo has been working at Fleming’s since he was a teenager. The bartender is also a contemporary artist, and the restaurant displays his paintings on its walls.

Cruz Melo’s works caught the eye of Donna Porter, the co-chair of the “Let’s Be Frank About Cancer” gala, before she died of cancer in December 2019.

Newport Beach resident Frank Di Bella, the gala’s namesake, said he has raised more than \$8 million for City of Hope through the gala in the last six years. During the pandemic, the gala was canceled in March 2020, but he came up with another way to make a difference.

Di Bella, 75, does everything he can for the City of Hope. He was diagnosed with bladder cancer in 2011 and got a third opinion from City of Hope after the first two opinions gave him only months to live.

His cancer is still in remission. Porter’s wasn’t, but she invited him to her San Juan Capistrano home a week before she died.

“She said, ‘I’m going to give you \$100,000 for ‘Let’s Be Frank About Cancer,’ ”



**PAINTINGS LIKE** these, created by Cruz Melo, hang on the walls of City of Hope.



**ONE OF 6 PAINTINGS** by Cruz Melo that hangs at City of Hope.

Di Bella said. “She asked to use part of it to acquire some paintings from Leonardo, because she knew she wouldn’t be alive to see the new facility. So that’s what I did.”

City of Hope Newport Beach opened a month later. Six of Cruz Melo’s paint-

ings are now on display there and include a triptych piece consisting of three panels personally donated by the artist himself.

When City of Hope Newport Beach opened, many Orange County cancer patients who had previously traveled to Duarte for treat-

ment now had a more convenient location.

Following the donation of Cruz Melo’s artwork during the pandemic, patients now have something else to help them relax during what can be a traumatic ex-

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### BOYS’ BASKETBALL

## Newport tops CdM in Battle of the Bay

The visiting Sailors earn a 50-41 win on Friday in a Sunset Conference crossover game.

BY SHAWN MEDOW

The Corona del Mar High School boys’ basketball team left the back court empty, attempting a high press to box in visiting Newport Harbor.

Newport Harbor senior Levi Darrow saw an opening and ran. Fellow senior Luke Barnes launched a pass down the court to find the 6-foot-2 Darrow for a bucket and some breathing room. They pulled it off three times, resulting in two baskets and a foul.

“We practice that play over and over,” Darrow said. “I don’t think we thought it would work that much. Luke Barnes looking like Tom Brady out there.”

With clutch plays down the stretch, Newport Harbor hung on to beat rival Corona del Mar 50-41 to take the latest edition of the Battle of the Bay on Friday.

Although it was a non-league game, the fierc-



Don Leach  
Staff Photographer

**NEWPORT HARBOR’S** Tyler Li (24) drives the lane for a tough basket.

ness of the rivalry was felt.

“It’s always fun playing these crosstown games,” Newport Harbor coach Bob Torribio said. “We’re both kind of struggling in our own spots right now, so we’re happy to come away with a win tonight.”

Newport Harbor (3-4) leapt to an early lead with a pair of first-quarter three-pointers by senior Tyler Li, who scored nine points on the night — all from beyond the arc.

“I knew I needed to get going early,” Li said. “I

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**SHOPPERS WEARING** masks explore the various vendors during the Farmers Market in April at the O.C. fairgrounds.

Kevin Chang  
Staff Photographer

## COVID-19 fatalities reach 5,000 in Orange County

BY LILLY NGUYEN,  
CITY NEWS SERVICE

Orange County reached a grim milestone Friday: 5,000 people have died of COVID-19 since the county healthcare agency began tracking the data in March last year.

The agency breaks down the deaths further. Of those 5,000, 1,091 were residents of skilled nursing facilities and 552 were residents of assisted living facilities. One patient who died was an inmate and 11 were individuals experiencing homelessness.

The remaining 3,345 deaths were of those residents not living in a facil-

ity.

Andrew Noymer, a UC Irvine professor of population health and disease prevention, told City News Service that Orange County was the 11th deadliest in California during the pandemic.

“So we’re not the worst by any stretch of the imagination,” said Noymer on Friday, adding that the rate of deaths for Orange County is 1,570 deaths per million.

That compares against Los Angeles County, which averages at around 2,370 deaths per million, and San Diego County,

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## Estancia High students build a better car, win Energy Invitational

BY SARA CARDINE

Estancia High School engineering students were recently tasked with designing and building a vehicle large enough to accommodate a driver that would travel as fast and as far as possible on only \$1 worth of energy.

In record time, 16 seniors participating in their first 2021 Vital Link Energy Invitational Engineering Design Competition — working together as “Team Havoc” — had retrofitted a simple go-kart into an electric car that based on initial testing is capable of reaching speeds up to 30 mph while using only 1.0 kilowatt-hour for more than an hour of con-

tinuous driving.

“We took a preexisting machine and configured it so it would meet our specifications,” said project manager Carter Gruebel, 18. “Then, we designed modifications, such as an external frame, buying a new motor battery system and making our brakes and tires more efficient.”

That result earned them 47 points out of a possible 48 and last week landed the team a first-place win over competitors from schools in Huntington Beach, Tustin, Long Beach and Hacienda Heights, known for well-established STEM programs and engineering academies.

Gerald Rizza, an engi-

neering design teacher for Estancia and Team Havoc’s adviser, explained the competition was a capstone project for seniors enrolled in the school’s Project Lead the Way career pathway.

“We probably had less than three months from the day we said, ‘OK, we’re going to do this’ to the day we had to deliver,” Rizza said of the March 19 deadline that required kids to submit a completed design report, a presentation of their effort and a video showcasing the finished product.

“It was a coordinated nightmare,” he joked. “But they all made it happen.”

In addition to the many challenges posed by the competition guidelines, Es-



Kevin Chang | Staff Photographer

**AN ENERGY EFFICIENT** vehicle, created by Estancia High School’s Team Havoc, earned first place in the 2021 Energy Invitational Engineering Design Competition.

tancia students also worked through enormous logisti-

cal complications presented by the pandemic, in-

cluding soliciting donations to cover the \$3,400 project cost.

Coming onto campus in separate cohorts, team members worked in shifts, some doing hands-on work while others chimed in virtually through Zoom. As project manager, Gruebel had to supervise both sets of students.

“At first, it was kind of hard to coordinate what each cohort was doing,” he said. “But we ended up adding a daily progress report to write down what each cohort did and what we wanted the next cohort to accomplish.”

Senior Nathan Sweet, the

See **Estancia**, page A4









# Thank you to those who make care, their career.

♡ Nurses Week May 6-12



When times get tough, your toughness comes out in full. Your tenderness. Your selflessness. We applaud the fortitude of our nurses, who experience triumphs and setbacks, highs and lows, yet keep pushing on. Demonstrating the truest combination of iron will and caring touch. For this, we thank you all. You are the caretakers who take care to another level.

We encourage the community to continue to do their part by practicing distancing, handwashing, masking and vaccinating. It’s the very least we all can do to show our thanks.

[memorialcare.org](https://www.memorialcare.org)





