

# FOOTHILLS SENTRY

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A Monthly Community Newspaper

APRIL 2024



Photo by James Gomez

Fans of Mrs. Roper, a character in the 1970s-80s TV show, Three's Company, dress up in her image and go pub crawling. A local group sets off on a "Roper Romp," gathering first at American Legion Post 134. See Mrs. Roper, page 2.

## NEWS INSIDE

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Orange will ask voters to consider bringing safe and sane fireworks sales back to the city.

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An El Modena High School alum adds new scoreboard to his ongoing financial support of the softball program.

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## Recalled OUSD trustees attend one last board meeting

By Tina Richards

While the primary election results had not yet been certified before the March 11 OUSD board meeting, a 3,500-vote lead by those saying "yes" to the recall of Madison Miner and Rick Ledesma indicated that the Monday night meeting would be their last.

The mood in the boardroom was subdued and the once-raucous crowd quiet. Before the business portion of the meeting, featuring such routine items as the annual transportation plan, interim budget report, Measure S audit update and the student calendar for next year commenced, Ledesma and Miner offered a few final words.

"A smooth transition of power is part of democracy," Miner said. "While those efforts have been hindered over the last year, I, as a board trustee, will not contribute to that destruction. The district is more than one board member. It is a community that is built together and I am excited to continue to be a part of those efforts."

Ledesma thanked the OUSD voting community for electing him to the board over the past 25

years. "This is a wonderful community," he said. "All the other districts in the county pull from here, so what does that tell you about the talent level. I will enjoy driving around and seeing the many improvements made during my time on the board, as well as the programs I've been a part of. God bless OUSD."

### Legal fees unleashed

The only board actions that generated any discussion at all were on the consent calendar. The consent calendar contains a list of routine items requiring board approval that are typically decided with a single vote covering all of them.

This night several consent items were pulled for discussion by Kris Erickson, including one to increase the fees for attorneys Parker and Covert by \$200,000; another to increase fees for Atkinson, Andelson, Loya, Rudd & Romo by \$250,000.

The additional legal fees had also been noted by members of the audience. Dan Rothenberg, making public comments, called

See "Recalled OUSD" continued on page 4

## High-density housing project twice denied will go to Orange City Council for final reckoning

By Carrie Graham

The Orange Planning Commission decided, Mar. 18, to agree with the city's Design Review Committee (DRC) and recommend the denial of a project by Newport Beach developer, Intracorp Homes to build 49 small lot housing units on the 1.7 acre parcel of land currently housing the AT&T building at 901 W. Katella Ave.

The denial came at the request of the Intracorp attorney when it appeared that the commission, missing one member, would vote 3-3 on the project. Assistant City Attorney Melissa Crosthwaite told the commissioners that if they recommended denial of the project, they would have to document their reasons why by wading through the approval resolutions prepared by staff and "changing the findings."

That would have required the decision to be continued until a future meeting. Planning Commission Chair David Vasquez suggested they recommend approval with conditions. That, too, would have required a continu-

ance while the conditions were documented, Crosthwaite advised.

### Denial by design

Seeking to avoid the delays of a continuance, Intracorp's attorney asked the commission to recommend denial of the project (which a 3-3 vote would have been), allowing the developer to take the project to the city council sooner. The company apparently decided it would rather face the council with recommendations of denial than delay the project any further.

Dozens of residents living near the intersection of Cambridge St. and Katella Ave. attended the Monday night meeting to again speak out against the proposed medium tract as they had at two previous DRC meetings. They noted their concerns about privacy, traffic, parking, the mass of the structures, loss of sunlight and the project's overall incompatibility with the neighborhood.

Several other uses have been proposed for the space, includ-

See "Housing project" continued on page 5

## Voters may be asked to help resolve Orange budget deficit

By Tina Richards

The City of Orange is facing a \$10 million budget deficit and, short of cutting necessary public services, may ask residents to help solve the problem.

The deficit is due to a number of factors. Federal funding doled out to help cities navigate the COVID pandemic ended. While revenues from sales tax, property tax and service fees are going up, they are not keeping up with expenditures. Everything -- from maintenance, repairs and supplies, to salaries -- costs more.

"We are not overspending," City Manager Tom Kisela says. "Employees, for example, are 17% of the budget. We're run-

ning 50 vacancies. We don't have people in community development or finance. I'm going to do some council briefings that will be shockers. I'm not saying 'the sky is falling,' but we have major challenges."

To help fill the gap, the city council may ask voters to consider either a 1% sales tax increase, or a 5% boost to the Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT), or both, possibly as ballot measures in November. As a last resort, the city would be compelled to cut services.

### Survey says

To determine the public appetite for tax increases and identify city services most important to

residents, last fall the city hired a consultant to survey 947 likely voters. Half were asked about a sales tax increase; half were asked about a TOT raise; all were asked to prioritize city services.

The survey found that 25% of respondents perceived a "great need" for additional city funding; 59% believed there was "some to no need"; 16% didn't know. Asked about a sales tax increase: 50% said yes, with 27% "definitely." The noes totaled 43%, with 7% undecided. TOT fared slightly better, with 64% saying yes, 25% no and 11% undecided.

The "yesses" to both taxes rose by a few percentage points when respondents were told how a revenue shortage would impact city

services. Those who would agree with a sales tax hike increased to 60%, with 31% saying "definitely." Support for a higher TOT grew to 70%.

Priorities among those surveyed were: maintaining 911 emergency response, fire protection, preventing property crimes, addressing homelessness, recruiting and retaining paramedics, firefighters and police officers.

### Tell it like it is

In a subsequent discussion, councilmembers acknowledged that residents are largely unaware

See "Budget deficit" continued on page 7

### Taft Library is not closing

Orange Councilwoman Kathy Tavoularis set off a firestorm when she asked that a discussion of the sale of Taft Library be included on the Feb. 27 council meeting agenda.

The impending "sale" spread quickly over social media, alarming Taft Library neighbors and patrons. Aware that the city currently faces a budget shortfall, residents perceived the discussion item on the agenda as a very real threat to the library. A dozen people came to the council meeting to defend the facility.

Tavoularis appeared mortified that her request to discuss the Taft Library triggered such a passionate response. Her intent, she said, was simply to discuss the facility. "There is no proposal, no plan," she stressed. "The library is underutilized. The building is worth a lot of money. Is there a better use for the facility? It's my responsibility as a city council member to raise the issue for discussion."

Library users, library board trustees, foundation members and parents, however, attended the council meeting armed with prepared comments intended to get "on the record." Despite Tavoularis's assurances that the library is in no immediate danger, the public made it clear that closing it is not an acceptable option.

Speakers noted that the library budget is small, and the city will not save a great deal by cutting there; and, the Taft Library is an important part of the community, offering services and programs within walking distance of hundreds of homes.

Library Trustee Peggy Calvert pointed out that the library offers programs in French, Chinese, Spanish and Vietnamese; helps job seekers with resumes and interview skills; hosts Red Cross blood drives, and a mobile eye clinic. It holds cultural celebrations and game days for all ages. "It's a people's library," she said.

Others reiterated the value of an "educated community" resulting from readily available books, computers, crafts and programs.

"The item was listed on the agenda as 'sale,'" Friends of the Library's Jim Dickenson pointed out. "That's unfortunate terminology. That's what upset the public. Maybe we should be talking about how to help the Friends raise revenue and increase usage."

"I felt the same way when I saw the agenda," Councilmember Ana Gutierrez noted. "We have a duty to promote a literate community."

The council agreed that closing the library or selling the property was not on the agenda, now or in the future. "I'm not interested in closing the library," Denis Bilodeau said, "but the discussion keeps us on our toes."

Jon Dumitru added that it was incumbent on the council to look at all city properties periodically, and that's what they were doing. "We had to encourage discussion," Tavoularis explained. "Your comments reached a lot of people today. This is what the council is supposed to do."

### Old fire department headquarters to be demolished

The City of Orange is moving forward with plans to demolish the former fire department headquarters on Grand Street, but is deferring the proposal to turn the site into a parking lot until a public meeting can be held.

The old fire station is 50 years old. City studies of the facility found that it is seismically vulnerable, has no historic significance and is not viable for other commercial uses. It has been empty since September 2022, when the fire department moved into its new headquarters on Chapman.

The city considered turning the property into a parking lot, which, combined with adjacent parking areas north of the site, would create 119 parking spaces. That's a 77-slot gain, and would increase parking options in Old Towne.

The council was asked, at its Feb. 27 meeting, to give city staff the go-ahead to solicit proposals for the demolition work and finalize plans for the parking lot extension.

Before the council discussion on the topic began, Old Towne resident James Kushon voiced his objections to the parking propos-

al. "Where is the study that says this is necessary?" he asked, adding that "there's been no traffic study, no environmental review. A lot of traffic will use South Orange Street, some of it going 50 miles per hour. I will be directly impacted by this. What about other options that could go there?"

Mayor Pro Tem Arianna Barrios agreed with his assessment, noting that the council had promised residents that nothing would be done on that site without a public hearing. "We talked about it four times," she said. "Yes, the fire station needs to be demolished, but we promised a conversation about what to do with it. Could it be a pocket park? Can we protect entry into neighbor-

hoods?" Barrios suggested that the tear-down project be separated from the parking lot planning, that the council could vote on one, but not the other.

Mayor Dan Slater acknowledged that Old Towne needs more parking, but supported the idea of community discussion. "Can we approve the first part (demolition), but move the second part (parking) forward until we have that public meeting, get community input and then bring it back to council?"

The council agreed that the aging headquarters building had to be razed no matter what the next step might be, and voted 6-0 to approve the demolition.



Old Orange Fire Department headquarters at 176 S. Grand



### Mrs. Roper's Romp comes to Orange


Fans of the TV series, "Three's Company" of the late 70s and early 80s, have brought one of the shows characters, Mrs. Roper, back to life by donning caftans, wigs and outlandish jewelry and going pub crawling en masse.

The craze began in New Orleans about 10 years ago, and quickly spread to cities all over the nation. Mrs. Roper caught the attention of TV nostalgia buffs because she was "progressive, freethinking and a voluptuary." She's also easy to recreate with simple costumes and fuzzy wigs.

The local romp, dubbed the Caftan Crawl, graced the City of Orange March 2. The American Legion was the first stop for the approximately 150 participants, because it was large enough for a group photo. The throng of Mrs. Roper look-alikes then broke into smaller groups to visit the District Lounge, Paul's Cocktails, 1886 Brewery and O'Hara's Pub.

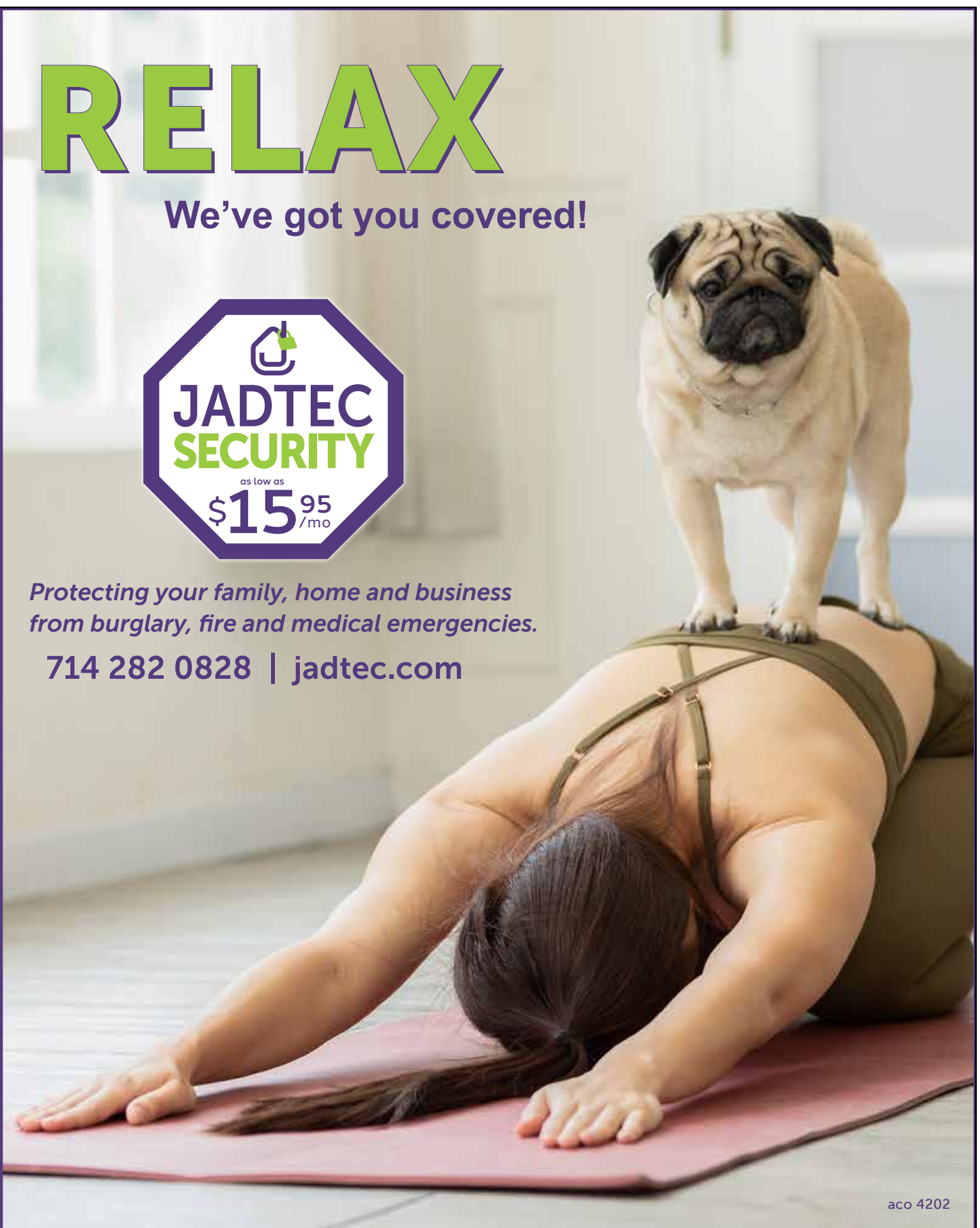
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# Residents hear from elected officials at FCA annual meeting



Photos by Tony Richards

Supervisor Don Wagner talks with a constituent at the FCA meeting.



FCA members discuss local issues during an informal meet and greet prior to the meeting.

By Tina Richards

The Foothill Communities Association (FCA) annual meeting, March 4, was highlighted by talks by OC District Attorney Todd Spitzer and Chair and Third District Supervisor Don Wagner.

A crowd of over 100 people came early to visit the tables of local agencies and community groups set up in the Hewes Middle School auditorium. Residents received updates from OC Parks, Save the Racquet Club, the Sheriff's Department, the DA's Office and Don Wagner's staff.

Spitzer told the North Tustin audience that the annual FCA gathering is his "favorite meeting" and he has missed attending it over the last few years. Before becoming district attorney, Spitzer was the county supervisor representing North Tustin, as Wagner is today. Spitzer attended every FCA meeting, but that changed with his new job. "I finally had to ask Rick Nelson (FCA president) when he was going to invite me back," he grinned.

### Orange County prosecutes

Spitzer was apparently "at home" with old friends and familiar faces, but he assured FCA members, he enjoys being district attorney. "Orange County is the safest county in California," he said, "and it's my job to keep

it that way. We still prosecute crime here."

Sheriff AJ Patella, captain of the department's North Bureau, which includes North Tustin, offered a few statistics to bolster Spitzer's comments. "Burglaries are down by half," he said, "due to our deputies and the DA's office. They've apprehended gang members from L.A. and South America, who organized teams to case houses, learn the homeowners' habits and calculate the best time to break in. The jail is full of them right now. The crime statistics are good in this neighborhood."

Most burglaries, he added, are crimes of opportunity. Keep your garage doors down, doors locked and don't leave valuables in your cars, he suggested. While burglaries are down, fraud and identity theft are up. Unfortunately, he said, deputies can't protect you from that type of victimization.

### Don't hesitate to call

Also down, Patella reported, are suspicious activity calls to the department. He'd like to see those calls go up. "Ninety-nine percent of the time," he said, "it's nothing, but one percent of the time it is. Those calls also give us an opportunity to interact with our residents. We get to meet them, and they get to meet us."

"You are not burdening the sheriffs when you call them," Spitzer stressed. Report all suspicious activity; the deputies will respond quickly, and don't mind if it's a false alarm. That's why they are there.

Spitzer is getting the word out locally and internationally that "We prosecute in Orange County," via signs posted on buses and billboards. "We have signs in L.A. and Long Beach," he explained, "and I appeared on TV in Chile, telling the gangs not to come to Orange County."

Chilean gangs, he reports, get visas to go to Disney World. They start in Florida and burglarize their way across the county. They dress in camouflage and watch your house. "We've arrested a tremendous number of them." During his tenure, the DA's office has charged 388 people with home burglaries.

### Keep it local

Supervisor Don Wagner also began his remarks with his relationship to the North Tustin Community. "I live here," he said. "I'm here tonight to talk to my neighbors."

He expanded on the public safety issue, stressing the role of the community in that effort. "I'm doing what I can to keep the quality of life good here in North Tustin and in Orange County," he said. "But public safety involves more than law enforcement. It's empowering communities, bringing information to residents; offering townhalls on fire safety, CPR classes, women's self-defense; and alerting people of things to watch out for regarding computer fraud."

"Orange County has six of the safest cities in the state," he added. But we, like everyone else, have a fentanyl crisis. Wagner noted that from 2016 to 2022, there was a 2,200% increase in fentanyl use statewide, a 1,600% increase in Orange County. The danger, he said, is that it is adulterating other drugs, even legal drugs. That is the reason the county is trying to get Narcan – an effective antidote – distributed as widely as possible: not just to first responders, but to teachers, neighbors and parents and in classrooms. "It works," Wagner said. "It saves lives, if administered at the first signs of an overdose."

### Small steps

The other major issue in every community, Wagner noted, is homelessness. The county does a physical count of homeless people every two years. Although this year's numbers are not yet available, the last count showed a 16% decrease from the previous tally. "We're seeing some progress," the Supervisor advised, "but the problem isn't solved. It's an all-hands-on-deck effort."

The Supervisor applauded the state's experiment with Care Courts. Instead of putting mentally ill people or drug users in jail, the Care Court connects them with a treatment program. Orange County is one of seven test counties in the state. The program, he admits, has been poorly implemented, with criteria and funding decreased, but it is a tool that we have.

Another tool that North Tustin residents have, Rick Nelson wants his neighbors to know, is FCA itself. "We have been here for 61 years to protect our community and our residents."



District Attorney Todd Spitzer explains his office's efforts to prosecute criminals.

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DA Todd Spitzer shares a moment with the FCA audience. "I'm happy to be back," he said.

## Guest Commentary

### City of Orange water leaks

By Angela Rocco DeCarlo

The good news is the charming City of Orange, where we have lived for more than 30 years, professes on its website to care about water conservation. The city indicates it is sort of a "Guardian of the Environment." Urinals in city buildings are waterless. Park grasses are watered infrequently.

And for our part we've learned to turn off the water when brushing our teeth.

The bad news is: Orange residents experiencing an unknown leak on their property, which is recorded daily by the individual property water meter, are not alerted in a timely manner by the city.

We recently received a nearly \$800 water bill indicating unusually high water use.

That's a heart attack in an en-

velope to us very senior citizens. There was a leak somewhere on our property, of which we were unaware. But, the city's water meter was recording that leak daily. Yet, it was a secret. We were not informed until months after it began.

When I phoned a local media outlet, the person who answered had a similar experience - senior citizens with an unknown leak resulting in a "heart attack" \$500 water bill.

That's \$1,300 the city water department generated by failing to inform two residents of a water leak when the data is collected daily.

Ultimately, a yellow card was placed on our door on Feb. 20, telling us for the first time our home's water use was exceedingly high. However, printed city charts of water usage show high

volume in late November, escalating into December, January and February.

Of course, once informed, we were able to stop the leak. Which could have been done immediately had the city let us know. Our home is on a hill and fear of it sliding down is not unfounded, as seen in many media photo reports of such things.

Yet, the Orange city water department did nothing to protect the environment, which its website states is so important. When I phoned the head of the water department to request the \$800 bill be stopped, fully expecting something like, "oh, gosh, sorry, we'll fix that," instead I received a puzzling response letter from a person who believes he is a "civil servant" rather than the taxpayer-paid city employee, advising that nothing can be done about the

overcharges.

Further, other city officials with whom I spoke were courteous but seemed bewildered by the notion the city should uphold its duty to conserve water and protect the environment by alerting residents to leaks of which the city knows.

One phone call from an official said he wanted to apologize for the letter, but couldn't do anything about the bill other than suggest payments.

That seemed rather amusing: sort of like a nice mugger displeased one has only \$10 to give him so suggests sending him additional money. As water bills are usually less than \$150 for two months, the \$800 demand from the City of Orange seems hostile and unproductive when directed to senior citizens.

We wonder how many other Orange residents and business owners were also hit with sky-high water bills due to unreported-by-the-city leaks. It would be good to learn what revenue is obtained due to such overcharges for secret leaks.

This puts one in mind of the

great ancient Roman statesman Cicero. While declining a political payoff in Sicily, he declared, "The chief thing in all public administration and all public service is to avoid even the slightest suspicion of self-seeking."

To show our good faith I mailed a check of \$150 to Orange Mayor Dan Slater, city hall. Have not heard back from that office as of this time.

To solve the "secret leak" situation, a competent computer technician would advise an electronic alert be installed on the data system. This may result in diminished water department revenues from the overcharges for the secret leaks. But this would certainly serve the city's professed concern for the environment as well as give residents better service.

*Angela Rocco DeCarlo is a journalist originally from Chicago where her work appeared in the Chicago Tribune and other publications. Her column The Business Traveler ran in the Las Vegas Review Journal's business section. Her most recent work appeared in the Wall Street Journal.*

## LETTERS to the EDITOR



### It takes a village

Dear Editor

Fourteen months ago, a movement was born. Incited by the firing of our superintendent, Orange Unified School District parents, teachers and community members came together to return our district to a place where students are the first priority. It was apparent on Jan. 5, 2023 that the current board majority did not prioritize our students, nor input from OUSD parents and teachers.

Since then it has become clear what their priorities are. They fast-tracked pet projects that benefited their individual interests at the expense and safety of our children. They have risked the financial health of our district in order to benefit their campaign donors or themselves personally. Trustees for the Orange Unified School District should have two priorities: students' education and management of taxpayer dollars.

While the Registrar of Voters may not officially certify the results until this month, it is evident the voters of Orange Unified agreed with the OUSD Recall campaign regarding the need to end the chaos and corruption that this board majority has inflicted on the students, staff and community these last 14 months. Madison Miner and Rick Ledesma have been recalled and will no longer be able to push their personal agendas on our students. This is democracy at work.

We appreciate the support of the community, shown by this definitive win. We have hundreds of volunteers, and this win is validation of the sacrifices they made in order to make our community a better place. The campaign would never have existed without their passion and commitment. The actions of the board majority and subsequent recall have been difficult for our community. The unintended benefit is more people than ever paying attention to what happens in local elections and how school boards are governed. We look forward to a time where school board meetings can be boring again, with a board that is focused on the financial health of our district.

Because democracy is never over, it is likely the OUSD Recall group will move forward. What that looks like is yet to be determined. We will continue to fight for our one core, uniting principle: Public Education that serves all students is vital to the success of our community and must be protected.

Those who choose to serve should serve our students first, not those with access or with ability to pay-to-play. With transparency and accountability this can be a reality in Orange Unified, and under the watchful eyes of

our parents and community this is our future. There is nothing more important than education, we cannot fail in our mission.

Darshan Smaaladen, Michelle Weisenberg, Scott Resnick, Kimberly Buchan, on behalf of the hundreds of parents and community members who participated in the OUSD Recall

### Kind words

Dear Editor:

Thank you for your journalism. Your reporting is a service to our community.

I found your reporting on the Orange Unified School District especially helpful. Because of the *Foothills Sentry*, voters had the opportunity to read about the egregious mismanagement by the school board majority. I found the school board's decision to grant one privately managed charter school less than half priced rent, and a different privately managed charter school an option to mortgage district property, unacceptable. This type of fiscal mismanagement should not be tolerated. Voters in our district seem to agree, as it appears that the recall effort of trustees Madison Miner and Rick Ledesma will be successful.

We are fortunate to have a community newspaper for our area. Thank you to the *Foothills Sentry* for keeping us informed.

Carol LaBounty  
Orange

Dear Editor:

The importance of the role of the free press in a democracy cannot be emphasized enough. The *Foothills Sentry* has provided a sounding board to residents, giving them the opportunity to express their views over the recent takeover of the Orange Unified School Board. Ironically, freedom of speech has been one of the rights compromised by the new majority on the school board.

There is nothing more important to the survival of democracy than the freedom of speech and freedom of the press. They are the basis of a democratic government and are the targets of authoritarian groups which want to challenge it.

Lynn Lorenz  
Retired OUSD teacher

### "Recalled OUSD" continued from page 1

out Parker and Covert, saying he wasn't convinced that firm was worth it. He specifically noted Attorney Spencer Covert who attended board meetings to provide legal advice. "He danced around questions," Rothenberg noted. "He either didn't want to answer or couldn't answer."

Erickson questioned the increase in legal fees for both firms, noting that the district employs a variety of legal firms for different reasons, but with the increases, these two firms alone will be paid \$1.1 million this year. That's more than double what they earned last year. "That concerns me," she said, adding that the higher costs were due to the way the board majority has conducted business.

### An issue of governance

"Month after month, a variety of issues were brought up by way of special meetings, things were added with 24 hours notice. Policies were brought up in an unusual way and passed on the first reading. We probably needed legal advice more than ever, but that's not the way it should be. We should not have a \$300 an hour attorney sitting through every meeting, as Spencer Covert did last year. And that's in addition to associates who charge \$280 an hour. We had meetings lasting until two in the morning. "He stops charging after six hours," she acknowledged, "but that's a crazy amount of money."

Andrea Yamasaki asked the amount of attorney's fees paid for charter schools. She was told \$184,444 through January. That was primarily for facility use agreements with Explorer Academy, which never materialized, and Orange County Classical Academy.

Ledesma reminded his colleagues that OCCA will be paying the district close to \$1 million this year, and that the board constantly needed advice from council because it was accused of Brown Act violations "every five minutes and meetings were disruptive."

"We had to have legal services," President John Ortega added, "There was an unprecedented amount of Public Record Act (PRA) requests and they all had to go through legal. We were threatened with lawsuits, accusations were rendered. We have to pay our legal bills. But I understand this is a political situation."

### The end is nigh

"To be clear," Erickson noted, "PRAs were only \$64,000 out of \$1 million. Most legal bills were due to board policies. We're looking at numbers, not politics."

Erickson, Yamasaki and Ana Page voted against the additional \$450,000 for the two law firms. Ledesma and Miner joined Ortega and Angie Rumsey to vote "yes," giving the board majority the four votes it needed to prevail.

The meeting ended with public comments on non-agenda items, which were all about the recall. Soren Williams noted that it was hundreds of thousands of dollars of waste that started the recall. "You spent that much on lawyers," he said. "I know that money was wasted by the majority."

Dan Rothenberg returned to thank the board for creating an opportunity to meet lots of wonderful people. "You took having a narrow majority as a mandate to do whatever you wanted. If you'd have slowed down a little bit, maybe you wouldn't have galvanized us the way you did." During the recall campaign, he said, he walked every neighborhood, knocked on thousands of doors, and people were "great." "Thank you for that."

Several speakers used their time to applaud Miner and Ledesma for "a job well done" and for "protecting children." "You have been vilified," an OCCA parent said. "This was about parents' rights and the union." There is discrimination here in OUSD, said another. "This was a relentless persecution of your faith."

A number of recall advocates had submitted cards to speak, but chose not to. The meeting - the last for Rick Ledesma and Madison Miner -- ended at 10:35 p.m.

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**"Housing project"**  
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ing a car wash and fast food restaurants, however none but the housing units has been formally submitted.

The planning commissioners expressed concern that not approving this project could open the door for other developers to take advantage of recently enacted California Bill AB 2011, a provision that allows for streamlining in the development process for the construction of low-income housing on commercially zoned areas.

**Small concessions**

Intracorp took community and DRC feedback into account and made several changes to its original design. Bedroom windows on the units backing up to the neighbors on Carleton St., that would look into residents' backyards were raised above eye level, a hedge row was added to enhance privacy along that same border, and a four-foot wide path now grants ADA access to a previously inaccessible common space.

"We're happy to say that grandma can now come to the barbeque," quipped Intracorp project manager Emilie Simard. The company is not, however, willing to make any additional changes.

The Planning Commission found that even with modifications made based on feedback from the DRC, the project still didn't meet standards laid out by the city's small lot subdivision guidelines. Those guidelines

were cited by the DRC when it recommended denial of the proposal at its Mar. 6 meeting.

"This is a dilemma that's being faced not just here in Orange but throughout all of Southern California and beyond," said DRC member Mary Anne Skorpanich, "There isn't any more raw land to build on. What's happening is higher density development is coming in and replacing what was low density. We're moving from this world of one-story, single-family detached units to a completely different world."

**Respect the guidelines**

"Because this is a brand new project," she advised, "the first one to come under the city's new small lot subdivision standards and design guidelines, I think it is important that we really pay a lot of respect to those guidelines and require that projects live up to those guidelines."

Some of the guidelines that remain unmet include the requirement that new housing match the aesthetic of existing homes; that there should be architectural variety in the design, and a continued concern that existing residents' privacy should be adequately protected.

"It's not one or two items in the guidelines that we're not meeting," DRC member Greg Ledesma pointed out. "There's a number of them, and I want to reiterate that they're by design. They're absolutely created inherent in the design that's been brought to us. None of them have to be there."

Final approval or denial now falls to the city council.



Neighbors of a proposed infill development say the two-story units 10 feet from their backyards will invade their privacy.

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**Temporary homeless shelter flies in under the radar**



A nonprofit foundation wants to convert the property at 688 Hewes Street into a temporary homeless shelter for families.

**By Tina Richards**

A well-financed nonprofit has purchased a \$2.97 million home located between Hewes and Earham in Orange to serve as temporary shelter for homeless families.

The home, at 688 Hewes, is in a neighborhood zoned r-1, which precludes multi-family residences and commercial properties. The Illumination Foundation bought the house in January, worked on it in February and was prepared to move families into the residence in March. The foundation did not notify the city or the neighbors because it didn't think it had to.

Homeowners living next to the six bedroom, six bathroom, 5,018 sq. ft., home, were curious about the ongoing construction traffic and activity, and became alarmed when they watched a number of mattresses and refrigerators being moved into the premises. The immediate neighbors were shocked to learn that the property was to become a temporary homeless shelter.

**No meeting of the minds**

The Illumination Foundation agreed to meet with neighbors to address their concerns. The meeting, however, simply increased community anxiety. The Foundation told them the plan was to move families (up to 30 people) into the home for 90 days each. The 90 days gave the families a window to get back on their feet and move into permanent housing. They would then be replaced with another family for 90 days. There would be Foundation staff on site during the day, but they would leave at 6 p.m.

"They didn't answer any of our questions and told us this was a done deal," a resident reported. "They said that they could open the shelter at will and did not need city approvals or permits to do so," another said. "They told us they had similar homes in Anaheim and Stanton that no one objected to. We were told that the mayor supported them."

Mayor Dan Slater, however, knew nothing about the Foundation's plans for the site. Several irate neighbors attended the Feb. 27 city council meeting to express their concerns and outrage.

It was the first the city had heard of the multi-family shelter.

**In the dark**

Slater, Councilwoman Ana Gutierrez and Asst. City Manager Susan Galvan arranged a community meeting to hear from residents, March 6. Galvan set up a separate meeting with the Illumination Foundation principals to take place the following day.

About 100 residents packed the El Modena Library Community Room to explain their objections to the shelter and find out "what the city is going to do about it." Neighbors were angry that the shelter was apparently forging ahead without addressing their concerns or with city concurrence. The overwhelming complaint was that "no one seemed to know what was going on."

They were disturbed that a multi-family facility was encroaching on their single-family neighborhood, that 30 or so strangers would be routinely moving in and out, and that 20-plus cars would be coming and going on a gravel driveway. They were worried about fire safety, crime and drug use. "We don't know whether these people are being vetted or not," a resident pointed out. "We don't know anything about them and we have no reason to trust the Illumination Foundation."

**Looking for answers**

Slater explained that the city was in the same position as residents; it didn't know more than they did at that point. Galvan reported that before the city could do anything it had to understand what the Foundation's plans were and ask "a lot of questions." That was the purpose of the March 7 meeting.

"The city," she said, "will do everything it can to keep the neighbors and the community safe." The city also encouraged the Foundation to hold another community meeting to better explain itself.

That meeting was March 13. It, too, attracted about 100 residents and was attended by Slater, Gutierrez and Galvin.

The Illumination Foundation gave a presentation on its overall

mission – disrupting the cycle of homelessness by offering shelter, health care and advocacy. It noted the success of its other shelters, that there were 500 homeless people in Orange, that there were students in the Orange Unified School District living in cars and that the situation is desperate. Questions from the audience were answered with examples of the foundation's good works and the help it gives people in need.

"We think you're wonderful," a homeowner acknowledged, "but you don't belong here. Not in an r-1 zone. Why don't you look for a facility in an r-3 zone? No one would complain about that." Those views were an accurate representation of everyone in the audience. Yes, the Foundation is a worthy cause, yes, it is filling a need, yes, we support your mission. But no, not in a single-family residential zone.

**An unlikely location**

"You could have made this a win-win with support from the community by picking an appropriate location," another concerned citizen asserted. "Instead, you come bullnosed into our neighborhood and now you're fighting with us."

The foundation insists that its use of that residence to house families is supported by state legislation, that "supportive housing is considered a residential use and is subject only to restrictions applied to other residential zones." Indeed, group homes, halfway houses and rehab facilities are legal in single-family neighborhoods, but they are limited to six beds. It is not clear whether the law extends to temporary shelters housing some 30 people.

"The house has six bedrooms," one neighbor pointed out. "How many people will be in one room?" He was told only that the Foundation was "following state law."

"So does the law have a cap on the number of people you can house in one room? Can you put 50 people in there? 100?"

He did not get an answer. The city continues to meet with the Foundation principals and is "looking into" all the legal parameters.

**CANYON BEAT** *by Andrew Tonkovich*



Vote Center couture

**Givers and takers**

"April is a promise that May is bound to keep." - Hal Borland

**Vote Center**

You haven't confronted, enjoyed, or endured representative democracy until you've spent 13-hour days staffing an OC Vote Center. At least four canyonites worked as customer service representatives in the primary; three at Library of the Canyons and one (your humble scribe) at nearby Church of the Foothills. Oddly satisfying to be thanked for my "service," even as some voters suggested their vote would be stolen... only moments after casting it! Yet suspicion, irony

or only perverse reactionary cosplay fatalism can't stand up to higher-than-average turnout in the canyons, above the low 31% countywide, which pleased Eryk Stacy, Steve Kerrigan and Alison Winnie, locals who staffed Library of the Canyons. Kerrigan earns extra ink for both his firehouse work and record-setting blood donation, recently reaching 17 gallons, for which he got, no kidding, a pin. Ouch. How 'bout one of the nation's most respected election operations sign on with American Red Cross, combining two important civic exercises? After all, from Revolutionary War to Civil War to Civil Rights Movement, blood was shed to protect the vote.

**POTS**

Geoff Sarkissian of the Inter-Canyon League (ICL) and the inimitable Joanne Hubble (emergency planning, coordination and communications liaison) are happy to object, publicly, to AT&T's plans to eliminate copper-wire phone service, also known as plain old telephone service (POTS). This old-fashioned telephone line system is highly reliable, says Sarkissian, and our canyons depend on it for communication when other phone systems disappear because of fire or power shut-offs. Before pulling the wires, AT&T needs permission from the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) to be delisted as a "carrier of last resort." That designation carries both an obligation to maintain service and funding from the state to help defray costs. At a Feb. 15 CPUC meeting, Sarkissian and Hubble spoke against premature elimination of POTS, at least until an alternative system with equal reliability can replace it.

Hubble, an unshy advocate and former employee of the utility, emphasizes the history of emergencies here when dialing 9-1-1 was impossible due to lack of power, or AT&T's failure to provide emergency generators. "What entity," she asked the CPUC, "is accountable for making sure that people can call 9-1-1 24/7 with or without power?"

**Drag strip versus rumble strip**

In other Joanne Hubble activ-

ist news, she helped direct the late-February Public Works installation of seven rumble strip arrays on Modjeska Grade Road, where some months back drag racer, speeder, and hot rod scoff-law misbehavior caused accident and injury. Placed strategically, and away from homes in order to lessen noise impact, the grade project is a pilot program allowing OC Public Works to assess its effect. Naturally, drivers have already torn up some of the strips.

**Pancakes**

Defensible space meets delectable taste at both canyons' annual Easter Pancake Breakfasts, Sunday, March 31, one at Silverado Community Center, and the other at Modjeska Fire House. Though eating flapjacks doesn't prevent wildfires, Mo Canyon Captain Bruce Newell notes there's never been one on Easter morning.

**Inter-Canyon cats**

Linda May won election to the Democratic Party Central Committee, then immediately staffed a booth at Women For: Orange County's annual Great American Write-In, advocating along with Julie Williams and the ICL for more awareness of the threat to mountain lions from development, and promoting an urban green boundary. Vehicle strikes are a main cause of the decline of the species. As a result, several threatened subpopulations of mountain lions in SoCal. are candidates for protection under

the California Endangered Species Act (CESA). Along with the Center for Biological Diversity (CBD), the Mountain Lion Foundation formally petitioned the California Fish and Game Commission to protect them. May and Williams suggest reading more about the status of cougars and the call for stricter protection under CESA at mountainlion.org/us/California.

May, responsible, in part, for the gorgeous rustic bridge west of Silverado, through her lobbying of a supervisor a decade ago, suggests constructing markers at the beginning of both ends of Santiago Canyon Road to alert visitors that they're in a mountain lion habitat preserve, a special place like a national forest, and should perhaps slow down. Cheaper than installing a thousand rumble strips!

**The price of utopia**

It's high, no kidding, and nobody really wants to live there anyway. Lois Lowry's classic dystopian YA novel "The Giver" is April's Book Club pick at the Library of the Canyons, and makes for a cautionary tale, if this column hasn't provided enough of them already. Fun fact: It was recommended by Vote Center rep, former fifth grade teacher, and stalwart Book Club member Alison Winnie. So you can talk about a novel featuring big, important social themes with somebody who knows, on Wednesday evening, April 3 at 5 p.m.

**May the 4th be with you at Orange May Parade**

The annual Orange May Parade, themed "Come to the Orange Side," is slated for May 4, beginning at 10 a.m.

The Orange Chamber is accepting applications for entries and sponsorships. This year's salute to Star Wars invites participants to channel their inner Jedi, Sith or Droid via bands, floats, drill

teams, dance teams, equestrians, and groups of all kinds.

The one-mile parade route begins on Chapman Ave. at Shafter, continues down Chapman, winds around the plaza and ends at Glassell and Almond.

For updated information on the parade, please visit orangechamber.com/orange-may-parade/.





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The Woman's Club of Orange honored four high school seniors as Inspirational Young Women at its March luncheon. OUSD counselors and teachers selected the students for their academic accomplishments, and achieving their goals while overcoming challenging experiences. From left, Grace Hernandez, Villa Park High; Victoria Cable, Edge Academy at Parkside Ed. Center; Daisy Villa Vasquez, El Modena High; and Angie Alvarado, El Modena High. All are college bound. Earlier this year, the Woman's Club of Orange awarded scholarships to Inspirational Young Women from other OUSD high schools.



The Fire Support Dog Committee of Orange Elks Lodge 1475 met with the Orange City Fire Department to present a \$1,700 check to help with training expenses for the new fire support dog, "Ember." From left, Deputy Chief Doug Yates, Elks Exalted Ruler Janine Storm, Ember, Fireman Michael Romero, Elk Kati Bye and Fire Chief Sean de Metropolis

## Turtles and tortoises abound, oh my!



Linda Grunnet and Sparky, age 17.

The OC Chapter of the California Turtle and Tortoise Club Annual Show will be held on Saturday, May 18, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The 60-year-old club was founded to promote education and awareness of the species. This event will bring together over 25 giant live tortoises, as well as other shelled ones, with members from all over the state exhibiting their special pets.

Vendors will offer unique turtle- and tortoise-themed T-shirts, jewelry, soaps, how-to books for the humans, as well as special foods and habitat equipment for the animals.

In addition to many live exhibits, adoption information and educational materials, the show will offer themed activities and snacks for unshelled visitors.

The show will be held at the First Christian Church of Orange, 1130 E. Walnut from 8-4. For more information, see [tortoise.org/orangecounty](http://tortoise.org/orangecounty).



## Tustin Area Historical Society's 25<sup>th</sup> Home & Garden Tour May 18, 2024

**TICKETS**  
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Opening Ceremony: 9:40am  
Box Office: 10:00am  
Tour: 10:00am - 4:00pm



### "Budget deficit" continued from page 1

of the city's budgetary crisis and that a deliberate communications effort is needed to get the word out. If people understand the depth of the problem, they might be more amenable to drastic solutions. To that end, the city queried several consulting firms to develop and conduct a communications program; they selected Pivotal Strategies.

Pivotal Strategies' bid of \$98,500 includes public education and outreach through November. A second \$50,000 contract with the firm that executed last fall's survey, Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3), would allow for results of the communications outreach to be tracked via additional citizen surveys.

Arriana Barrios asked if it was necessary to commit to \$98,500 through November. She was told the council could approve the contract for a shorter period, and the cost would be adjusted. Additionally, about a third of that cost is for direct mailers, which could be excluded.

"If we don't do this," Barrios maintained, "it will be slashing and burning in every department. There will be no sacred cows."

"We need to do this," Jon Dumitru said. "It is incumbent for us to communicate to make sure people are tuning in. We need a professional firm."

### The devil you know

John Gyllenhammer noted that the survey found people were less interested in a sales tax than a TOT increase. "Would this outreach be focused on that?" he asked. "I see this as a way to message a sales tax."

Ana Gutierrez saw it another way. "I don't see this as a pathway to a sales tax," she said, "but rather to inform our residents what's going on in the city. This is an opportunity to let people know how the city is run. That's more important to me than whether we get a sales tax on the ballot."

Mayor Slater indicated reluctance to pursue a sales tax, favoring a TOT increase instead. "If we don't pursue a sales tax," he asked, "can we use this same contract to tell people we have to knuckle down?"

The contracts for Pivotal Strategies and FM3 were approved 5-2, with Denis Bilodeau and John Gyllenhammer voting no. None of the council members, however, liked it.

Holding on to the hope that there are undiscovered budget cuts to alleviate the problem, Mayor Slater appointed an ad hoc committee - Bilodeau, Gyllenhammer and himself -- to delve into city expenditures and look for ways to balance the budget. On a parallel track, Slater appointed Barrios, Gutierrez and Kathy Tavoularis as a second ad hoc committee to assist with public education on the issue.

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## Orange will ask voters to consider sale of legal fireworks

The Orange City Council agreed to take the legalization of safe and sane fireworks to the voters on the Nov. 5 General Election ballot.

Fireworks have been prohibited in Orange since voters rejected the idea in 1990. Because the fireworks ban was the result of a vote, sales can only be brought back by the voters.

Legalizing the sale of safe and sane fireworks came up at a council meeting last month. The council was interested in pursuing the idea to give local nonprofits another fundraising outlet. And, because neighboring cities sell them, Orange residents have access to them anyway. City Manager Tom Kisela was asked to look into the details and report back, which he did at the council's March 12 meeting.

Kisela reported that it would have to be a ballot measure. Due to fire danger in East Orange, fireworks should not be permitted east of Hewes Street or Cannon. Legislation allows a city to recover 7% of total fireworks sales and, based on what other cities allow and advice from a fireworks manufacturer, the city could issue eight permits to nonprofits to sell them.

Arianna Barrios had specifically asked Kisela to find out if cities that allowed safe and sane fireworks experienced fewer calls for service. Of the seven cities he contacted, he said, six said they had no quantitative data, but that it appeared to make little difference.

A lone public commenter asked the council to reject the idea and forego a ballot measure. He noted that the subject came up 10 years ago and was tabled. "Now it's

back," he said. "If the concept of safe and sane is no risk, why stop them at Hewes? If fire is a risk, why not ban them in Old Towne? Fireworks don't stay in one place."

Both Mayor Dan Slater and Councilman Jon Dumitru said that eight permits for safe and sane sales is too low. "This is supposed to help nonprofits," Slater explained. "I was thinking of 15 to 20," Dumitru added.

Dumitru has no problem putting it back on the ballot, he said. Prohibiting them in fire-prone East Orange would work, because "Anaheim does it," and the city would capture revenue that could be used for additional enforcement and suppression of illegal fireworks. "I'm ready to put it on the ballot now," he asserted. "I'm tired of kicking the can down the road."

Denis Bilodeau agreed that the issue has to be decided by voters. Ana Gutierrez commented that she can see both sides of the issue, but "we're not making the decision, voters are."

Arianna Barrios reflected that it is clear the issue has to be placed on the ballot, but, she asked, do we have to decide this right now? "We're already talking to residents about other things (see Voters, page 1). This will muddy the waters."

"The 1990 vote was decided by 480 votes," Slater advised. "Thirty-four years later, it's time to do it another way. Last year we tried to increase enforcement. It didn't work. Let the debate begin."

The vote to place safe and sane fireworks on the November ballot was 6-1, with Barrios opposed. It will cost an estimated \$8,000 to put the measure on the ballot.

## Temple invites public to Haggadah display



Temple Beth Shalom will display over 500 illustrated Haggadot from April 12 to May 5.

Haggadah is a compilation of biblical passages, prayers, hymns, and rabbinic literature meant to be read during the Passover Seder, a ceremonial meal held in Jewish homes to commemorate the Israelite redemption from Egypt. The earliest known Haggadot still in existence date back to the seventh and eighth century.

Many of these books are, themselves, works of art, some in metallic casings, others with embroidered covers or leatherbound. The books include historical versions and editions for children.

The exhibit is open to the public Fridays from 4 -6 p.m. and Sundays from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and Tuesdays by appointment. Temple Beth Shalom is located at 2625 North Tustin Street.



Photo by Jonathan Zimmerman

Work is underway on the City of Orange's Well 28, located at 225 W. Maple. When the well is complete, the property will become Antepasado Park, (Ancestors Park), a dash of landscaped public open space celebrating the families who have lived in the surrounding Cypress Street Barrio for generations.

## Central Dems offer how-tos

The Central Orange County Democratic club will offer a beginner's guide on how to get involved and make change at the government level, from how to serve on planning boards and commissions to how to run for office, at its Wednesday, April 24 meeting.

Doors open, snacks and chats at 6:30 p.m. and general meeting at 7 p.m. RSVP via Mobilize or the club website is required to attend.

Central OC Dems includes the Tustin, Tustin Hills, Orange, Villa Park, and surrounding communities. All Democrats are welcome to join. Meetings are held on the fourth Wednesday of each month at St. Paul's Episcopal Church at 1221 W. St. in Tustin. Central OC Dems is not affiliated with St. Paul's.

For information, visit [www.CentralOC Dems.com](http://www.CentralOC Dems.com) or the Central Orange County Democratic Club page on Facebook.

## Orange Elks meet Make-a-Wish family



Left to right are John and Janice Mauldin (Zach's parents), Elk Exalted Ruler Janine Storm, Kathy Perrea of Make-A-Wish, Zach Mauldin, Orange Elks Matt Ferrero and Terri Schatz

The Orange Elks presented the local Make-A-Wish chapter with a \$5,000 check to aid in its

mission of granting the wishes of children with life-threatening medical conditions.

Lodge members also met Make-a-Wish recipient Zach Mauldin and his parents. Zach, now a senior at Canyon High School, was diagnosed with thyroid cancer.

He told the story of his treatment and his wish, which, as a huge baseball fan, was to meet Angel's ballplayer Mike Trout. Zach and his family were picked up in a limo, given a stadium tour and then met Trout. During

the meeting, he was also introduced to baseball phenom Shohei Ohtani.

Zach earned the rank of Eagle in Boy Scouts. His Eagle project was to build a hope chest with board games for Make-A-Wish.

The local Make-A-Wish Chapter was established in 1983, and has granted nearly 8,000 wishes.

A survey of both parents and medical professionals indicates that experiencing a wish significantly improves the emotional health of the child and of the entire family.



Wilson Automotive celebrated the sale of its 1.5 millionth automobile on March 16, almost seven years to the day that it sold its millionth (March 11, 2017). Wilson Automotive has several dealerships in the City of Orange, including David Wilson's first -- Toyota of Orange on Tustin Street, purchased in 1985. From left, Allen Moznott, general manager Toyota of Orange; Vikki Murphy, executive vice president, Wilson Automotive; David Wilson, CEO, Wilson Automotive; and Craig Whetter, president, Wilson Automotive.

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### Middle school bakers raise money for charity

The culinary arts students at Santiago Charter Middle School put their baking skills to work to net \$1,025 for the Abound Food Care nonprofit.

Following the culinary arts program motto, "do something great with the food we create," students were inspired to raise money for their favorite charity.

A contest was held to determine what that favorite charity was, and votes cast by the 140 culinary students identified Abound Food Care.

Raising money to fight hunger was an obvious choice. Students have been working with Abound Food Care for several years, serving as an education and repurposing kitchen for the organization.

Abound Food Care recovers usable food waste to provide meals for those in need. In the past year, Santiago's seventh and eighth grade chefs have rescued over 200 pounds of food waste and provided over 200 meals.

The bake sale exceeded the student's \$1,000 goal and brought cheers to the classrooms. "These kids are getting a unique opportunity to give back in big ways. They get to feel passionate about what they're doing, and this is what will drive them to do more in the future," said Richelle Kalman, Santiago's culinary arts teacher.

As student Destiny Noyola pointed out, "One cupcake can change a life."



Back row, from left: Principal Jim D'Agostino with students Jaden Dicker, Joshua Beristain-Cano, Gage Coloman, Claire Erkelens, Kinsley Kohler and Giada Lancellotti. Middle Row: Emily Carter (Abound Food Care), Richelle Kalman (culinary director), Tricia Hill (instructional aide) with students Heaven Downing, Sophia Dressendorfer and Alia Erkelens. Front Row: Students Andrew Khong, Sydnee Beza, Hope Lynn and Lamiya Vasi, with Anthony Martinez (Abound Food Care) and school administrators Michael Lee and Ashley Pedroza.

### Young Women of the Month recognized by TAWC



Claire Jensen

The Tustin Area Woman's Club named Claire Jensen of Foothill High School and Jamera Fernando of Tustin High as March's Young Women of the Month.

Claire Jensen participated in the Mock Trial program for three years, as a witness and a defense attorney. She was the Associated Student Body athletics commissioner, responsible for planning football games and the National Signing Day ceremony for pre-collegiate athletes. Jensen was on the volleyball and golf teams, and awarded the Principal's Honor Roll and Scholar-Athlete Award all four years. She interned at the Tustin Public School Foundation as a teaching assistant for its annual Summer Academy. She will attend Clemson University in the



Jamera Fernando

fall to study communications.

Jamera Fernando was involved in the Model United Nations program for four years, serving as the secretary general her senior year. She was also involved with the Robotics Club all four years, and is currently its president. She is on the lacrosse and golf teams, and is currently the lacrosse team captain. Fernando interned at Boeing through TUSD Pathways by being part of Tustin High's T-Tech program. Her experiences in the aerospace and STEM field encouraged her to pursue a degree in electrical engineering and computer science at a four-year university.

Also named were Anusha Kohli of Beckman High and Zainab Hemani of Legacy High.

### VP March n Spartans to host 20th Car & Bike Show

Registration is now open for customs, classics, exotics, hot rods, bikes or boats for Villa Park High School's 20th annual March n Spartan Car and Bike Show.

Entry fees are \$35 prior to April 11, or \$40 after April 11 up to the show date. Awards will be given in five categories. Entrants may check in at 6 a.m.; judging begins at 11 a.m., trophies will be awarded at noon.

Admission is free to the public. View the vintage and unique

vehicles, enjoy food and live music. Gates will open at 8 a.m. The show is open until 1 p.m.

The event will be held Saturday, May 11, rain or shine, at the high school, 18064 E. Taft.

The annual show is the major fundraiser for the March n Spartans band, helping to fund instrument repair, uniforms, travel to competition and more.

For registration and sponsorship info, contact Brandie Smith at brandiesmith@yahoo.com.



Lisa Adray (Santiago staff member) sells cupcakes to student Kingston Jimmerson with the help of culinary aide Aidan Chavez.

### Flash book sales coming to Canyon Hills Library

The Friends of the Canyon Hills Library will host several Flash Sale events to raise funds for library projects and programs. Books, CDs, DVDs, jigsaw puzzles and games, jewelry and fine collectibles will be on sale April 23 and 24, May 22 and 23 and June 18 and 19. Patrons are also invited to visit the new children's area, paid for with funds raised by the Friends of the Library.

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### ElMo scores big with new scoreboard



Photos by Jackie Driskill

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**Thursday, April 23, 2024 at 5:30pm**

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After three years of permits and red tape, the El Modena Vanguard softball team has a new, working scoreboard, the jewel of their pristinely manicured field.

At the dedication, Feb. 24, Coach Robert Calderon thanked their benefactor, Ward Bassett '87 and Bassett Salon Solutions for their many contributions, including the scoreboard that bears his name.



The new Vanguard scoreboard donated by the Bassett family.

Bassett believes in the ElMo softball program, and has been assisting it since his daughter was a freshman player in 2019. At the first parent meeting, he was dismayed to learn the girls did not have home and away uniforms with matching numbers.



Benefactor Ward Bassett, left and coach Robert Calderon shake hands at the scoreboard dedication.

Bassett rectified that with new JV and varsity uniforms and helmets. The wooden backstop was not effective; Bassett installed the new padding himself. Dugout covers and matching benches followed.

Even after his daughter moved on from the program, Bassett continued to support ElMo softball. The field was groomed: graded, leveled and lasered to remove a dangerous lip. Then a zero-turn lawn mower was needed for upkeep.

It was learned, during COVID, that the softball field sprinklers were on the same lines as the Fred Kelly Field. When the Fred Kelly sprinklers were turned off, the softball outfield turned brown. Bassett supplied the materials for a new, separate irrigation system, and the field is now one of the premiere venues in OC.

Both the junior varsity and varsity softball teams are currently 4-0, and look forward to more runs on their new scoreboard.



The Orange Park Acres Women's League reports its March garage sale was a grand success. The league thanks all those who donated items and volunteered their time to help fund the group's philanthropies. The Women's League is also pleased to announce that Dawn Dietz will be taking on the Vice President of Communication for the League.

### Gaddi Vasquez to speak at Covenant luncheon



Gaddi Vasquez.

Ambassador Gaddi Vasquez will be the keynote speaker for Covenant's Women's Fellowship Luncheon on Thursday, April 18. His topic will be "Combating World Hunger: A Matter of Life and Death."

Vasquez began his public service as a police officer in the City of Orange, and is a home-grown leader who has gone on to serve as an appointee of two U. S. presidents and three California governors.

He served as U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Organizations in Rome, including the World Food Program and the U.N. Food and Agricultural Organization. Ambassador Vasquez served as director of the United States Peace Corps, where he led agency programs and the international volunteer service organiza-

tion serving 77 countries. He has been a leader in combating issues related to world hunger and food insecurity, which resulted in the Director of the U.N. World Food Program naming Ambassador Vasquez as Champion in the Battle Against Hunger.

The luncheon is open to the community, and will be held in St. Andrew's Hall on the church campus, 1855 N. Orange-Olive Road. Men are welcome to attend. Doors open at 11 a.m.; the program begins at 11:30 a.m.

A catered lunch is \$15 per person, payable in advance. Reservations are required by Saturday, April 13, by calling Linda at (951) 237-9888. Reservations are also required to attend the program only at 12:30 p.m.; the cost is \$5, payable at the door.

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**MARKET SNAPSHOT**  
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FEBRUARY 2024  
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<b>\$1.24M</b> Avg. Sales Price ↑ 2%	<b>\$1.57M</b> Avg. List Price - 0%	<b>57</b> Avg. Days on Market ↑ 76%	<b>\$664</b> Avg. Sales Price per Sqft. ↑ 7%	<b>63</b> No. of Props for Sale ↓ 2%
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**MARKET SNAPSHOT**  
TUSTIN, CA  
FEBRUARY 2024  
Single Family

<b>\$1.50M</b> Avg. Sales Price ↓ 4%	<b>\$2.05M</b> Avg. List Price ↑ 4%	<b>40</b> Avg. Days on Market ↓ 13%	<b>\$704</b> Avg. Sales Price per Sqft. ↑ 4%	<b>21</b> No. of Props for Sale ↑ 19%
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**MARKET SNAPSHOT**  
VILLA PARK, CA  
FEBRUARY 2024  
Single Family

<b>\$2.09M</b> Avg. Sales Price ↑ 2%	<b>\$3.53M</b> Avg. List Price ↑ 17%	<b>36</b> Avg. Days on Market ↑ 151%	<b>\$651</b> Avg. Sales Price per Sqft. ↓ 10%	<b>10</b> No. of Props for Sale ↓ 23%
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## Conservative Patriots of Orange County toast 2nd Amendment Day

The Conservative Patriots of Orange County will honor Second Amendment Day to the U.S. Constitution, April 17, at its Thursday, April 18 meeting. The meeting will feature an educational segment about the right to bear arms and a talk by Firearms Training Associates, Bill and Cheryl Murphy.

The meeting will also include committee reports on election integrity, education, legal action and young patriots. A buffet dinner will precede the meeting.

Tickets are \$30 for members; \$35 for nonmembers; and \$20 for young patriots, ages 14 to 25 with valid ID. Reservations may be made online at conservative-patriotsofoc.org or contact Peggy Baranyag, (714) 828-1289/swtmthr@sbcglobal.net

The meeting will be held at the Santa Ana Elks Lodge, 1751 S. Elk St. Doors open at 5:30 p.m.

## OBITUARIES



### Fred Brewster 1928 - 2024

Fred Brewster (95) was our beloved father who earned his wings on Feb. 23 at his home in Lake Havasu City, where he and his late wife Mary had lived since moving from Orange in 2008.

Fred was born in Canandaigua, New York to Basil and Grace Brewster. The family moved to Tustin, where they built Brewster's Auto Camp, a welcome stop for weary motorists. It was located on the corner of Main and

D (El Camino Real). The family lived in one unit, and the rest were rented out to travelers or visitors to the El Toro Marine Base.

Fred started his career as a brick mason, and later moved into the profession of welding for the Home Oil Company located in Anaheim, where he worked until about 1993.

Fred was a lifetime member of the Orange Elks.

He is preceded in death by his wife of 53 years, Mary Kesel Brewster, and his brother, Basil Brewster of Santa Ana.

He is survived by his daughter Linda Brewster of Parker, Arizona; his son Mike (Linda) of Lake Havasu City; stepdaughters Wendi Bowman of Lake Havasu City and Shari Hegel of Orange; grandchildren Chad Tant, Mavany Tant, Brandi Brewster, Dustin Hamilton, Melissa Zielke (Matt), Robbie Hegel, and seven great-grandchildren.

Per Fred's request, there will be no services. Raise a glass today to celebrate a man who loved his family and lived his life with a smile, a sense of adventure and a wonderful sense of humor.

## Bag of Books sale coming to Orange Library



The Friends of the Orange Public Library (FOPL) is hosting a Bag of Books sale, April 13 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Patrons are invited to fill an FOPL bag with books for just \$5.

Bring your own FOPL bag and save a dollar. Members only may come early, from 9 to 10 a.m.

The sale will be held in the Community Room of the main library, 407 E. Chapman.

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## “Now and Again” Thrift Shop is part of the community



Assistance League members in front of the Thrift Shop.

The number one fundraiser for Assistance League of Orange is the revenue derived from its Now and Again Thrift Shop on the Orange Plaza Square.

Its sales net approximately \$200,000 per year, which is used to fund the organization’s philanthropic programs. The store is entirely staffed by volunteers.

Villa Park residents Cindy McCandless and Meri Burgess oversee the operations of the shop. Meri Burgess says, “We get a variety of amazing donations. Please stop by and see our wonderful store.”

The thrift shop offers gently used clothing, housewares, books, jewelry and collectable items, all donations from the community. It is located at 20 Plaza Square, in a historic building the group purchased in 1961 for \$22,000. It has seen two renovations and a seismic reconstruction.

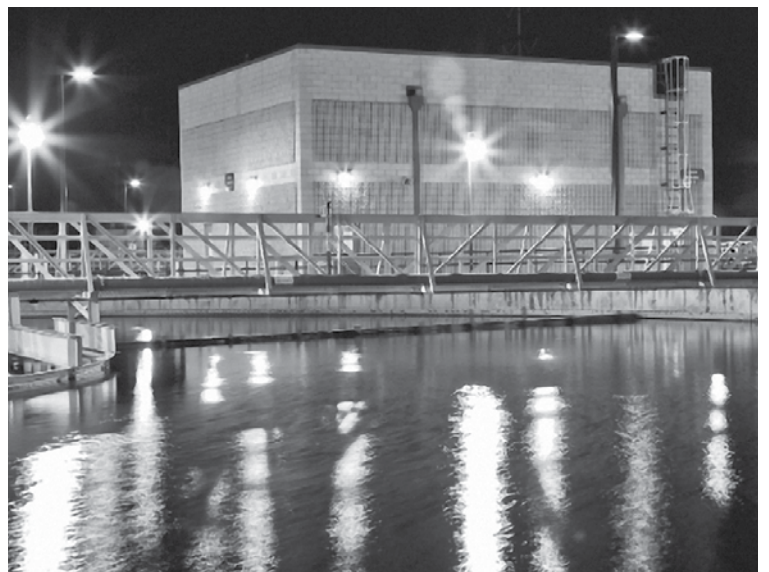
The store’s “Shop with Purpose” motto reminds shoppers that their purchases support over 15 philanthropic programs that drive positive outcomes for residents of the community.

Some of these programs are: Operation School Bell, which provides uniforms and school supplies to OUSD students; scholarships for high school graduates; the Salute to Service program, which recognizes students entering military service; and Special Assistance, which provides emergency financial support to people in crisis.

Assistance League of Orange welcomes anyone wishing to volunteer in service to the community. Its Invitation to Membership event will be held on Thursday, April 25 at 5 p.m.

For more information, visit [AssistanceLeague.org/Orange](http://AssistanceLeague.org/Orange).

## Groundwater replenishment system named “Community Champion”



The Orange County Water District (OCWD) and the Orange County Sanitation District (OC San) were selected by the WaterReuse National Association to receive the 2024 “Community Water Champion Award.”

This award recognizes OCWD and OC San for the completion of the world’s largest potable reuse project of its kind, the Groundwater Replenishment System (GWRS), and for its continued dedication and commitment to water reuse.

During the final expansion of the GWRS, completed in early 2023, two major milestones were achieved: recycling 100% of OC San’s reclaimable wastewater flows and producing 130 million gallons of high-quality water every day. The purified water is recharged into the Orange County Groundwater Basin, managed by

OCWD, and eventually becomes part of the region’s drinking water supply that serves 2.5 million people.

The GWRS came online in 2008 and has produced more than 430 billion gallons of water and counting. It increases drinking water supplies in Orange County and decreases the need to import water from northern California and the Colorado River, providing a cost-effective and energy-efficient alternative.

“From what was once the unthinkable – purifying wastewater into drinking water – is now the model for water reuse, and it is happening right here in Orange County,” said OC San Board Chairman Chad Wanke. “The GWRS has again made history with the final completion that recycles all of our agency’s reclaimable wastewater flows.”

## Former OUSD superintendent recognized by Association of California School Administrators

Former Orange Unified School District Superintendent Gunn Marie Hansen, fired without cause last January in a 4-3 board vote, was named 2024 Superintendent of the Year by the Local Association of California School Administrators (ACSA).

Following her abrupt dismissal from OUSD, Hansen was quickly offered the superintendent position at the Westminster School District.

ACSA recognized her for “exceptional leadership in implementing and supporting innovative programs as well as creating a culture of high performance.” She was also applauded for spearheading the district’s six-year strategic plan, which addresses shifts in preK-8 education.

During her tenure at OUSD, Hansen received the Orange County School Board Association Award for Exemplary Superintendents, and, in 2022, the Orange County 4th District Parent

Teacher Association (PTA) Outstanding Superintendent Award.

Her unexplained firing from Orange Unified launched a year-long campaign, led by district parents, to recall two board majority members.

ACSA serves more than 17,000 California educators and annually spotlights top administrators and friends of education at the regional and state levels for their dedication to public education.

Four administrators at OUSD also merited 2024 recognition. Ashley Pedroza was named Middle Grades Principal of the Year; Katherine Treat, Career Technical Education Administrator; David Rivera, Business Services Administrator; Julie Lucas, Continuation/Educational Option Administrator.

The Tustin Unified School District was represented by Yaneli Rivera, Elementary Co-administrator and Maurita De La Torre, Personnel/HR Administrator.

## Old Towne in the spotlight at forum

The State of Old Towne Forum, sponsored by the Old Towne Preservation Association, will be held Wednesday, April 3 at 6 p.m. in the city council chambers.

The meeting will feature Mayor Dan Slater, Mayor Pro Tem Arianna Barrios, City Manager Tom Kisela, Police Chief Dan Adams and Chapman Vice President Ali-

sa Driscoll. Topics include boarding houses, Chapman expansion, student housing, the Plaza, parking, city finances, and crime.

Visit [OTPA.org](http://OTPA.org) to RSVP.

# COMMUNITY SPORTS

BY CLIFF ROBBINS AND CHAD CLINE



Mariah Streeter (3) goes around two Rancho Cucamonga players for the layup shot.

## Meet the coach, Sara Brown



Sara Brown

Sara Brown, the first year head coach of the Canyon High School girls basketball team, is no stranger to the CIF Finals. She played in the game during her prep years, and took her previous high school team to a divisional championship.

Brown has guided the Canyon Comanches girls basketball team to a 5-1 North Hills League finish, ending the season 27-13 after qualifying for a CIF State Girls Basketball Playoff berth.



Canyon High School's Everett Roach (22) shoots over the Rancho Cucamonga player. Roach finished with eight points.



Justine Prajitno (14) from Canyon High School drives the lane. Prajitno scored 16 points in the Championship game.



Everett Roach (22) from Canyon High School controlled the boards in the CIF Championship game. Roach totaled 11 boards.



Jasmine Prajitno (15) led Canyon High to a 52-43 CIF Championship. Prajitno finished with a game high of 20 points.



Canyon High School, making its first trip to the CIF-SS Finals, captured the championship with a 52-43 win over Rancho Cucamonga High.



Canyon High School Athletic Director Nate Harrison, left, and Canyon Principal Brent McKee congratulate Coach Sara Brown for winning the CIF-SS Div. 3 Girls Basketball Championship.



# COMMUNITY SPORTS

BY CLIFF ROBBINS AND CHAD CLINE



Foothill (2-3-1, 17-6-6), represented the Crestview League in the Division 2 Boys Soccer playoffs. Foothill advanced to the CIF-State Div. 3 Playoffs.

Matthew Mendoza (16) from Foothill High drives around the Newport Harbor defender. Foothill took runner-up to Newport Harbor in the finals.



El Modena High girls pom team captured second place in the recent California state competition. Left to right are team members: Brenna Cassel, Misha Hansuvadha, Alexa Perez, Jessica Mason, Co-Captain Cassandra Jurjis, Coach Kelly Hesp, Co-Captain Shaylyn Morgan, Morgan Palacios, Olivia Draffen, Gisele Franklin and Marissa Santos.



Eli Arthurton (11) teams up with Tony Colley from Santiago Canyon College to block the shot attempt. The SCC season came to an end against Hancock College, losing 55 to 62.



Canyon High School was well-represented by these women athletes at the annual Sally Reclusado Women in Sports Conference, Feb. 26. The annual event started over 20 years ago by Reclusado and other athletic directors and coaches to celebrate Title IX, and empower and inspire female athletes. The event is sponsored by the Orange County Athletic Directors Association.



Santiago Canyon College Hawks Tony Colley (21) and Chico Lopez (34), right, go up for the rebound in the home game against Hancock College.



Damien Parker from Villa Park, Santiago Canyon College's second leading scorer, drives the lane against Hancock College in the state playoffs. Parker scored six points.

# PLAY BALL!

The Villa Park Little League celebrated the baseball season opener, Feb. 24, with a convoy of team-decorated trucks, flatbeds and cars wending their way to the ball fields at Cerro Villa Middle School.



The Dodgers fill a truck bed. From left, Niam Shah, Ashton Herdrich, Jamison Rickrode, Griffin Bleeker, Gus Deloach, Giovanni Hernandez, Grant Garcia, Akram Ibrahim.



Luka Gastelum, Barrett Ridenour, Nicholas Pappas, Lincoln Covington, Garrett Garcia, Kieran Gibb

## Elks support South Sunrise



Left to right, Eva Segura, Rebecca Torres and Greg Early

The South Sunrise Little League has been serving the community of East Orange since 1961. Baseball teaches children the importance of sportsmanship, teamwork, competition, hard work and fair play.

The Orange Lodge 1475 has proudly supported the South Sunrise Little League for many years. This year, the lodge donated \$800 to help refurbish batting cages and make other needed improvements.



Grant Garcia, Ashton Herdrich



Kingston Che, Preston Thomas

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