



San Fernando Valley Home Sales Increased During July

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Nighttrek: What to See in the September Sky

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Halloween Horror Nights Returns to Universal

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ENCINO ENTERPRISE

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NEWS IN BRIEF

VICA to Honor Extraordinary Women in Business

The Valley Industry and Commerce Association (VICA) will honor extraordinary women in business on Friday, September 12. The event brings together trailblazing female professionals, executives, and public officials for an empowering afternoon of insight, connection, and shared experiences. Hear their stories, gain valuable career inspiration, and grow your network. The breakfast is sponsored by CSUN Nazarian College of Business and Economics and the *Los Angeles Business Journal*. It will be held at the Airtel Plaza Hotel, 7277 Valjean Avenue in Van Nuys. For more information visit vica.com.

405 Freeway Weekend Closures Set

Caltrans announced extended weekend lane reductions on the 405 Freeway through the Sepulveda Pass. The freeway will be reduced to three lanes in each direction and motorists are strongly encouraged to seek alternate routes and explore public transportation options to reach their destinations. The work will start at 10 pm Friday, September 19, through 5 am Monday, September 22. Northbound I-405 will be reduced to three lanes between Santa Monica Boulevard to just north of Sunset Boulevard. Santa Monica Boulevard on-ramp closed. Wilshire Boulevard off-ramp closed. Eastbound and westbound Wilshire Boulevard on-ramps to northbound I-405 closed. Sunset Boulevard on/off-ramps closed. Sepulveda Boulevard/Moraga Drive off-ramp closed. Southbound I-405 will be reduced to three lanes just north of Sunset Boulevard to eastbound Wilshire Boulevard. Sunset Boulevard/Church Lane on/off-ramps closed. Westbound Wilshire Boulevard on-ramp to southbound I-405 closed.

Swastikas Found Graffitied on Encino Store and Surrounding Area

In what police are calling a hate crime, multiple swastikas have recently been found graffitied in Encino. Late last week, a swastika was reported on the door of the Jewish religious supply store Mitzvaland Judaica on Ventura Blvd. Surveillance from the store shows an individual approaching the store and clearly spraying the message in yellow spray-paint. This incident follows other reports of swastikas and antisemitic graffiti in the area.



Armida Colmenares-Stafford



Dennis DeYoung



Steve Fazio



Jorge Rabaso



Sharon Udkoff

Fernando Award Finalists Named

The Fernando Award Foundation announced five Valley leaders as official finalists for this year's Fernando Award, honoring volunteer leadership in the San Fernando Valley.

Each year, except for 2020 due to COVID, community organizations and businesses nominate outstanding individuals to be considered for this lifetime achievement award. Nominees are evaluated based on their volunteer engagement, length and number of years of volunteer service, volunteer leadership roles, and volunteer mentorship.

The five finalists are Armida Colmenares-Stafford, nominated by the Valley Economic Alliance and the Annenberg School of Nursing, Dennis DeYoung, nominated

by Keith Nathaniel and CSUN, Steve Fazio, nominated by Dale Surowitz and Rickey Gelb, Jorge E. Rabaso, nominated by Teylez Perez and Claudia Shah, and Sharon Udkoff, nominated by Los Angeles Jewish Health and Los Angeles Valley College.

Armida Colmenares-Stafford is a First Vice President with Columbia Bank. In over 30 years of banking, she has served in various senior management positions with national, regional, and community banks.

Colmenares-Stafford is the Chair of the Board of Directors of The Valley Economic Alliance and the first Latina Chair of the United Chambers of Commerce. In addition to her business focus, Colmenares-Stafford is involved with healthcare through

her work as Co-Chair of the Annenberg School of Nursing, part of LA Jewish Health. She is also on the Board of Directors and the Business Committee for Proxy Parent Foundation which provides services for people who are disabled and their families.

Colmenares-Stafford was a member of California Bankers Association, raising awareness with members of Congress about banking legislation. Since 2021, she has been listed as one of the Top 200 Valley Influential Leaders in the Valley Area by the *San Fernando Valley Business Journal* and was a nominee for their Women in Business Award. In 2023, she was honored by United Chambers as one of the Inspirational Women

(continued to page 3)

CALENDAR

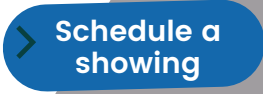


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Community Calendar

- * The Encino Neighborhood Council will be holding their Public Safety Committee meeting on Monday, September 8, at 7 pm at the Encino Community Center (4935 Balboa Blvd). For the agenda, visit encinonc.org.
- * SAGE Learning in Retirement will host a free training on “How to Protect Yourself Against Cyber Crime” on Tuesday, September 9, from 11 am to 2 pm at the Episcopal Church St. Andrew & St. Charles, 16551 Rinaldi St., Granada Hills.
- * Discover a fresh connection with the works of William Shakespeare as a cast of enthusiasts brings his timeless words to life through quotes, monologues, sonnets, swordplay and even a touch of music. “Shakespeare in a Different Light” will be held at the Tarzana Community and Cultural Center on Sunday, September 14, at 7 pm. This intimate salon-type evening includes a talk-back session with the cast following the performance. This show will be indoors; snacks and beverages available for purchase. Admission is \$20 and can be purchased at mytarzana.org.
- * Westfield Fashion Square, in partnership with the American Red Cross, will hold a blood drive on Tuesday, September 16, from 10 am to 4 pm. To book your appointment, visit redcrossblood.org.
- * Join the West Valley Regional Library each Monday at 10 am for their World Literature Book Club. The short story selections are from *100 Great Short Stories* edited by James Daley and *The Scribner Anthology of Contemporary Short Fiction*. This month’s selected works are as follows: September 8: *After Rosa Parks* by Janet Desaulniers, September 15: *Nilda* by Junot Diaz, September 22: *The Caretaker* by Anthony Doerr and September 29: *We Didn’t* by Stuart Dybek.
- * You can experience a crystal healing sound bath at the Native Spirit Lodge in relaxing reclining chairs. No yoga mats! The body’s main energy centers are associated with specific musical notes and frequencies which can be utilized in sound healing practices such as sound baths. These notes and frequencies are believed to resonate with and balance the corresponding chakra, influencing physical, emotional and spiritual well-being. Sound baths are held daily in a specially dedicated room. For more information, call (818)-703-7046.
- * The Sherman Oaks Encino Chamber of Commerce will be holding their “Lunch Break Live” on Thursday, September 11, at 11:30 am at Hugo’s (12851 Riverside Dr.) in Studio City. Make business connections over a delicious lunch. Cost is \$30 for members and \$50 for non-members. RSVP at shermanoaksencinochamber.org.
- * The Southern California Garden Club kicks off their 99th season on Tuesday, September 16, at 9:30 am at Sepulveda Garden Center (16633 Magnolia Blvd.) in Encino. Nicholas Staddon will present the history of horticultural therapy. See the full itinerary of the day at socialgardenclub.org. Attendance is free and all are welcome.



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Fernando Award Finalists Cont'd

(continued from page 1)

of the Year. In 2022, 2023 and 2024 she was a nominee for the Fernando Award. She is an Ambassador for the American Red Cross for St. Joseph the Worker Catholic Church.

Dennis DeYoung is a Certified Financial Planner with LPL Financial, LLC, in Northridge, with over 42 years of experience in the investment advisor and financial planning field. He is currently a member of CSUN's Foundation Board and Audit Committee Chair and a Development Committee and Strategic Plan Task Force Committee Member. He is a California 4-H Foundation Board Member, and Camp Director, Committee Chair for L.A. County 4-H Youth Program Summer Camp, a member of Volunteers Cleaning Communities, and a Fernando Award nominee in 2016 and 2024.

DeYoung is a member of the LAPD Devonshire Division, Volunteer Surveillance Team and was Chairman of the 50-year Time Capsule Committee for Granada Hills Veterans Park. He is also a board member and past President, CSUN Alumni Association Board of Directors. He was selected as a "Fabulous 50" of the CSUN David Nazarian College of Business & Economics for the 50-year anniversary gala, recipient, C.K. Tseng Community Leadership Award, member of the CSUN Ad Hoc Committee for Athletics Engagement, the Athletic Director's Circle of Champions and board Chair, Matadors Community Credit Union Board of Directors. He is a Director of the 51st District

Agricultural Association, Valley Fair Board and a member of the LA Pierce College Advisory Committee.

Steve Fazio is the owner of Fazio Cleaners, headquartered in Woodland Hills with locations across Los Angeles and Nevada.

Since 1981, he served the city as a LA reserve police officer. He spent 40 years in uniform working in a variety of assignments including patrol, undercover vice, the fugitive task force and the gang unit. Fazio is currently assigned to the LAPD's well-respected Robbery Homicide Division where he works as a cold case homicide investigator.

He serves as an instructor at the LAPD's Edward Davis Training Facility where he educates recruits in tactics and also serves as Chairman and CEO of the California Reserve Peace Officers Association. Fazio is also Vice Chair of the LAPD Operations Valley Bureau Foundation, helping to raise money to purchase equipment and supplies not covered by the City. He served as a member of the LA City Fire Commission from 2013-2016. He currently holds the rank of Captain with the California State Guard serving as Deputy Director of the Strategy and Policy Unit at Headquarters.

He serves on Cedars-Sinai Medical Center's Board of Governors, the board of Providence Cedars-Sinai Tarzana Medical Center and the Valley Economic Alliance.

Motivational speaker and leader Jorge E. Rabaso is regarded as one of the most recognized Hispanic leaders in

LA. Born in Buenos Aires, Rabaso immigrated to the States in 1988 in pursuit of the American dream. His first accomplishment was in founding the Hispanic Business Network in 1998, where he still serves as its chairman. In 2002, Rabaso founded the project, "Helping Our People," which sent funds to Latin-American countries. In 2010, he joined the board of directors of Mend Poverty. In 2015, seeking a way to bring parity and recognition to Hispanic speakers, he founded the "Bilingual Toastmasters Group" that was held in the Valley for and which earned him the title of a "Distinguished Toastmaster."

Rabaso has been a member of the Valley Leadership Institute and served on the Board of Governors at the City Club in DTLA for four years. In April 2009, he was nominated by the Governor to be part of the Valley Fair Board of Directors. In 2024, Rabaso was nominated for the 2024 Fernando Award

CPA Sharon Udkoff is on the board of directors of The Executives, the support group for LA Jewish Health. She co-chaired their largest fundraiser for three years and was treasurer for eight. She served on the Board of Directors for Magnolia Tree Villas HOA and Hillel 818, and also served as President. She has been on the board of LA Valley College Foundation for over 25 years, serving as treasurer, secretary and member-at-large as well as sitting on various committees. She is the treasurer of the Studio Village HOA.

Her volunteer focus has been on helping the elderly and youth of the community.

COMMUNITY

English Channel

By Rodger Sterling

English Channel offers the best of the late editor Rodger Sterling's columns that ran continuously in the local papers since 1968.



• As writers we love our puns... so here are some from longtime reader Margaret Hampton:

- The fattest knight at King Arthur's round table was Sir Cumference. He acquired his size from too much pi.
- I thought I saw an eye doctor on an Alaskan island, but it turned out to be an optical Aleutian.
- She was only a whiskey maker, but he loved her still.

• As my daughter heads back to college and I write out the bills, I asked her why she couldn't have chosen Bible College. It's cheaper because they only have one book, the test has only 10 questions and if you flunk out you're forgiven!

• Why did Beethoven kill his pet chicken? It kept saying "Bach, bach, bach!"

• A reader called in to ask if one in five people suffer from diarrhea, does this mean four in five enjoy it?

• Turrell also asks readers if they've heard about the new restaurant that opened on the Moon. The food's okay, but there is no atmosphere.

• Thought for today: Happiness is good health and a bad memory.

• Local banker Mahsa Saam offers this joke. "For most women, men are like bank accounts - no money, no interest."

• Which leads us to the old Yiddish proverb..."With money in your pocket, you are wise and you are handsome and you sing well too!"

• In his retirement, John Yang figured he would take up golf like many men his age. When asked how it was going, Yang said, "The only part of golf I'm good at is when you launch your club into the woods screaming."



Congressman Brad Sherman



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San Fernando Valley Home Sales Increased During July

Existing single-family home closed escrows increased during July compared to a year ago while the collection of home and condominium active listings hit its highest level in 14 years, the Southland Regional Association of Realtors® recently reported.

Local realtors assisted the close of escrow of 627 single-family homes last month, a total that was 4.7% higher than a year ago and the highest monthly tally since June 2023. While welcome news, the home sales total remained below levels set during the COVID pandemic in the early years of this decade and pales compared to historical highs that had monthly totals of more than 1,200 closed escrows.

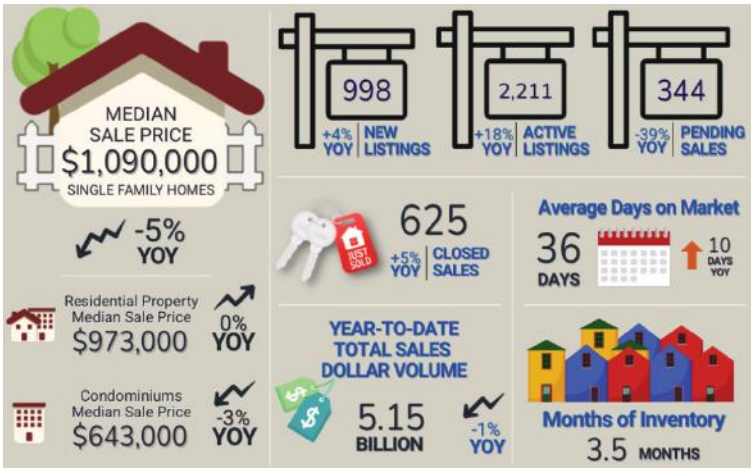
Condominium closed escrows during July came in at 132, down 14.3%.

“While interest rates on home mortgage recently dropped, condominium sales and overall activity slowed due to rates that were still too high for middle- and entry-level buyers,” said Anthony Bedgood, President of the Southland Regional Association of Realtors®.

“There’s too much uncertainty about where the economy is headed, about home prices, and about job security,” Bedgood said. “While some people always find an opportunity, most people unsurprisingly want certainty and consistency when it comes to finances and buying a home.”

Bedgood and Valerie Biletsky, SRAR’s Chief Executive Officer, agreed that buyers who are willing to plunge into the market will find an array of options.

“Home and condo active listings are at levels not seen in many years,” Biletsky said.



“And it appears the inventory will continue to swell well into the future.”

The Association, which serves the San Fernando and Santa Clarita valleys, reported 838 active listings of condominiums – up 57% from a year ago. New listings during July increased 30%.

Similarly, the 2,204 single-family homes listed for sale on the Association’s MLS increased 17.8%. New listings increased 4%.

At the end of the month there were 3,042 home and condo active listings available – a total not seen since 2011. That represented a four-month supply at the current pace of sales, which is close to what market experts believe represents a balanced market, where neither buyer nor seller hold a clear negotiating advantage

The median price of the 627 homes that changed owners last month was \$1,095,000, down 4.7 percent from a year ago and down from the record high \$1,150,000 set in June. The condominium median price of \$643,000 fell 2.6% compared to the July 2024 record high \$660,000.

According to a new

report, over 43,000 Californian households relied on private mortgage insurance to achieve homeownership during 2024 with downpayments as low as 3%. California ranked third in low-down payment homebuyers using private mortgage insurance.

SRAR’s Income-to-Loan guide for July calculated an income of \$297,929 was needed to qualify for an 80% loan of \$876,000 on a San Fernando Valley median-priced single-family home of \$1,095,000.

With the national average interest rate at 6.80% last month, the income needed to qualify was down 6.8% from a year ago. The monthly PITI — principal, interest, taxes and insurance payments — totaled \$7,198.

As of August 4, mortgage rates on a 30-year mortgage had plunged to a 10-month low of 6.57%, down from 6.74 percent on July 28.

The Southland Regional Association of Realtors® local market statistics are compiled from all available data share partner information accessible through CRMLS and may not represent complete activity for the San Fernando and Santa Clarita Valleys.

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Why Contracts Should Be Strategic Tools, Not Just Paperwork

By Janice L. Miller, Esq.

In the digital age, contracts are too often relegated to dusty file folders. But in reality, contracts are powerful leverage points: they shape relationships, streamline operations, mitigate risks, and unlock revenue.

1. The High Cost of Treating Contracts as Mere Formalities

Treating contracts as administrative checkboxes comes with a steep price. Organizations lose around 9% of annual revenue on average due to contract mismanagement, according to reports from Procurement Tactics. In large firms, inefficiencies can erode up to 40% of a contract's value without close governance (Gitnux, Contract Management Statistics). The implications are serious. Forty three percent of organizations struggle with compliance, and 40% admit they lack clarity over who's responsible for contract-related tasks.

Moreover, locating terms or obligations can be time-consuming. Professionals may spend up to two hours digging for specific clauses.

2. Strategic Contract Management Delivers Real Value

The upside of proactive contract governance is clear. Companies with robust contract management processes tend to enjoy higher profitability, faster cash flow, lower administrative costs, and improved risk management. In fact, research shows that organizations with effective contract management practices see up to 5% higher profitability and 7% annual revenue growth, while also realizing cash faster, lowering operating costs, and capturing greater value from agreements, according to Gitnux. These aren't fringe benefits. They are competitive differentiators.

3. Reimagining Contracts as Business Drivers

Strategic contracts are not just about compliance. They can actively drive business outcomes. For example, performance-based contracting (PBC) ties compensation to measurable outcomes rather than deliverables, aligning incentives and driving better performance. According to the Financial Times, in industries like defense, PBC has delivered both lower costs and higher system readiness compared to traditional models.

Relational and "vested" contracts push this concept further by embedding shared goals, governance frameworks, and flexibility directly into agreements. By creating win-win structures, companies such as Microsoft, FedEx, and P&G

have shown how contracts can transform from transaction documents into frameworks for innovation and growth (Zoho Contracts, The State of Contract Management 2025). Similarly, supplier relationship management (SRM) strategies anchored by strategic contracts enable businesses to deepen collaboration, reduce risks, and co-develop solutions rather than simply enforce obligations.

4. The Future: Smarter, Strategically Responsive Contracts

The next wave of contracts will be even more strategic as AI becomes embedded in contract drafting, negotiation, and risk analysis. Generative AI tools are already helping legal and procurement teams identify risks, flag nonstandard clauses, and accelerate redlining. According to Contract Management Online, analysts project the Contract Lifecycle Management (CLM) market will grow to nearly \$3 billion by 2027, expanding at double-digit annual rates as more organizations adopt these systems.

This shift marks a fundamental evolution. Contracts become dynamic governance tools. They enable organizations to not only reduce liability and improve compliance but also to recover hidden value, support collaboration, and provide real-time business insights.

Contracts should never be thought of as dusty paperwork. They are living frameworks that define relationships, ensure transparency, and position businesses for growth.

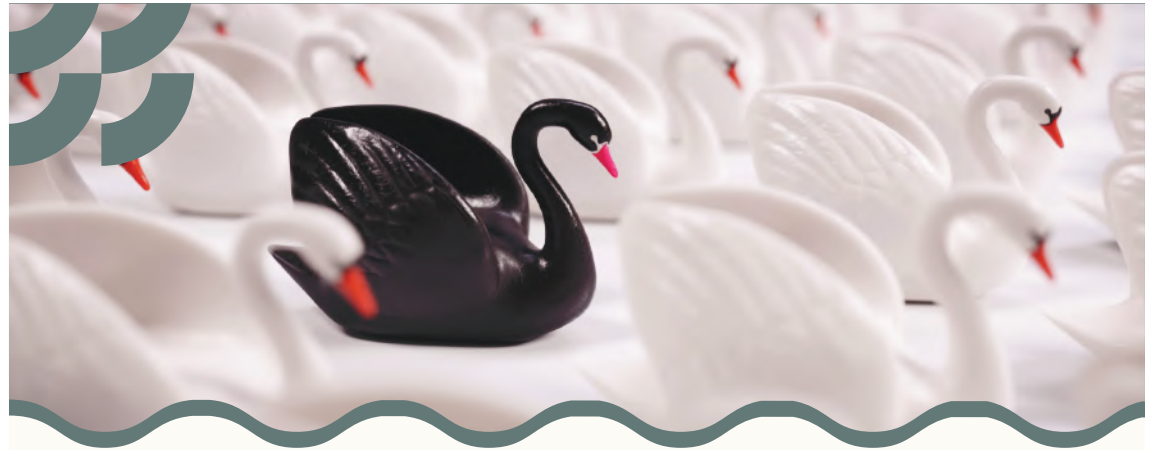
By embedding data-driven processes to prevent revenue leakage, adopting AI-powered CLM systems to increase efficiency, aligning incentives through performance-based agreements, and fostering collaboration through relational models, organizations can transform contracts into engines of value.

In other words, when contracts are treated as strategic assets rather than afterthoughts, they start becoming a source of competitive advantage for any type of business.

Disclaimer: This article is not meant as legal advice. It is solely for educational purposes.

Janice L. Miller Esq. is the managing partner of Miller Haga Law Group, LLP in Calabasas. She is a highly recognized legal advisor, published author, noted speaker, and panelist with over 25 years of experience as an innovative general counsel in business, real estate, entertainment, and intellectual property.

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“Therapeutic Laziness” is the Latest Health Trend

While the American lifestyle is often touted as one of constant hustling, the latest lifestyle trend is stressing the importance of incorporating periods of inactivity in one’s schedule. “Therapeutic laziness” is the antithesis of society’s demands for constant productivity.

Much like its close cousin in wellness, “bed rotting,” therapeutic laziness is the idea of being unproductive. It is a defined period of self-care where an individual must slow down, reset and recharge. Not only is it beneficial for one’s mental

health, it can aid in avoiding an eventual burnout from overexertion. While bed rotting often stems from emotional exhaustion, therapeutic laziness is a more active decision to slow down. One is a mental and physical reset, while one may be more a red flag indicating burnout.

The biggest factor in regards to therapeutic laziness is avoiding the feeling of guilt. It

doesn’t need to wait until your to-do list is checked off or your errands have been completed. Rather, therapeutic laziness should be seen as a treat and not as a reward.

Dr. Stefanie Mazer, Psy.D., a licensed psychologist, explains “When you allow yourself to be deliberately unproductive, you give your nervous system a chance to downshift. Many people live in a near-constant state of activation, mentally juggling tasks, responding to tech messages, pushing through exhaustion. Therapeutic laziness interrupts that cycle.”



Examples of engaging in therapeutic laziness include taking a mindful walk, cuddling a pet, disconnecting from electronic devices, bird watching, taking a soothing bath or even relaxing on the couch in silence. Whatever brings you a sense of peace and calm can be looked at as therapeutic laziness. After all, this trend acknowledges that rest is a necessity for one’s overall well-being.

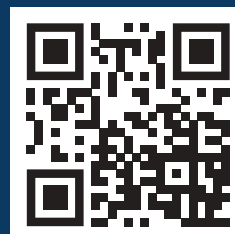
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Is the 10,000 Step Fitness Goal Outdated?

It's long been a fitness "rule" that 10,000 steps is the ideal number an individual should get within a day to hit their fitness goals. New research now suggests that you can still reap major health rewards without having to hit a five-figure target.

It also may be more realistic in terms of time and fitting a lower step count into an already hectic schedule. To put it in simple terms, waking approximately 10,000 steps is equivalent to almost five miles. On the flip side, walking around 7,000 steps is approximately three miles.



A scientific analysis published in The Lancet Public Health reviewed data from multiple studies on the topic and came to the conclusion that a more realistic goal is anywhere from 5,000 to 7,000 steps a day. Once you fall into this range, you still get multiple health benefits.

For example, walking just 2,000 steps a day, an individual has a 25% lower risk of heart disease, a 14% lower risk of developing type 2 diabetes, a 38% lower risk of dementia and a 22% lower risk of depression.

While more steps are certainly not detrimental, an individual can still reap multiple benefits from a lower step goal.

Both 7,000 and 10,000 are still major milestones to hit and if someone is more sedentary, health experts suggest starting by adding small increases to your current step count. Start with a small goal and gradually work your way up. Ultimately, it comes down to what one's personal fitness goals are and what is best for their own body.

At the end of the day, more realistic goals could prove more effective at managing health and creating meaningful change. Walking, even just a little bit, is better than not walking at all as it's a gentle exercise with huge benefits.

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New and Returning Haunts Kick Off Halloween Horror Nights at Universal Studios Hollywood

Get ready to scream! Halloween Horror Nights at Universal Studios Hollywood kick off this Thursday, September 4 and will run until Sunday, November 2. The torturous debauchery includes new and returning favorites for attending guests to delight in and dread!

Amazon MGM Studios' supernatural cult horror classic *Poltergeist* will bring guests "into the light" only at Universal Studios Hollywood's Halloween Horror Nights event. Considered one of the "scariest films of all time" when it debuted in 1982, the haunted house will transport guests into nightmarish scenes with terrifying characters from the movie, including the iconic Freeling family home.

Located on the historic Universal backlot, "Terror Tram: Enter the Blumhouse" will enable visitors to disembark the Studio Tour tram and set off on foot to encounter some of the most iconic villains from Blumhouse's popular horror franchises over the past 15 years, including The Grabber from *The Black Phone*, the possessed from *The Exorcist: Believer*, the diabolical M3GAN, the ruthless killers from *The Purge* franchise, Blissfield Butcher from *Freaky* and Babyface Killer from *Happy Death Day*, among others.

Guests who elect to upgrade their Halloween Horror Nights experience by purchasing the R.I.P. Tour will

have an exclusive opportunity to meet and scream with select characters featured on Terror Tram. General admission guests will encounter a special photo op upon disembarking the tram.

"The Purge: Dangerous Waters" stunt show returns to the WaterWorld venue, taking guests on a fiery, rocket-fueled adventure while they fight to survive the night.

Completing this



Nights and will do anything to defend their nest.

year's line-up, horror fans will encounter four petrifying scare zones throughout the event. As they begin their terrifying evening at Halloween Horror Nights, guests will need to dodge a troop of chainsaw killers in "Chainsaw Clownz" and escape a maniacal fun house in "Carnival of Carnage." After surviving this year's haunted house, "Monstruos 3: The Ghosts of Latin America," guests will stumble upon a dimly lit street to brave the "Noche de Brujas" scare zone. The ever-popular "Murder of Crowz" flocks back to Halloween Horror

These exciting experiences join previously announced haunted houses, including Prime Video's critically acclaimed series *Fallout*, Blumhouse's hit movie *Five Nights at Freddy's*, cult classic horror film franchise *Terrifier*, WWE's supernatural pro wrestling group "WWE Presents: The Horrors of The Wyatt Sicks," the infamous killer Jason Voorhees in "Jason Universe," the original haunted house "Scarecrow: Music by Slash," featuring a soundtrack by Grammy® Award-winning guitarist and songwriter SLASH, and "Monstruos 3: The Ghosts of Latin America," the third installment in the Monstruos trilogy.

Adding to the scares, guests also can experience select theme park attractions open during the event, including

SUPER NINTENDO WORLD, "Jurassic World—The Ride," "The Wizarding World of Harry Potter™," "Transformers™: The Ride-3D," "Revenge of the Mummy—The Ride" and "The Simpsons Ride™."

A variety of Halloween Horror Nights ticket options for Universal Studios Hollywood are available, including General Admission, Universal Express, After 2 P.M. Day/Night, the Early Access Ticket, which provides entry to select haunted houses beginning at 5:30 p.m. (subject to change), in advance of the scheduled 7 pm event opening time, the R.I.P. Tour and popular passes, Frequent Fear Pass and Ultimate Fear Pass, which enable guests to experience the scares again and again.

For tickets, visit universalstudioshollywood.com/hhn/en/us.

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Get Shucked! The Corn-Fed Musical Sure to Satisfy Your Appetite for Humor

Get ready for a feast for your eyes - and ears - as Tony-award winning *Shucked* is at the Hollywood Pantages only until September 7.

Shucked takes place in a small town named Cob County, where the livelihood and identity of the residents are deeply intertwined with their corn crop.

Our present-day hero is Maizy, who is all set to marry childhood sweetheart Beau when something inexplicably goes wrong: The corn, the cash crop from which Cobb County residents make pretty much everything, starts rotting away. She travels to Tampa and enlists the aid of a con man posing as a "corn doctor."

The musical explores themes of community, unity, and the power of humor as the town grapples with its crisis and the unconventional solutions offered

by outsiders.

The cast will be led by Miki Abraham as Lulu (Abraham understudied the role in *Shucked* on Broadway), Tyler Joseph Ellis as Storyteller 2, Maya Lagerstam as Storyteller 1, Mike Nappi as Peanut, Jake Odmark as Beau, Quinn VanAntwerp (*Shucked* on Broadway) as Gordy, and Danielle Wade as Maizy.

Featuring book by Tony Award winner Robert Horn (*Tootsie*), a score by the Grammy® Award-winning songwriting team of Brandy Clark and Shane McAnally (Kacey Musgraves' "Follow Your Arrow"), and directed by Tony Award winner Jack O'Brien (*Hairspray*).

Tickets are available at broadwayinhollywood.com. The Pantages Theatre is located at 6233 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood.



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ENTERTAINMENT

Tiles That Unite: The Popularity of Mahjong

By Sharona Saltzman

What do a retired Marine, a teenage coder, and a Brooklyn grandmother have in common?

The answer clicks into place with a satisfying shuffle: mahjong. This centuries-old tradition has a way of turning any gathering into something truly unforgettable.

Born in China during the Qing Dynasty, this game has evolved from its regional roots into a global phenomenon. Whether it's being played in a hip New York café, by a sunlit pool in Los Angeles, or on a shaded porch in Miami, it has transcended mere recreation to become a vibrant lifestyle.

So, what exactly is mahjong? While definitions vary, its essence is widely understood: a game designed for four players, using intricately designed tiles, where skill, strategy, and chance intertwine to build a winning hand — and above all, to bring people together. There are over 40 known variations around the world. Among the most popular are Chinese, American,



and the fast-paced Riichi style from Japan. Though rules and tiles may differ, the core values — camaraderie, tradition, and intellectual challenge — remain the same.

Beyond its mechanics, mahjong holds a unique social magic. Whether sipping tea between turns or sharing laughter over a playful misstep, the game is a bridge — cutting across ages, cultures, and languages. It's brain-boosting, mood-lifting, and may even trigger a release of endorphins. While winning is always sweet, many players will tell you the real joy lies in the friendships formed across the table. The challenge is fun, but the social connection is the real prize.

Its enduring appeal has made its way into design, fashion,

pop culture, and yes, even TikTok. With colorful tile sets, custom accessories, and themed events, the mahjong revival is well underway. It's a game that stretches the mind and feeds the soul and it's just as enjoyable at age eight as it is at 98.

You might be surprised by how many celebrities and creatives play, from actors like Julia Roberts and Sarah Jessica Parker to writers, artists, and even athletes. Mahjong's charm knows no bounds — it's just as likely to appear at a cozy wine bar as it is after church on Sunday.

No matter where or how you play, mahjong offers something universal: a way to unplug, challenge oneself, and share meaningful time with others. If you haven't learned yet, there has never been a better time to start. And if you're already a player — congratulations, you're part of a timeless tradition that continues to unite and inspire.

Sharona Saltzman is a writer, creator and founder of Mahjong West Media. Follow her @mahjongwestmedia for all things mahjong!



It's the Military vs the Misfits in Netflix Area 51 Doc

By Katie Sterling

The internet can be the biggest blessing or the ultimate curse. It's a treasure trove of useful information, available in seconds to satiate any curiosity or need. It's also a forum for trolls, haters, conspiracy theorists, dark web-users and the like. The ultimate juxtaposition! Thanks to the seemingly limitless nature of the internet, if you search long enough, you'll ultimately find whatever you seek, however niche it may be. Case in point: a group of individuals dead set on storming Area 51. You have to love the internet...a place full of surprises, and yet, does anything online truly surprise anyone anymore?

Trainwreck: Storm Area 51, a two-part documentary now on Netflix, chronicles how a group of strangers came together on the internet to plan a ludicrous "takeover" of one of the most-heavily-secured military facilities. It's a saga filled with lunacy, fueled by certain individuals that society would certainly classify as "characters." Much like many of the ridiculous items you may find on the internet, what started as a joke, quickly spiraled into an uncontrollable situation.

Out of boredom one day, mall worker Matty Roberts created a fake Facebook event titled "Storm Area 51, They Can't Stop All of Us." While he meant the post to be a joke, sarcasm is a bit hard to read on the internet, and the post quickly went viral. After all, Area 51 is already rife with controversy, with many seriously believing the base is home to aliens and UFOs that the government is hiding from society. Why not pile on to the ridiculousness by staging a coup? It's the military versus the misfits, what could go wrong?!

Despite Matty attempting to make another joke hinting that it was not a real event, this information passed over peoples' heads in the manner of said UFOs. With the scheduled date of this faux event months out, the internet had plenty of

time to blow it out of proportion and gain enough traction that the military had no choice but to step in. Like they don't have anything better to do with their time...

While Netflix can be hit or miss with their scripted series, their documentaries tend to be well produced and *Storm Area 51* is a short, but satisfactory addition to their roster. In telling the complete story, interviews are conducted with various major players involved, as well as interspersed clips of the actual Facebook posting and subsequent reactions to it.

Over a million people continued to add fuel to the fire and it escalated throughout the internet taking forms that only became more and more ludicrous. Think celebrity engagement, trending memes, an EDM concert, influencers dressing as sexy aliens and even spin-off alien porn. Oi vey internet, oi vey. Throughout it all, you can't help but feel that this is a plot seemingly straight out of a Fargo universe. It's a small town you wouldn't even believe is real, having to face an influx of influencers lacking any semblance of common sense. Frankly, to them, they're as alien as much as the so-called ones hidden within Area 51.

What started as a laughing matter quickly turned into a torment of harassment, prompting a local state of emergency. Death threats, authorization of weapon usage and blatant naivety eventually prompted the FBI to step in. But is it too late to control the masses?

If you're looking for a good laugh, or frankly, needing to confirm you have more brain cells than you think you do, watch *Storm Area 51*. It may lessen your faith in humanity a bit, but also reassure the fact that if aliens do exist, the overall intelligence of the human race is nothing they'll be coming after anytime soon. After all, it seems that the true threats come not from the sky, but from behind the screen.

Trainwreck: Storm Area 51 is currently streaming on Netflix.

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Nighttrek: What to See in the September Sky

By Neill Simmons

The highlight of September is the return of the ringed planet Saturn. After 9 pm look east to see the planet rising. Saturn will be at its brightest on Saturday night, the 20th. At this time of the year, Saturn is between the constellations Pisces and Aquarius. In October, Saturn will be fully in Aquarius. It takes over 29 years for this planet to orbit the Sun. If you have binoculars, one of Saturn's moons, named Enceladus, can be spotted. Saturn is not a perfect sphere as its north pole is 90% of the equatorial diameter. Saturn's winds blow at over 1100 miles per hours, the fastest in the solar systems. One day on Saturn is just over 10 hours long. Look on Monday, the 8th, when the Moon and Saturn will appear to be close to each other.

The full Moon on September 7 is called the "Corn Moon." This name comes from Native American traditions, as corn was often harvested at this time of year. It is also sometimes called the "Autumn Moon." If you are traveling to Asia, Australia, or parts of Europe and Africa, the full Moon will appear red due to a Total Lunar Eclipse. This is also known as a "Blood Moon." Unfortunately, the lunar eclipse will not be visible in the Americas.

Mars is low in the west in September and appears as a tiny red spot. On Wednesday, the 24th, Mars will be near the thin crescent Moon. Mars is known as the "Red Planet" due to the iron oxide in its soil. It has the largest volcano and canyon in the solar system. It has two moons, Phobos and Deimos, and its seasons are similar to Earth's but much longer.

Dawn Patrol: The planets Jupiter and Venus are a great sight in the east after 4 am until dawn, which is about 5:30 am. Both are super bright with Jupiter appearing to be above Venus. To the right of Jupiter is the Orion constellation.

On Sunday afternoon, September 21, there will be a partial solar eclipse, which will cover about 10% of the Sun. It should only be seen with good eclipse glasses! Next year, on August 12, 2026 there will be solar eclipse in Greenland, Iceland and Spain lasting about two minutes. This is the first mainland eclipse in Europe since 1999. Also, many people are making plans now for the August 2, 2027 solar eclipse. It will last over six minutes and 21 seconds long. It starts in the Atlantic Ocean and goes through Gibraltar, Egypt and parts of Africa. There will be many cruise ships traveling to this event.

Every night, look straight up to see the famous asterism, the "Summer Triangle." The three stars that make up this formation are called Vega, Deneb, and Altair. An asterism is a recognizable pattern or group of stars that is not an officially designated constellation. Another asterism in same area is the "Northern Cross" which is located within the constellation Cygnus the Swan. Also, the dwarf planet Pluto is in the center of this asterism but cannot be seen with the naked eye. Pluto is primarily known as the largest dwarf planet in our solar system and for the controversy surrounding its demotion. It was once considered the ninth planet but was reclassified in 2006 due to new definitions of a planet.

The next two months will bring us a lot of solar activity with some spectacular auroras. Most of the action will be above Bakersfield and all the way to Canada. The Aurora Borealis, or northern lights, are natural light displays in the sky caused by charged particles from the sun colliding with Earth's upper atmosphere. We are hoping one might show up here in Southern California.

Another great sight to see in September is our spiral galaxy, the "Milky Way." It is bordered by Sagittarius on the left and Scorpius on the right in the west. It is best to get out of the city lights to see the band of stars.

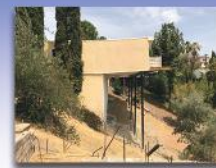
In the East, the Great Square of Pegasus, the Winged Horse, is a large, prominent asterism in the autumn night sky, composed of four bright stars that form a square or diamond shape. Notice that the square is balanced on one corner and that inside the square there are no stars visible. The Great Square serves as a guide for astronomers to locate other celestial objects, most notably the Andromeda galaxy.

Mark Saturday, September 13, on your calendar as a fun and local "star party" will come back to Paramount Ranch. The Ventura County Astronomical Society is putting on "An Evening Under the Stars" with many telescopes and special events. You can also bring your own telescope. The location is in Agoura Hills and there is plenty of room to park. It starts at 7:30 pm but get there before dark to take full advantage of the evening. Night temperatures can be chilly so dress accordingly. This event is free.

When not stargazing, Neill Simmons is an Investment Executive with LPL Financial. He may be reached at (818) 936-2626 or emailed at neill.simmons@lpl.com.

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With English Supertitles

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Mariachi Herencia de México
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SAT OCT 4 8PM

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Featuring Wild Up

SAT OCT 11 3PM
SUN OCT 12 3PM

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SAT OCT 18 8PM

Fly Me to the Moon
A Tribute to Quincy Jones
Featuring Pacific Jazz Orchestra
With Special Guests
Ms. Lisa Fischer and José James
Chris Walden, conductor

FRI OCT 24 8PM

Lila Downs
Día de Muertos

SUN OCT 26 3PM

Colburn Orchestra
Carlos Miguel Prieto, conductor
Zi Yang Low, violin

THU NOV 6 8PM

Mariza

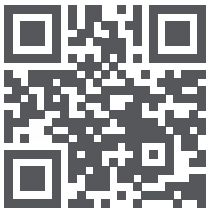
SAT NOV 15 8PM

Ballet BC
BOLERO X

SAT NOV 22 3PM

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