

THE TOWNE LOCAL

Chula Vista



THE NEW CHULA VISTA BAYFRONT

SPECIAL ONE-YEAR ANNIVERSARY ISSUE!

4

WHAT A YEAR IT HAS BEEN!

Our Magazine Front Covers

5

"TAKE ME TO LOLITA'S"

Interview with Dolores Jackson

10

BONITAFEST #54

Parade, Awards, Performances, Melodrama

11

"ALL THE LONELY PEOPLE"

Hannah Wagner's New Film

14

SAN DIEGO PORT AUTHORITY

Interview with Chair Ann Moore

19

CHULA VISTA ART FEST

4th Annual--Fun for All

20

SAN DIEGO BAYFRONT HISTORY

The Salt Works

22

MEET RONNIE THE RACCOON

Chula Vista Living Coast Discovery Center

23

TELLING THE HUMAN STORIES

Our Interview with Jeff Bettger

27

STEIN'S HOLLOW ART GALLERY

Danny and Hector Leading the Way



Check out the current Art Through The Glass exhibit at the Chula Vista Center mall, curated by Stein's Hollow Gallery.

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THE TOWNE LOCAL *One Year Anniversary*



JEFF BETTGER
PUBLISHING DIRECTOR

It is true. Time DOES fly by quickly when you are having fun! It has been one year since we published the first issue of The Towne Local Chula Vista magazine. The second year since the first issue of our previous magazine The Towne Local Bonita. I want to thank the many people who have agreed to be interviewed for our articles. You have been so kind and generous sharing your amazing stories with us. I want to thank the business partners who have supported our efforts. And, most importantly, I want to thank you, the readers of our magazine.

In a world of 90 sec. social media reels, you have shown there is still a place for quality written stories. We have focused on the People, Place, and History of the South Bay and will continue to do so. We already have amazing stories to share with you this coming year. Look for a tribute to the 65th anniversary of Southwestern College. More interviews with Olympic and Paralympic athletes training at the Chula Vista Elite Athlete Training Center. A tribute to Veterans Day with the San Ysidro War Memorial, and much more!

Thank you!

+++++

Find additional video content on our social media platforms. Search for **Chula Vista Magazine** on Instagram and Youtube.

Do you have an idea for a future story? Please contact me at Jeff@TheTowneLocal.com



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100% Local ABOUT OUR TEAM



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Jeff has been a Realtor in the South Bay for 25+ years. Previously, he was a Professor of Special Education at San Francisco State University.



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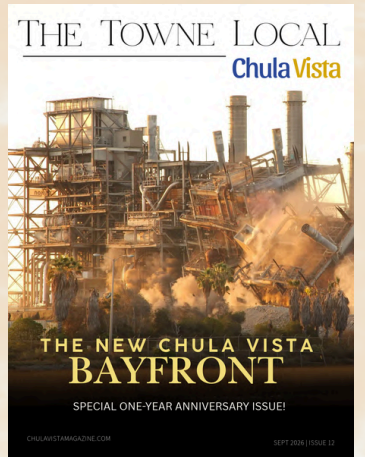
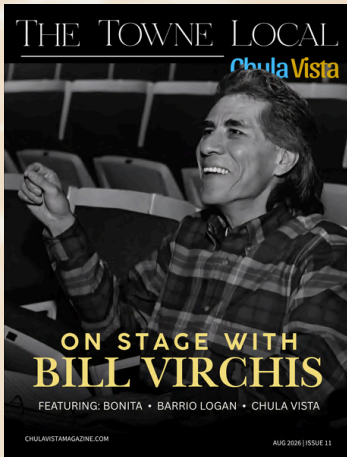
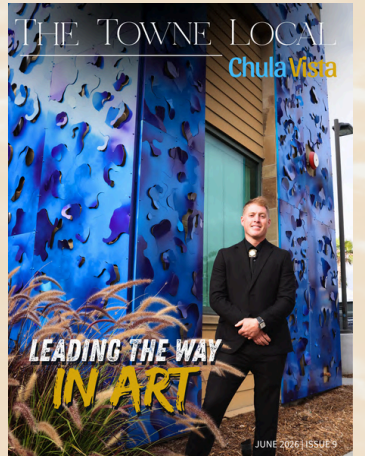
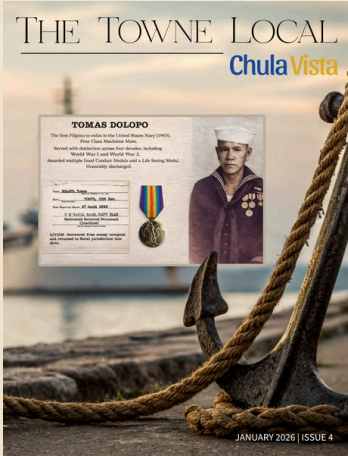


Steve Wood
Photographer
SteveWoodChulaVista@gmail.com

Steve is a legendary Chula Vista photographer. When not capturing beautiful sunsets, he and his wife can be found supporting community art events.

The Heart & Soul of the SOUTH BAY

Celebrating one year of the
STORIES THAT SHAPES OUR COMMUNITIES



A FAMILY TRADITION

LOLITA'S MEXICAN FOOD



by Jeff Bettger

A few years back, before COVID hit, I remember picking my son up at the airport. He had been living in Portland and was returning home for the holidays. It was around noon and he informed me he was hungry. I asked him where he would like to go? Without hesitation he said, "I want a California Burrito from Lolita's!" From the puzzled look on my face, he immediately explained, "It's an awesome burrito that has french fries in it!"

With five locations, Lolita's Mexican Restaurants continues to feed residents of Chula Vista and San Diego county while providing approximately 170 jobs. Dolores Jackson, the only daughter of the Farfan family, serves as the company President. Despite her busy schedule, Dolores was gracious to sit down with me and discuss her family's history, the restaurant business, and her thoughts on the future of Chula Vista.

Dolores Jackson is a quiet and thoughtful business owner who shoulders the weight of a large operation with class and pride in her family's accomplishments. Her original intention of having a career in fashion or interior design, rather than restaurants, is betrayed by her personal style. A subtle elegance that displays confidence earned, not inherited. More obvious is the many local events Lolita's sponsors each year. Community and traditions have always been important to this dedicated family.

THE FARFAN FAMILY

Dolores' father, known as Senior to all, was born in Mexico City but raised in Tijuana. Her mother was born in Monterrey and came to the US when she was eight years old. Dolores and her five brothers were born and raised in Chula Vista, and all still live here. She attended Vista Square Elementary, Chula Vista Junior High

School, Chula Vista High School, and graduated from Hilltop High School. Her fond memories include going to playgrounds, watching her brothers play Little League baseball, and then playing sports herself. She also remembers going down J Street with her parents and collecting shells and clams off that bay. "We didn't venture too much out of Chula Vista until we got a little older."

Dolores was 11 years old when Lolita's opened. Her mother's family had restaurants, and her grandfather on her father's side cooked for the military at the Admiral Baker field. Thinking about the future, Dolores' mother along with her father began managing her aunt's restaurant for a year. Saving money, the family was able to open their own restaurant. That was forty-two years ago. The original Lolita's still operates today on the corner of Telegraph Canyon Road and the 805. When asked about the name Lolita's, Dolores explains, "Lolita is a nickname for Dolores. My grandmother, my mom, and I are all Dolores. My grandmother they called Dona Lola, my mom is Lolita and I go by my middle family name Cruci. It was my father who wanted the restaurant to be named Lolita's."

After five years, the second Lolita's was opened in Bonita. Locations in Kearny Mesa, East Palomar in the Sunbow community, and Eastlake followed over time. Dolores and her five brothers still work together in different roles. Even her father continues to work six days a week. Her mother, the original Lolita, is now semi-retired.

COVID

Two additional locations, in downtown San Diego and at SDSU, had opened but were closed as casualties of COVID. With decreased sales and staff calling in sick, the decision was made to close on Sundays for a couple of years.

It soon became evident that customers wanted Lolita's open on the weekend. It was

critical for the business to re-open. With the closing of the Downtown and SDSU locations, the remaining five stores were re-opened seven days a week. This proved to be a game changer for the company.

During COVID, careful planning was required to comply with safety regulations, distancing, and staffing. Dolores recalls that one location needed to be remodeled, "We brought a food truck onto the parking lot and were able to serve our community, with a limited menu, but we didn't disappear." In addition to these changes, an I-9 audit and new procedures showed that some of the staff could not be legally employed, causing a loss of 40 individuals, some of their most trusted team members.

Dolores remembers, "COVID was tough. People really didn't understand all the sacrifices and changes we needed to make to remain open. It wasn't only our family needing the income, it was our employees and our vendors. We're all a team and we couldn't do it without the others. We had an 'All Hands on Deck' attitude. I even showed my husband, who's retired military, how to open and close a store. So even through the challenges, I believe Lolita's did a really great job remaining a great place to work. 2024 was still tough, but I feel like last year was really the first year I was able to breathe a little bit."



Dolores Jackson with some of Lolita's many awards.



The Farfan family. Lolita, Senior, Dolores, and five brothers.

THE MENU

Lolita's has a large menu of customer favorites. One of the keys to their long-term success has been the emphasis on quality ingredients and detailed attention to preparation. About twelve years ago, some items were removed when it was realized that their sales did not justify the time and labor needed to make those dishes. With many other competitors selling Mexican food, Dolores says that it is her father's special mix of spices (his mother was from Veracruz, where they use lots of spices) and their exacting preparation that continues to set them apart, along with the quality of the ingredients. "We have a constant communication with our vendors. That's non-negotiable. For example, we have a local meat vendor we've worked with for many years. There are larger suppliers who want to sell to us at a cheaper price, but their product is not good enough to make us change," states Dolores.

Dolores also emphasizes that making a great burrito is more than throwing ingredients into a tortilla. The exact proportion of items is

critical, and each new employee must be trained. "A Lolita's Carne Asada burrito is delicious. But if you put in more meat and too little guacamole or salsa, the flavor profile is gone. Following our standards, our builds, our portions are extremely important!"

Despite their emphasis on tradition, new items are added to the menu. Trends, tastes and diets change over time. "We added a salad about six years ago. It took time because I wanted to make sure we had a great salad, not just a bowl of lettuce." But the salad is not their most famous addition.

THE CALIFORNIA BURRITO

Favorites at Lolita's are rolled tacos and carne asada fries. But it is the California Burrito that has people driving straight from airports. Here is the story straight from Dolores, "My older siblings were managing the Bonita location. One of the vendors came in and told them about a place in El Centro that was selling burritos with carne asada and potatoes. They didn't think much about it, but then as time went on, they started to sneak over to the Vons and grab a little pack of French fries and started testing it. Of course they did not tell my Dad, because he would not have been ok with it! Now, lots of places make a variation of the California Burrito. But the Lolita's California Burrito is carne asada, french fries, sour cream and cheddar cheese. If we weren't the first, we were definitely one of the first."

THE RESTAURANT BUSINESS

Fourteen years ago, Dolores sat down with her parents and asked them about the future. Did they want to remain a sole proprietorship, or did they want to grow and become a corporation? The change was not easy for her parents. For example, Senior was hesitant to make his special recipes available to more people. Dolores explains, "They're his babies. There

were only a limited number of individuals who had them. But I explained that if we want to keep growing as a company, they must be written down.” Similarly, from the beginning, her mother did the business paperwork from her kitchen table, and her garage was her warehouse. Now it was time to rent administrative office space, and to write training manuals, procedure binders, and a mission statement. After much thought and discussion, they settled on “Our Passion is to Serve Authentic, High-Quality Mexican Food to Generations of Guests.” Dolores smiles with pride when relating that her four adult children and two grandchildren now walk through the doors, the fourth and fifth generation of Farfan’s.

Because many restaurants open and close quickly, I asked Dolores what advice she would have for somebody wanting to open a restaurant. I was quite surprised by her answer. Rather than discussing building a menu, she focused on the business aspects. “The permitting process can take longer than expected, so cash reserves are important. Understanding your customer base and matching the menu to their desires.

Understanding all the regulations regarding employee wages, employee meals, heat illness prevention, and work violence prevention. It can be overwhelming. Most business owners don’t realize that if you have a branded item, such as putting your logo on a cup, you are now considered a producer and you have to register and report how much is used, what the weight is, what we have in inventory, and where that product goes from start to finish,” Dolores summarized. Doing business in California is not easy. Regulations change and/or added often. Even changes such as raising the minimum wage greatly affect how a business can operate.

With her combination of a lifetime of experience and a personal gravitas, people listen when Dolores speaks. Lolita’s was awarded in 2026 the Best Mexican Casual Restaurant for the fourth year in a row by the California Restaurant Association. This award is voted on by other restaurant owners. Even more impressive, Dolores was recently recognized as the 2026 Restaurateur of the Year! An admitted introvert, speaking in public is not Dolores’ comfort zone, but she has realized the importance of advocating not just for Lolita’s, but for the restaurant industry in general.

THE FUTURE OF CHULA VISTA

Having a business establishment like Lolita’s in a community is important for many reasons. Memories of eating out with extended family members. Grabbing a late-night tostada with friends. Maybe even meeting for a first date. But in this case, it is also important that the same family has owned and operated the restaurant all these years. Growing up in Chula Vista, Dolores knows the history and the people of Chula Vista. I asked her why she continues to contribute her time and support to community organizations such as the Chula Vista Chamber of Commerce and the Envision Broadway



group. She responded that giving money is important but so is sharing your time and knowledge. It takes people working together with a common goal to improve things.

Dolores remembers her parents driving the family out to Otay Lakes and feeling what a treat it was to go so far. Hillsides filled with grazing cattle. And now, so much has changed, including the Gaylord Project. "So for me, just the excitement of knowing what's coming to Chula Vista, making it more of a destination, but also understanding that there's so many areas that we need to beautify still, such as the Broadway area."

Describing in more detail, she is surprised that the city didn't do more to make Chula Vista a destination before the Gaylord opened, such

as improving the Chula Vista Golf Course. "Why not have the Gaylord guests stay in Chula Vista, rather than go to Coronado, Downtown or La Jolla? How can the Chula Vista Center mall help with these efforts? When you go to Hawaii, you go to a cultural center and enjoy a luau. Why can't we have similar productions of dinners and ballet folklórico?" Thinking about the future, Dolores admits, "I'm excited about what is coming, I just hope it doesn't take another twenty years to arrive."

In summary, thank you Dolores for your time doing this interview, your restaurants, and your many contributions to our community. Speaking on behalf of the residents of Chula Vista, we hope that Lolita's will continue serving your delicious food for generations to come.

Out with the Old



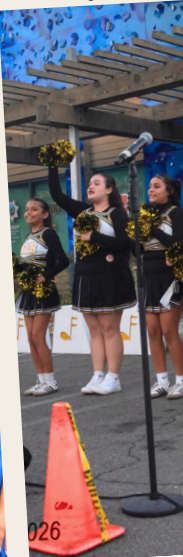
Cover photo by Steve Wood showing the demolition of the South Bay Power Plant, signaling the beginning of a new era of development on the Chula Vista Bayfront. An area once filled with manufacturing buildings has new life.

Starting with the massive Gaylord Pacific Resort and Convention Center, residents can now enjoy the expanded Harbor Park. A proposed Pangaea project would bring residential and shopping options to the area.

Scenes & Moments at the 54th BONITAFEST

Photos by Josh Whitehead and Sinay

Saturday, September 12th, 2026



MAKING A MOVIE: PART 1

INTRODUCING

All the Lonely People

A HANNAH WAGNER FILM

by Jeff Bettger

In my youth, Saturday afternoons, a double matinee, a sugary drink in one hand and an even more sugary candy in the other hand. My brother and I enjoyed a cartoon and then an adventure movie at the one-screen movie theater in my hometown. Fast forward a few decades. Star Wars. Indiana Jones. Crocodile Dundee. Field of Dreams. The Godfather. Forrest Gump. I wanted to make a movie. I would create little scenes in my head as I waited in line or tried to fall asleep.

Hannah Wagner is following her dream and is currently making her film, *All the Lonely People*, here in Chula Vista. Being interested in the movie making process, I will follow Hannah's progress in a three-part series. Part 1 will discuss the planning and screenplay of a movie. Part 2 will focus on the filming and editing process. Part 3 will focus on the distribution of the film, including various film festivals.

Jeff Bettger: Hi Hannah. I'm very excited to learn more about your movie. But first, tell me a little bit more about yourself.

Hannah Wagner: Absolutely. Funny enough, my background is in electrical engineering. Kind of far away from the arts, but I've always been very passionate about film. I always thought that engineering would be my day job and film would be something I do on the side. But when I graduated from college, a combination of COVID and the rise of AI, there were tons of layoffs in the engineering industry. I reached out to Aaron David Roberts after reading about CVEC (Chula Vista Entertainment Company) in a San Diego Union Tribune article. It turned out the project had just started in earnest, and what began as helping Aaron with some tasks part time very quickly turned into a full-time job. That was a year and a half ago. Working with the

incredible team we have put together has been an invaluable experience.

Before that, I worked on any project that I could. I worked on student films as an AD (Assistant Director) and producer, on short films, and on a couple of feature films in different production roles. But my goal has always been to become a writer/director. I have been writing this script since 2020 when I was still in college. After trying to get it made twice before, in 2022 and 2024, this year I decided it was time to make it happen.

Jeff: Which leads beautifully into my next question. I understand the name of the movie is *All the Lonely People*. What is the general plot line and who are some of the characters?

Hannah: When I was a kid, I was obsessed with the song *Eleanor Rigby* by the Beatles. I had written a 30-page school project based on

that song and wanted to go back and explore it again. And what came to me is the idea of creating sort of an anthology story. It's four different stories depicting loneliness in four very unique ways. We imagine loneliness is someone who's very solitary and alone. But a person can be surrounded by other people and still be lonely.

Then these four stories are interwoven and show the multiplicity and varying ways loneliness can present itself in people's lives. But also, how our lives are intertwined with others in ways we don't see at play in our day-to-day lives. Then when you take a step back and you look at the whole picture, you see all the small ways our lives touch each other.

Jeff: Is it set in current times? Set in America?

Hannah: Yes, it was originally set in New York City, but the filming logistics and cost was a little bit too much of a barrier. So it's lots of interior shots in an ambiguous city. We will be shooting and filming in San Diego. It's set in the pre-COVID world. Our decision was that everybody would have old flip phones rather than modern smart phones, so we like to say it's set roughly between 2005 and 2015.

Jeff: Is the script fully written and completed?

Hannah: Yeah, I've had lots of different iterations of the script. The original draft was like 200-250 pages, which is far too long for a feature film. I had tried to film versions of it previously, but with



low-budget projects like this, things can fall through. For example, I lost crew members last minute and then couldn't find replacements to move forward. But what was great is it gave me the opportunity to keep refining the script to the place that it is now. And I feel very, very happy about where we landed.

Jeff: OK, after you have your script, what is the next step?

Hannah: For me, the first step was to get a cinematographer on board because I really wanted to nail down the look of the movie. The cinematographer needs to be creative partner in the project, speaking the same language and seeing the same vision, so we needed time to build a rapport. I found someone who just graduated from film school. She was gung-ho and we shot a couple of short films together just to kind

of get a workflow going. We've been building a vision for this film for the last six to nine months. Then she connected me with a friend of hers who will be co-producing it with me. It's just helpful for me to have an additional person to bouncing ideas off, to help organizing things, and to help with logistics. Also, on set, having a producer that can deal with all the logistics and help to put out fires is incredibly important.

The next step was casting. I posted casting calls and then sifted through probably 400-500 auditions. I was looking for people with the ability to just exist naturally in front of a camera. That really helped weed out lots of people. I am happy that I ended up with a really stellar cast. They are all really passionate about making art and creating something

special.

I have been so lucky and grateful that every single person I've brought onto this project has been such a wonderful human being and pleasant to work with. Then we also have a camera and lighting crew. A first and second assistant camera (AC), a gaffer who works on lighting, a key grip, sound people, an assistant director who helps create the schedule and keep everybody on time, and a production assistant who, on our set, will be focused on production design and things like helping replace props between takes.

Jeff: How many cast members are in your film?

Hannah: Including ancillary and very small roles, I think about 15 total, six of which are leads.

Jeff: Can we go back and explain more about the job of the DP (Director of Photography)?

Hannah: Sure. We've done a lot of visualizing and talking through the meaning behind each scene and each shot and how we want to treat the camera like it's an additional character. How we want that "character" to be interplaying with the world that we are creating changes slightly from scene to scene. For this movie, in most scenes we want the camera to be a silent observer. Then the DP's job is to build out a shot list, so that's going scene by scene, writing out each shot.

Jeff: Do you also need an editor?

Hannah: I intend to be the primary editor on this project. I love the craft of editing. For me as a director, as I am filming I'm always

trying to imagine how it works in the edit, what the score or music will sound like, where I'll cut.

Jeff: I understand that you have already completed some of the filming?

Hannah: Yes, we just wrapped our first block of two, so we are about halfway through production. Everyone did an amazing job, we learned a lot, and we are looking forward to filming the second half in January.

Jeff: That's great! Changing topics a bit, what is the budget for your film.

Hannah: We have raised \$21,000 so far. Our goal is \$45,000. We will be filming in two blocks. Our hope is that this gives us an opportunity to share an early edit of some of the scenes with investors, and it will aid in our fundraising. By giving our investors a sneak peak, they can see that we are already making great progress. It gives

them something tangible to become excited about.

Jeff: If our readers are interested in investing in your film, how can they learn more?

Hannah: They can email me at theATLPfilm@gmail.com and I can share more information.

Jeff: Thank you again Hannah. I would love to sit with you and talk about movies all day long but I know you are busy. So the plan is that I will interview you again after you have finished filming in January, and then again for Part 3 after you have begun the distribution of the film. Thank you for including us on your journey. We wish you the best of luck!

For more information about CVEC, check out our interview with CEO Aaron David Roberts in the March 2026 issue online at www.ChulaVistaMagazine.com



Understanding the Port of San Diego

A CONVERSATION WITH CHAIR ANN MOORE

by Jeff Bettger

As we highlight the Chula Vista Bayfront in this issue, it is necessary to understand the role that the Port of San Diego plays in the governance of our bayfront. As such, I was fortunate to interview Ann Moore, current Chair of the Board of Port Commissioners and a Chula Vista native.



Chair Moore at the ribbon cutting for Gaylord Pacific

Jeff Bettger: Chair Moore, thank you for your time. I believe most people don't understand how the San Diego Port is governed and what that all entails. But before we dive into Port business, can you tell me a little bit about your youth growing up in Chula Vista and then why you decide to pursue a law degree?

AN IMMIGRANT MOTHER

Chair Moore: Absolutely. Well, I appreciate the question. My mother was full Japanese. She immigrated to this country along with me when I was three years old. My father was in the

military, and we moved to Chula Vista in the early '60s. I went to Rohr Elementary, Castle Park Junior High, and then Castle Park High School. I have a younger brother. Growing up with an immigrant mom, I did what I think a lot of immigrant kids do, which is end up sort of taking the role of an adult because I was the translator. Wherever we went, whether it was the DMV or an insurance agency, I would go along with my mother and help translate and help bridge the gap between Japanese culture and American culture. Because my father was in the military, he was

gone quite a bit.

From these experiences, I saw a lot of injustice of how immigrants were treated. I felt that they were underestimated. They weren't respected. Because my mom spoke with a heavy Japanese accent, people would think that she wasn't smart when she really was. She was college educated. She was a very remarkable woman, but people didn't treat her and her friends that way.

When I was 12 years old, I decided I wanted to be a lawyer because I wanted to help people that didn't know their rights or how to fight for those

rights. That passion stayed with me and I received a full scholarship to attend USD law school. If it wasn't for the scholarship, I don't know if I could have afforded to go to law school. It was during my time in law school that I really fell in love with the law. I loved what I was doing. After I graduated with my law degree, my first job was actually with the city attorney's office in Chula Vista. It felt full circle. That's when the love of public service really kicked in for me.

SERVING THE PUBLIC

Chair Moore: For the next 20 years, more or less, I worked in public service in the government. I loved working for the public. When I used to do trial work, I loved being able to go into a courtroom and say, "I represent the people of the State of California." It felt like I was doing more than just helping somebody with a legal problem. I was helping the community and I really enjoyed that.

I was very fortunate because Chula Vista at the time was the fifth fastest growing city in the United States. We were basically building a new city on the east side of Chula Vista. I was very fortunate to work with some really great public servants in government. They did a fantastic job and really cared about what they were doing and serving the public.

That was my introduction to public service.

Jeff: What an exciting time to be working in Chula Vista. What would you say is the biggest difference between working in private sector vs. the public sector?

Chair Moore: Well, I would say it's belonging to something bigger than just yourself. When you work for the government, you are working for an

what's good for the developer is also good for the community.

Jeff: Is there one thing in particular you are most proud of during your time as the Chula Vista City Attorney?

Chair Moore: Probably helping the east side of Chula Vista look the way it does today. I was one of a whole group of people, starting with the mayor and the council members, down to the planning director and the city



Chair Ann Moore swearing in ceremony.

organization that represents a big group of people. It's working for the public benefit. In contrast, now that I have a private practice, I represent individuals, which is great. I love doing that now as well. I'm basically looking after their interest, but when I represent private developers, I try to blend a little bit of both because there are many instances in which

manager and the city engineers and myself. We all worked together to create this really fabulous community on the east side, and we never settled for mediocre. We always wanted to push the developers. We wanted to push ourselves to create really a special place, something that we could all be proud of. I would say that was probably the best time in my



The inaugural launching of the new ferry service.

career.

Jeff: Well, I want to personally thank you for that. I've been a real estate agent here for the last 26 years. I tell people the timing was so lucky because overall the homes were built well. The amenities are great. The schools are great. The developers did an excellent job creating different floor plans and sizes. It was wonderful seeing so many young couples buying a first home that they could be proud of. So thank you for that.

Chair Moore: Oh, well see, this is why I like working for government. Being able to hear that and to feel like you made a difference in somebody's life. I mean, that is the essence of public service.

PORT OF SAN DIEGO

Jeff: So after already having a great career, you decided to take another big step forward in

public service and become a Port Commissioner. What made you want to take on that challenge?

Chair Moore: Well, first I felt like it was a great honor to be chosen and I felt that responsibility because Chula Vista at the time had a power plant on the site, empty raw buildings, and no development was happening. We had this beautiful master plan and there had been a lot of work put into it by previous commissioners and previous council members, but it wasn't approved yet. I felt like I could help get it to the next stage. I had this unique sort of training being a land use attorney and having worked all those years in government helping a growing city. I felt like this was the perfect niche and time to use my expertise.

Jeff: Yes, you came along at exactly the right time!

Chair Moore: Thank you.

Jeff: I'm originally from Colorado, so I arrived in Chula Vista with very little knowledge of the bayfront, the port, etc. After 26 years, there is still much I don't know. Can you provide an overview?

Chair Moore: Yes, and it's understandable because it's actually a very complicated agency. To start, it is a state agency. It was formed by the State of California in 1962 and is responsible for approximately 34 miles of tidelands. That land is located in five member cities-- San Diego, National City, Imperial Beach, Coronado and Chula Vista. Those five member cities gave the state agency its land along the bay to basically manage and care for. There are seven commissioners tasked as caretakers and trustees. It's all public land, and we are responsible for managing it.

Most people don't understand that we basically manage the land for the whole state, not for the individual cities. We are charged with looking out for the public as a whole, not just the people who live nearby. We don't receive tax money. We don't receive any state money. Our money comes from lease payments from various hotels, restaurants and other businesses who have their businesses on port land. That money is what we use to build and maintain parks and build pedestrian walkways that you see along the Embarcadero.

We don't manage the airport anymore. It was split from us and they have their own jurisdiction. It is run by the Airport Commission. And of course we have to coexist with the Navy because they are the federal government and their needs take priority. Our CEO, Scott Chadwick, works very closely with the military and we always try to keep a very good relationship with them.

Jeff: I think it is very interesting that you've got five different cities involved. Each one is very different economically, demographically, etc. How do those relationships work?

Chair Moore: From my perspective, the member cities are probably one of the most important constituents that we have because they actually have provided their property for the Port to manage. So I feel that it's our responsibility to be able to help manage that property in concert with what the community wants. As you said, each member city has their own needs, has their own desires, their own goals, and I feel that it's incumbent on the Port to help and to be able to coordinate with them for them to be able to realize that.

For instance, Coronado loves what they have now and are not really big on development. That's fine. That's what their community wants and what's important to them. On the other hand, Chula Vista has this beautiful Bayfront, that

has taken 20+ years to develop into a resort that provides jobs and opportunities for the community. As you said, each member city has its own personality and their own needs. We listen usually through the city councils because each city council has been elected by the people.

Jeff: Thank you for that explanation. I did not know that the land is owned by the State. I am curious how you decide how land should be used. I can think of two alternatives—using the land that most benefits the residents who live nearby (for example, building a hospital) vs building something more unique that would be used by people throughout the county (such as the previously proposed Chargers stadium).

Chair Moore: Good question. What really helps is my background in the law. We as a port are governed by law. We have public trust lands doctrine that really regulates what we can build along the bayfront, so we can't do municipal type activities. In your example, a hospital would not be something that would be allowed in the Port District because it's really municipal focused and something that can be built anywhere. On the other hand, a hotel can be built anywhere, but the difference is a hotel allows people to come and enjoy the waterfront in a way that a hospital would not. So that helps us regulate what is

actually put on the waterfront and what is not. The stadium is a more complex sort of analysis. Yes, it does attract people to come and enjoy the Bay and there are other types of similar facilities located along other waterfronts. However, a stadium is also regulated by the California Environmental Quality Act. There are all kinds of environmental issues that we would have to address before drawing 60,000 people from around the county near very sensitive property. Those are the types of things that we would have to analyze before we can put a specific use there.

THE FUTURE

Jeff: Thank you. If you had a crystal ball, what would you like to see for the Chula Vista Bayfront in the next 15 years?

Chair Moore: All right. I would very much like to see more of Harbor Park being built out. I would like to see the Marina redeveloped into something special, something beautiful. And of course, if I really wanted to dream big, I would love to see at least a portion of the Pangaea proposal come to fruition with a world-class tennis center there. I feel like that would really benefit the community and especially kids on the west side. Having grown up on the west side of Chula Vista, there's not a lot of opportunity to be able to go to world-class tennis centers, or even a really nice tennis center like you have in La Jolla or

Rancho Santa Fe. Having something like that for the community to enjoy would be something that I would really love to see.

Jeff: With the rise of pickleball these days, would the tennis center include that as well?

Chair Moore: Maybe a portion of it, but I would like to see it really be true to the essence, which is tennis. Growing up I never had an opportunity to explore tennis. I mean, what if I had this incredible tennis ability? I could have perhaps received a tennis scholarship. For the future, I would want to make sure that the focus stayed on tennis.

Jeff: For my last question, what advice do you have for a young person who wants to go into public service? How could they spend their time wisely in college to prepare themselves for that?

Chair Moore: First of all, I think you need to go into public service for all the right reasons. You don't make a lot of money, you don't become rich. But if you're the type of person that

wants to serve the public, that wants to do something bigger than yourself, then there's nothing more rewarding that you can do. And I think that starting small is a good idea. I've seen so many people who want to go into public service, but they want to start off on the Board of Supervisors or being the Mayor without having any experience. You have to start small. My background working for government for 20 years really prepared me for being a Port Commissioner. I would also say for me, what came in really handy is actually knowing the law.

Jeff: Is there any last thing you would like to clarify, maybe a misconception that the people have about the Port or just something else that would be useful general knowledge that we didn't talk about yet?

Chair Moore: I think people often don't understand that we have to serve the public as a whole. That is our responsibility. So no matter what it is that we do, we have to look at it from that perspective. When we

bring a use into the community, we make sure that we do all the studies, that we understand what impacts it could have on the environment, and then we also have to say, okay, does this enable us to be able to function as an agency? We can't lose money on this. We always ask what benefits it gives to the community? Does it provide jobs? Does it provide opportunity? Does it provide open space? Does that development allow us to build parks? For example, as part of that Gaylord project, we were able to build this beautiful Sweetwater Park, which is now the largest park that the Port owns and maintains. All of that is combined in our decision-making.

Jeff: Thank you, Chair Moore for your time and insightful explanations. I learned a great deal, as I know our readers will. I really appreciate it.

Chair Moore: Well, thank you very much, Jeff. And you know what? Thank you for your public service because you provide a public service as well. I think it's very informative what you do. And thank you for that.

Jeff: Oh, (blushing) thank you. I really appreciate that! I feel that when people better understand how the various levels of government work, they can better make their voices heard. Thank you again.

For more information, visit www.PortOfSanDiego.org



Unveiling the plans for the new park on the Bayfront



EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

CVFEST
ART



SATURDAY
SEPTEMBER 26, 2026

SOLAR SALT EVAPORATION PONDS



SAN DIEGO BAY NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE COMPLEX

By Harry Orgovan

The solar evaporation salt production facility is located within the San Diego National Wildlife Refuge Complex, providing an isolated resting and nesting habitat for a wide range of birds. The saltworks include 1,068 acres of diked salt evaporation ponds and 100 acres of levees. The Refuge Special Use Permit allows the commercial production of salt. This permit includes various conditions to ensure the protection of the migratory birds that utilize the site.

The ponds are divided into four categories based on their salinity levels—primary, secondary, pickling and crystallizer ponds which have the highest salinity levels. Once the intake of bay water is introduced into the pond system, a variety of fish and crustacean species enter with the water. While they are trapped in these ponds, many species of birds take advantage of this opportunity to feed, including the herons, egrets and terns. Over time the bay water is moved through the ponds by gravity flow and pumping.

As the water evaporates, gypsum separates to the bottom. It can be used in plaster and fertilizer. The brine solution, as it is now called, is moved to inner ponds where salt will separate from the solution. The brine solution is now called bittern or heavy brine. The heavy brine is moved to another pond. In one year 60,000 to 80,000 tons of salt (sodium chloride) can be produced at this facility. When the salt is removed from the ponds, it is

transported to the washer complex to be cleaned and rinsed. It will then be stockpiled to dry and to be processed to sell. It can also be separated by grain size for some applications.

The salt is sold commercially for water softeners, nitrate removal, ion exchange, setting agent in textile dyeing, pickling, and de-icing of roads. The heavy brine liquid further separates, leaving magnesium chloride in a liquid state that is sold to local industry. The remaining brine is used for petroleum products. Brine is used in the fishing industry, for storage freshness. Brine can be used in feedstock applications.

The original Salt Works was called La Punta Salt Company founded in 1871. This facility was much smaller than today's operation and was sold in November of 1901. Western Salt Company was established by Graham Babcock in 1902, a solar operation about a quarter-mile northeast of the original La Punta Salt Works. The ponds expanded over the years through 1915. The Great Flood of 1916 devastated the salt works. The Babcock family decided to sell the Western Salt Company to Mr. Henry G. Fenton in 1924.

The ownership remained in the Fenton family until 1999, when Western Salt Company sold most of the land to the California State Lands Commission and the Unified Port District of San Diego. Along with United States Fish and Wildlife, they all worked together to bring the habitat under public

ownership. The Refuge Special Use Permit allows South Bay Salt Works, as it is now called, to continue producing salt under a lease agreement.

The South San Diego Bay Wetlands Restoration and Enhancement Project completed in the fall of 2011, transformed 220 acres of solar salt ponds, to salt marsh, intertidal habitats and upland marsh. In the future most of the remaining ponds will eventually be restored. The restored ponds can be viewed from the Bayside Birding and Walking Trail, which runs parallel with the Bayshore Bikeway from 10th Street to 7th Street in Imperial Beach. It has six interpretive panels related to migratory birds, salt

marsh restoration, and history of South Bay Salt Works.

Several threatened or endangered species of birds make their nest on the levee's or feed in the ponds eating brine flies or brine shrimp. The brine shrimp when hatching can cause the water to appear orange in color. The crystallization ponds contain an organism, discovered in 1977 known as Halobacterium. The organisms are genetically and bio-chemically different from bacteria and can survive in extreme habitats, such as thermal vents or hyper-saline water. Halobacterium give the salt ponds their reddish-pink hue.



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RONNIE

the Raccoon

By Catrice Chan



Hi everyone! It's Tyto the barn owl! Did you miss me? I missed you! Well, I'm back with my amazing friend, **Ronnie the Raccoon!** Have you met Ronnie? He is super friendly

and super smart! Ronnie is about four years old. He has been living at the Living Coast Discovery Center since 2024. Right now, he is the only mammal here! All my other friends are birds or water animals.

Here's a little bit about Ronnie. Ronnie was only about eight months old when he was found in Oceanside by a member of the public. When a police officer came to him, he wasn't scared at all! Unlike most raccoons, he doesn't see humans as a threat. The police officer then brought him to Project Wildlife. There, they found some remnants of an embedded collar around his neck. This suggests that he may have been someone's pet. He also had a very large laceration, which is a deep cut in the skin. Ouch! Thankfully, the kind veterinarians at Project Wildlife stitched him up, and now he barely has a scar. He sometimes has a runny nose. Poor thing! Now, Ronnie has found his forever home at the Living Coast Discovery Center.

I love being friends with Ronnie! If you stand near him, he may come right up and look at you! He is super curious and loves meeting people - don't be afraid to introduce yourself and say hi! He always makes me laugh because he is so silly! Who knows? Maybe he will tell you a joke! Ronnie has an amazing memory. He can recognize faces and remember where food is located! Would you challenge him to a memory game? Another fun fact is that raccoons love to climb trees and swim across bodies of water. Ronnie isn't the biggest fan of climbing, but you might find him climbing on some of his different perches. You might also see him putting food or

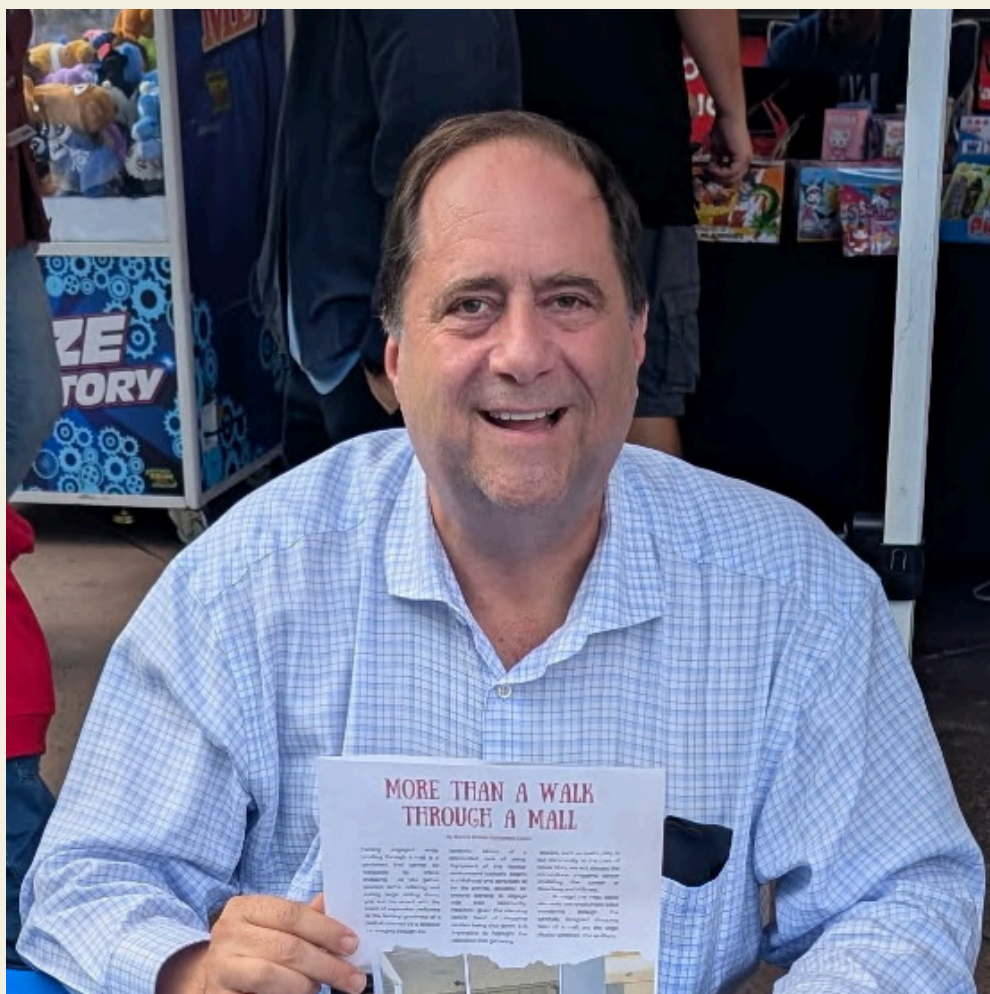
other objects underwater. Why does he do that? Raccoons have extremely sensitive paws. When their paws are wet, they become even more sensitive. This allows them to figure out what they are eating or touching! Cool, right? Another neat thing about Ronnie is he is very clean. He has a specific water bucket where he poops so he can keep his home fresh!

Here's another awesome fact! Ronnie is an omnivore, which means he loves all kinds of plants and animals. Are you a picky eater? Well, Ronnie sure isn't! He eats vegetables, fruits, nuts, and seeds. He also enjoys mice, poultry, fish, and hard-boiled eggs. His favorite treats are insects, grapes, and watermelon. Yummy! The only thing Ronnie cannot eat is dairy. Like some humans, he's lactose intolerant! Sometimes, Ronnie even eats Cheetos or plain waffles. Have you ever seen a raccoon? They are everywhere and anywhere! You might spot one digging food out of a trash can. Raccoons are like little thieves - they are super smart, sneaky, and active! They even have a little black mask on their faces and are always looking for food.

It is also important to know how to protect raccoons like Ronnie. If you see a raccoon in the wild, make sure not to approach it. Raccoons are strong and have very sharp teeth. We don't want to scare them!

I loved telling you about my friend Ronnie! Be sure to come visit him in the new Urban Oasis at the Living Coast Discovery Center! Don't forget to say hi to me, Tyto the barn owl, and all my other amazing friends here! We can't wait to see you here! And be on the lookout for a future issue of The Towne Local Chula Vista magazine, where I will introduce you to my other good friend Betsy the Bald Eagle. See you soon!

the Man, the Myth



BEHIND THE MAGAZINE

By Catrice Chan

The city of Chula Vista is full of hidden gems, incredible stories, and great people. Many of these stories, however, are often overlooked and taken for granted. Living in Chula Vista, there are places that I never knew existed. That is, until Jeff Bettger decided to turn a longtime dream into reality. He had a vision – to create a magazine that celebrates the amazing people, exciting stories, and unrecognized achievements throughout Chula Vista.

Getting to know Jeff Bettger, the first thing I noticed was his enthusiastic, passionate, and energetic personality. Whenever we share new ideas, his entire face lights up in excitement, a huge grin stretching across his face as his arms gesture happily. Naturally, I start smiling too. Like a bright light, he brings an exuberant presence everywhere he goes – it's impossible not to feel that same, contagious excitement. I am incredibly grateful to Mr. Jeff for trusting me, encouraging me to grow as a writer, and serving as a mentor both in writing and in life.

Jeff has had many careers throughout his life. He grew up in Colorado before moving to San Diego in 1992. He did postdoctoral research at the Salk Institute before becoming a professor of special education at San Francisco State University and UC Berkeley. In 2000, he moved to Chula Vista and started a successful real estate team with his family. But in the back of his mind, Jeff had long dreamed of starting a magazine about the people of Chula Vista.

"During 25 years of real estate, I was so lucky to meet so many people, go into so many businesses, and I realized there were lots of great stories," Jeff explained enthusiastically. "I like the South Bay, which includes Bonita, San Ysidro, National City, and the surrounding areas, because it has this great feeling of community. So even though it's big – Chula Vista has about 300,000 people – it still feels like a small town."

From there, the magazine began to take shape. In 2024, he published the first issue of

The Towne Local Bonita, a magazine focused on the unincorporated community of Bonita. Then in September of 2025, he expanded the magazine to include the surrounding communities, renaming it The Towne Local Chula Vista. In every issue, a common theme stands out – the people, the places, and the history of the South Bay. Each issue features articles about a wide range of topics, including art, education, a locally owned business, upcoming public events, and something fun for children. The diverse content makes the magazine enjoyable for all age groups. One of Jeff's particular passions is to highlight local artists, ranging from painters to singers to poets, with the goal of creating a more collaborative art scene in the South Bay.



Every issue contains the highest quality paper, ink, photography, and writing. Unlike a typical newspaper of current headlines, Jeff's articles are more timeless – they provide the background and stories that continue to be relevant over time. His magazine is funded through the advertisements of local businesses in each issue. Working with his small but amazing team has been nothing short of incredible. Kim Skulavik, an

outstanding graphic designer, has been onboard since the very first issue, making each issue beautiful, helping to guide the direction of the magazine, and sharing Jeff's goal of producing the best magazine possible. Steve Wood, a phenomenal photographer, has also contributed to the magazine. "Nothing great ever happens by yourself," Jeff explained. "It's a team, you know, and so the important thing is to find people that you really trust and that you value." Jeff also mentioned with pride that the entire magazine is a local product of the South Bay, from its ownership to its writing, design, and printing.

Jeff thrives in writing about a wide range of topics. When asked about a couple of his favorite articles, he mentioned the 3-part interview series with the revered Cox family. Former County Supervisor and former Mayor Greg Cox, former Mayor Cheryl Cox, and current Sweetwater Authority Board member Elizabeth Cox shared their extensive knowledge of the history of Bonita and the South Bay. Another of Jeff's favorite articles was inspired by his visit to Serenity Horse Therapy Center in Bonita Vista.

At the Center, children with autism are able to ride horses under the careful watch of an incredible staff. Children make special connections with the horses, develop better posture, and improve social skills. Jeff returned to the Center several times, listening to

the amazing stories that parents had to share about their children's progress.

In just the first year, the magazine received several happy surprises. The City of Chula Vista's Cultural Arts Commission awarded Jeff with the McCandliss Arts Award for the Literary Arts. In October 2025, the magazine won 3 awards for Excellence in Journalism from the San Diego Press Club. "Being recognized by professional journalists meant so much," Jeff said. "We knew that all of our hard work was paying off." These awards were soon followed by the biggest surprise of all. The City of Chula Vista officially named November 18, 2025 as "Jeff Bettger Day in Chula Vista."

One of Jeff's favorite aspects about the production of the magazine is working with local students. "I think writing is something that you learn by doing," Jeff said, adding with a smile, "One thing I'm most proud of is that I've been lucky to work with past and current award-winning students from the Southwestern College Journalism Department (Blanca Esthela Castaneda, Yanelli Zavina Robles, and Alfonso Julian Camacho), recently-retired Dept. Chair Dr. Max Branscomb, high school students Elizabeth Hoffman, Sebastian Bello, and Gianna Rodriguez, and you, Catrice, a student at UCSD. It has been a pleasure working with each one. For me, it's important to help mentor the next generation of leaders and advocates."

Most importantly, Jeff is proud to be making contributions to his community. "We have a lot of people from the military moving to Chula Vista, and they might be here for a short time. I like the idea that they could pick up my magazine and by reading it, get a feel for the history, people, and events in Chula Vista instead of feeling stuck in their specific neighborhood. I think we are providing a cool service to people that way. I want people to feel more connected, like this is not only a stop in their career but actually a place that they can call home."



From left to right: Steve Wood, Kim Skulavik, Jeff Bettger

Jeff's talent extends far beyond the pages of his magazine. Jeff is an artist at heart – he is a talented, award-winning poet whose poems tell captivating, heartfelt stories. For more than 25 years, he has also been deeply involved in the Chamber of Commerce, giving donations and scholarships to local schools, as well as serving on the Southwestern College Foundation Board.

As for the future of the South Bay, Jeff is excited about two prospects in particular. "I see the Chula Vista Entertainment Company (CVEC) bringing incredible opportunities to the South Bay. From technical training to experience working on large-scale entertainment projects," Jeff explained, "as well as the prospect of having a 4-year university in the South Bay. So many great things follow when a university appears. For example, universities from around the world use our border as the basis for their grant-funded research. There are literally thousands of dissertations and research grants just waiting to be written based on local topics such as cross-border ecology, pollution, security, trade, immigration, politics, culture, history, bilingual education, etc. Who better to do research about our border than our local students who already understand the nuances of living in a bilingual and bicultural area?"

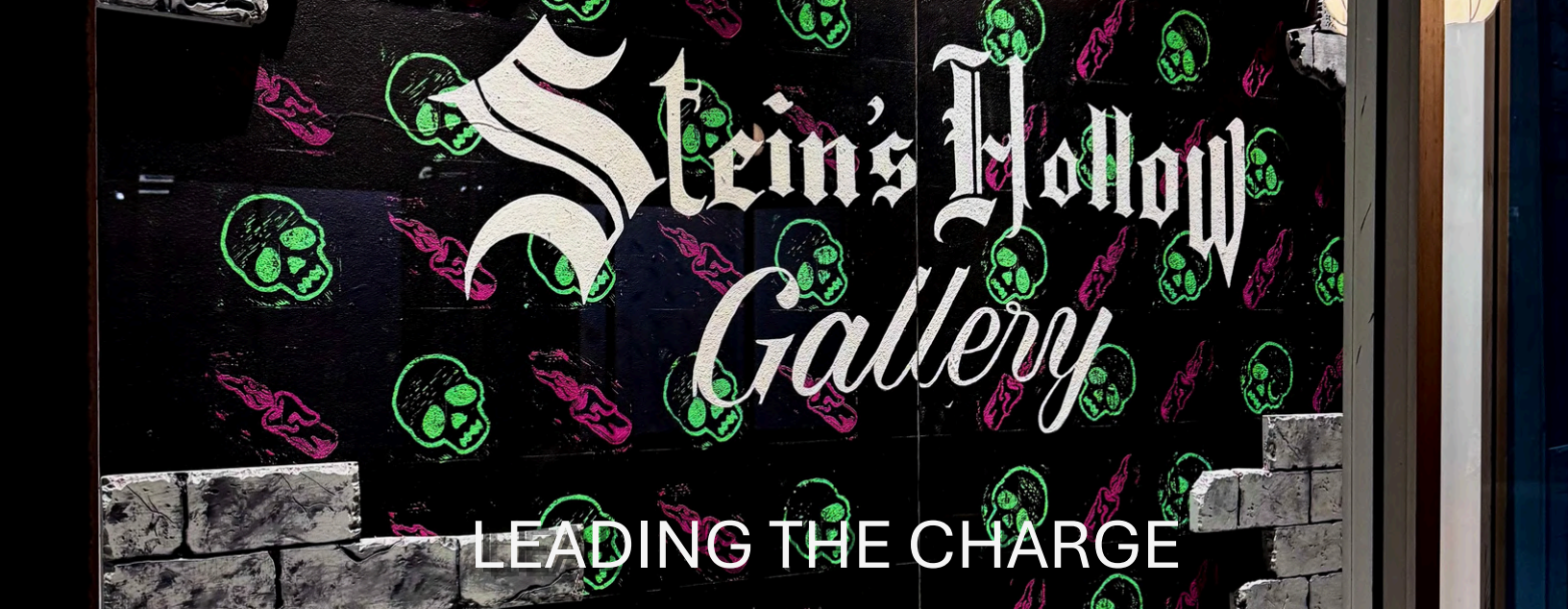
For the next generation of artists, writers, and dreamers, Jeff offered words of encouragement. "Given my background as a

professor, I enjoy working with students who take opportunities seriously, they want to improve," he said. "When I find somebody like that, I'm happy to give advice and provide meaningful experiences. But yeah, I would say, show up on time, work hard, and have confidence." Jeff also smiled when talking about the staff, teachers, and students at Howard Gardner Community Charter School. "It is amazing how one invited event has turned into many opportunities for the students to connect with the community," he shared. "The staff are terrific and really put in the extra effort."

When I asked about his favorite quote, Jeff shared a story about creating art. "During an interview, I asked artist Keith Mitchell, who goes by the artistic name Maryiedwithchildren, when you're creating something, how do you know it's done?" Jeff explained. "Keith told me about a podcast he heard in which an artist who works with silver explained that you know when the metal is in its final form when you can see your reflection in that silver. And I love that idea – that when you're trying to create something, you have an idea of what you want, but then all of a sudden, whether it's a painting or a poem, you realize that you have successfully conveyed a part of yourself in your art."

Like the silver in the story, Jeff's magazine has become a reflection of who he is – a reflection of his passion, creativity, and devotion to our community.





LEADING THE CHARGE

by Jeff Bettger

All art forms have their “classics.” In the world of painting, I’ve been blessed to see many of the world-famous paintings in person--Picasso, Monet, Rembrandt, Dali, Cezanne, Da Vinci, etc. But what keeps art interesting and relevant are the creations of each new generation of artists. Art from the streets. Art that predicts future trends before the general public becomes aware. Art that revives past elements of pop culture we all shared and enjoyed. Art that starts in a garage and years later is adored by paid critics. Danny Zavala and Hector Suchilt are native sons of Chula Vista and under their collective name Stein’s Hollow Gallery are providing opportunities for young artists to display their work.

More than just an art exhibit, a cultural experience. I have also been blessed to attend two of the Stein’s Hollow Gallery exhibits. On the west-most side of Chula Vista, a small warehouse was transformed into a vibrant showcase of a wide variety of art. A DJ spun an eclectic mix of upbeat music. A grill was fired up to make carne asada for guests. Artist Desiree Hanau directed a watercolor painting class for children and adult beginners. Impressive art graced the walls with small signs announcing very reasonable purchase prices. Many of the pieces were influenced by Mexican culture. I remember thinking to myself, “Museums are cool, but THIS is what art is meant to be!”

TWO FRIENDS AT SCHOOL

Danny and Hector met in kindergarten twenty years

ago. They both attended Castle Park Elementary School, Hilltop Middle School, Hilltop High School and Southwestern College. Danny recalls, “We’ve been really lucky to stay good friends for all this time. Even during high school, we would still chat or walk home together because we live pretty close to each other.” Both of these very rumble and kind young man have a common love for soccer which has led them to work for the local MLS soccer team, SDFC.

When asked about their beginnings in art, Hector explained that he has always been creative and grew up in a creative household. His mother was a face painter. When he was in high school, art became his escape to sort through various thoughts and concerns about the future. “When I got into college and started studying studio art and graphic design, I started to believe that I could have a career in art and started being more dedicated to my work. It was luck that Danny had those same types of aspirations.”

Danny grew up in a similar creative household. His father liked to draw. “He would design t-shirts and was always doodling at home in the kitchen. I used to draw with him. On my mom’s side, we loved going to Chicano Park just to see the murals under the bridges and just being involved in all that culture. My godmother introduced me to street art, like Banksy, Shepherd Fairey who is Obey, and all those guys. At that time, I never saw it as a career because you always hear terms like ‘starving artist’. But when I entered Southwestern, my mom encouraged me to take an art class. So I reached out to Hector and asked

him about his art classes. It sounded intriguing to me, so I finally took a class and fell in love with it. I got up every day excited to go to class. I was lucky to have the support and encouragement of my parents."

DEVELOPING A STYLE OF THEIR OWN

Hector relates that he was trained in a very classical style, using classical mediums like oil, watercolor, drawing and sketching. This training has influenced his style, which he calls naturalism. This training has also come in handy in other ways. "For a while, I was an instructor for an art studio. We focused on teaching the basics and foundations." More recently, Hector's own work has focused more on feelings and relationships. He has also been inspired by the graphic designs created in the 1980s related to the AIDS crisis and to the political turmoil happening now.

Danny continues to be influenced by street art. Stencils, spray paint and basic acrylic paints and markers are used to produce art that is "bold and in your face. I really want to capture the viewers attention right off the bat, without the need for a lot of second guessing." Danny often includes tile floral patterns in his work. When he was younger, he would help his grandfather with tile work. "It's just to show homage to my family and our beginnings as a hardworking family in the construction business and being working class. I guess that is what street art is

about, exposing the struggles of the working class." Despite blue being his favorite color, Danny often uses the color red in his work. "I don't know why, it just kind of happens. Maybe because bright red stands out like a stop sign and grabs your attention."

STEIN'S HOLLOW

For many artists, it is difficult to overcome shyness and present their work to the world. For artists hoping to exhibit, another obstacle often stands in the way. In July of 2021, Danny and Hector were excited to exhibit but found it difficult to have their art accepted into shows. They quickly noticed that it was the same artists in each show. Danny recalls, "I thought that was unfair. The whole point of art is to be inclusive, especially to young artists. It was really frustrating. One day, my Dad suggested that we do our own show."

As always, Danny called Hector with his idea. Neither of them knew how to run a gallery or put on a show. Hector agreed to help but was surprised that Danny wanted to do it the following week! "I don't know, I guess it was the nerves and excitement, and I was free that next Saturday," Danny remembers. And that, my friends, is how Stein's Hollow Gallery began! Danny and Hector worked every day after work that week to prepare. They invited friends and family and had a nice turnout. Hector says, "The art scene in the South Bay had existed in a vacuum. We knew that there was talent out there and we just wanted to showcase what we had." After that first show, Stein's Hollow Gallery opened its walls to more and more artists during its next 10 shows. Hector adds, "A lot of times, our gallery happened to be the first public place that people showed their work anywhere. That's something that makes us very proud."

At this point, you may be wondering about the name, Stein's Hollow? It turns out that one small corner of the family's warehouse was reserved for Danny's art station and his family asked him if he was going to name his space. After a trip to Universal Studios, Danny drew the Frankenstein monster and began using it as his Instagram logo. "My space was like this little hollowed out corner. And then I



Friends and artists Danny Zavala and Hector Suchilt

remembered the movie Sleepy Hollow. I thought about the names Frankenstein's Hollow or Frankenstein's Cave but they didn't sound right." After more thought, Danny shortened the name to Stein's Hollow. Friends liked the name and it became official.

JACK BLACK AS NACHO LIBRE

The movie Nacho Libre, starring Jack Black, is an iconic indie movie especially beloved in Latino culture. Danny did a stencil drawing of the main character wearing his lucha libre mask. All of Danny's friends loved it. "One of my friends thought it would be so sick if we could get it to Jack Black. He knew a person who knew a person who knew how to get it to the famous actor. I framed it, gave it to my friend, and forgot about it for a couple of months. Then late one night, I got a message from that friend telling me to check my phone messages. I opened it and saw a picture of Jack Black holding my drawing at his house! I was like holy cow! Later, I received another photo of it still hanging on a wall in his house. That was a true blessing, because that's one of our childhood heroes."

CHULA VISTA ART FESTIVAL

A few years back, the City of Chula Vista put out a call to artists to display their work in City Hall. Danny applied, was accepted, and showed five of his pieces. He received a message from the Mayor at that time, Mayor Mary Salas, that she liked one of his pieces and wanted to purchase it. They met and had a great conversation. Danny told her about Stein's Hollow and their dream of having a space for artists that was open equally to a wide range of artists. She suggested that Danny apply to be on the city's Cultural Arts Commission. He was then interviewed by the Mayor and another city representative and was made a commissioner. Danny remembers, "I had been to City Hall a couple of times and it is a really cool place. I thought you could definitely do a big festival in that space. Maybe have some vendors as well."

Side note: Being a huge fan of the arts and the

guiding force behind the building of Casa Casillas (Chula Vista's only civic art gallery) Mayor Salas has even attended a couple of the Stein's Hollow Gallery shows and has purchased art from the exhibiting artists. As Danny appreciates, "It's a blessing to have her as a friend and supporter, and to share the same belief about supporting the art community."

A year later, the commission said that they wanted to hold an art festival and wanted him to help create it. Danny recites, "Of course I was excited. I told them that I would have Hector to help me, being that both of us were artists and had experience with running shows. Hector had additional experience throwing music house shows and had great connections with that community."

Everybody loved the first CV ArtFest. A wide variety of art was represented, including dancers and musicians, along with hundreds of pieces of art and sixty artists. The graphic designs and logos that Hector created for the first festival are still used today. For the second year, Danny and Hector developed a catalog of the artists online and organized workshops. All their time and effort was done on a volunteer basis.

THE PODCAST

Always looking for new ways to connect artists, Stein's Hollow began a podcast. Seven, one hour-long interviews with local artists can be enjoyed on Youtube at "In the Lab Podcast with Stein's Hollow Gallery." More episodes are being edited and will be released for their second season. The podcast started



An Art Exhibit Event at Stein's Hollow Gallery

with the realization that every artist has a unique and interesting story. The podcast provides a platform for the community to know the artists as people, not just through their art. The podcast explores what it was like for them growing up in the South Bay and what struggles they endured as artists. Danny and Hector both reflected on the importance of people connecting with other people, whether at a framer's market or at an art exhibition.

THE FUTURE

I often ask myself, what is the difference between somebody who creates art once a month as a hobby, and somebody who sees themselves as a full-time artist? When I asked Hector about his future plans for his art, I received my answer.

"I don't want to create just for myself now. I want to create stuff that sends a message, that talks to people, and makes people want to investigate more the stuff that is going on around us. Whether it's the rise of fascism here in the US or having ICE raids snatching people off the streets, something that could easily happen to me, living here as brown man in the United States. Last year, I created a piece called *Brown Skin Bleeds Red, White, and Blue Too*. I want people to know that there are things people can do even if they are feeling helpless. I've taken a step back because I don't want to create without

saying something. Freedom is a constant struggle and it's something that we must be dedicated to saving."

ADVICE FOR YOUNG ARTISTS

Danny suggests, "Don't be afraid to take the first step and just jump in. You never know until you try. If your dream is to be an artist, you have to put yourself out there and stay dedicated. If we had given up, there would be no Stein's Hollow. There would be no five-year anniversary. There would be no CV ArtFest as we know it today . . . and a painting of Nacho Libre would not be hanging on Jack Black's wall!"

ART THROUGH THE GLASS

As everybody knows who reads this magazine regularly, *Art Through The Glass* is a program started by Julio Martha, in which the empty store windows at the Chula Vista Center mall are transformed into an accessible art gallery for the public. Past work by the *Art Through The Glass* group has created unforgettable *Dia de los Muertos* and *Los Posadas* celebrations for the community, drawing thousands of people to the mall. Stein's Hollow Gallery was tagged to create the newest *Art Through The Glass* exhibit. It will be available for viewing Sept 19-Nov 29. Stop by on Oct 24th from 4pm-8pm for their special Stein's Halloween Bash! See you there!





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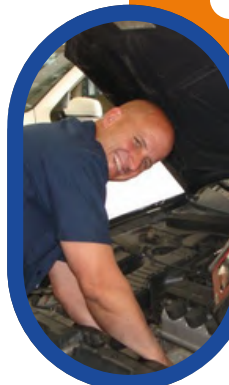
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