

THE TOWN LOCAL

Chula Vista

STARLIGHT PARADE: PAST AND PRESENT

HISTORIC BROADWAY
A Vision To Bring New Life

SOUTHWESTERN COLLEGE
4-Year Degrees on Campus

KATIA CALLAHAN
Eastlake's Volunteer



NOV/DEC 2025 ISSUE 3

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The Heart & Soul of the
SOUTH BAY

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www.TheTowneLocalChulaVista.com



WELCOME FROM THE EDITOR

being thankful



JEFF BETTGER
PUBLISHING DIRECTOR

In 2004, I had a dream of creating a magazine to spotlight the people of Chula Vista. However, the real estate market soon crashed and I opened a property management business instead. But I held on to that dream for the next 20 years. Last year, I had the opportunity to start The Towne Local Bonita magazine. After a successful year, graphic designer Kim Skulavik, photographer Steve Wood, and I were ready to launch the first issue of The Towne Local Chula Vista magazine this past September. Like the Bonita magazine, the Chula Vista magazine highlights the people, places, and history of the area.

Creating something you are passionate about is its own reward. Through the magazines, we have met incredible people. We have written articles on a wide range of topics. We have been recognized with three Excellence in Journalism Awards from the San Diego Press Club, and Nov. 18 was proclaimed as Jeff Bettger Day in the City of Chula Vista by Mayor McCann and the City Council. Thank you all!

You may be also interested in our companion magazine www.TheTowneLocalBonita.com which is celebrating its one year anniversary. Check out our monthly adventure story *Tails of Time* written by Ella Aldridge and Dr. Max Branscomb. In this cliffhanger serial, siblings Dulce and Miguel travel back in time to important dates in the history of the Sweetwater Valley.

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

MEET THE TEAM



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Winning three Excellence in Journalism Awards from the San Diego Press Club
Kim Skulavik, Jeff Bettger, Faride Vivas



Nov. 18, 2025 proclaimed as Jeff Bettger Day in Chula Vista by the Mayor and City Council



A NEW BEGINNING FOR HISTORIC BROADWAY

By Jeff Bettger

Like a house in need of a fresh coat of paint, new kitchen cupboards, or new appliances, neighborhoods often need an upgrade as well, especially neighborhoods with commercial businesses. The historic Broadway corridor in west Chula Vista fits that bill. Broadway is a long stretch of busy road containing a wide variety of businesses, such as retail stores, restaurants, auto care, and the Chula Vista Center. Traveling from north to south, it crosses the political districts of Councilmembers Preciado and Fernandez. A group of concerned citizens have been working hard to revitalize the area by improving the cleanliness and appearance of the corridor. They have been working collectively under the name Envision Broadway. To understand more, I have interviewed Sarah Boyer from the Institute for Public Strategies, Julio Martha from the San Diego Art Society and Yvette Roman from Creative Gathering. Julio and Yvette are also co-founders of the widely successful Art Through the Glass program which was highlighted in our previous Issue of www.TheTowneLocalChualVista.com

Jeff Bettger: What is Envision Broadway?

Sarah Boyer: Envision Broadway is a



collaboration of local businesses, property owners, residents, and other stakeholders working to achieve the vision of a thriving multi-cultural business community in which residents, families and visitors can enjoy fine arts, walking, dining, shopping, live entertainment, and all that Chula Vista has to offer.

Jeff: Why now? Why are your efforts needed?

Sarah: Broadway Avenue has long been a vital part of Chula Vista's history and a key contributor to our city's growth. Yet over the years, it has often been overlooked in revitalization efforts. Envision Broadway is changing that.

Our goal is to bring new life to this historic avenue, creating a space where residents, visitors, and businesses can thrive together. By listening to the community, prioritizing local needs, and planning smart improvements, we can transform Broadway into a vibrant, multicultural destination that reflects the heart of Chula Vista



Creating together at a mallART Saturday event

With the Bayfront improvements, there's no better time to reimagine Broadway. Together, we can honor its past while building an exciting future that benefits everyone.

Jeff: What kind of changes would be made over time?

Sarah: We are planning to add more public art. First, we hope to partner with local businesses to identify and sponsor more potential mural sites. The Envision Broadway Mural Project highlights the significance of murals in attracting businesses, stimulating the economy, and fostering a vibrant, safe community where residents can thrive and enjoy the highest quality of life. When possible, we involve community members in the mural creation process. This includes allowing the community to participate in painting days using a paint-by-number format, which fosters a collective sense of pride and reduces instances of vandalism.

By adding more trees, flowers, and green spaces, we can transform Broadway into a place that feels safe, welcoming, and vibrant. Green improvements, such as shade trees, colorful planters, and small pocket parks, will make walking or biking along Broadway more comfortable, while also improving air quality and cooling hot sidewalks. Special features, such as rain gardens and green bus stops, can help capture rainwater, prevent flooding, and keep our

bay cleaner. Other ideas include a) installing seasonal planters, hanging baskets, and tree wells along Broadway Avenue, b) adding decorative lighting such as pole-to-pole string lights for ambiance, c) creating shaded areas with benches near art installations, d) exploring bioretention tree boxes and native plant beds for water management, and e) working with local nurseries for planter sponsorships.

The beautification of vacant and underutilized storefronts would be achieved through public art that celebrates the area's cultural identity. This will lead to increased foot traffic and community engagement, supporting both local artists and businesses, reducing blight and deterring vandalism, enhancing environmental resilience and pedestrian comfort, and improving safety and ambiance.

These changes will not only make Broadway look better, they will also help local businesses by creating a more inviting place for people to shop, dine, and spend time with family and friends. Greening Broadway is about more than plants and trees; it's about creating a vibrant, healthy corridor that reflects the pride and spirit of our community. This effort also includes installing efficient and smart street lighting.

To address sanitation issues and litter abatement, we have organized regular neighborhood clean-up events in collaboration with local organizations, businesses, and volunteers. These events not only improve the physical environment but also strengthen community bonds. Together, we can grow a Broadway that works for everyone—beautiful, sustainable, and alive with opportunity.

Jeff: Thank you, Sarah. You make a strong case for the many benefits that could be achieved. Has something similar been done in other cities?

Julio Martha: Yes, there have been successful revitalization programs in several cities.

One city in particular, Seattle, provides a similar model for us to follow

1. **Vacant or Underutilized Spaces:** A great example is Seattle's business areas had many empty storefronts, especially during tough economic times. The pandemic made things worse, and many local shops had to close. Broadway in Chula Vista is facing a similar situation, with some spaces sitting empty. Like Seattle, these spots are great opportunities to bring life back into the area. To do that, we also need to make them safe, clean, and inviting. Adding art, better lighting, and places where people feel welcome can help small businesses return and encourages the community to visit again.

2. **Blight, Perception of Decline, or Safety / Attractiveness Challenges:** As with many other cities across the United States, Broadway in Chula Vista is facing challenges like worn-down streets, a poor walking experience, safety concerns, and graffiti. The area has also lost some of its appeal, which makes it harder to attract visitors and support local businesses.

3. **Strong Pedestrian Use / Potential for Mixed Use:** Seattle has long been known for its strong pedestrian activity and vibrant mix of shops, restaurants, cafés, entertainment, and housing. Broadway in Chula Vista already shares that same potential. The avenue is full of cultural diversity, seen in the many restaurants that showcase the flavors and traditions of our community. By improving the look and feel of the street by adding art, greenery, and lighting we can make Broadway more inviting for people to walk, gather, and explore. These changes can support a stronger pedestrian experience and encourage a healthy mix of retail, residential,

and community spaces that bring life and energy back to the area.

4. **Desire for More Local Business, Local Culture, & Inclusivity:** Not just Seattle but other cities create programs to prioritize support for local artists and small businesses, especially those from historically underrepresented communities. In Chula Vista, our revitalization efforts share that same goal, to uplift small businesses, celebrate cultural identity, and create spaces that feel inclusive and truly reflect the spirit of our community.

We can learn many lessons from Seattle's redevelopment successes. I witnessed firsthand how, after the pandemic hit and so many local shops and art spaces struggled, the city came back stronger by combining efforts to support local businesses and artists, and by beautifying streets with art, lighting, and green spaces. Seattle's efforts not only revived the city; it restored pride and connection.

Broadway Avenue can become a similar success story. When I was a teenager, I loved walking from Palomar to H Street, stopping in at all the stores along the way. I still feel that same connection today when I grab lunch or coffee driving down Broadway. But making that vision a reality takes community effort. Even a small group can make a big impact, just look at what we accomplished with Art Through the Glass at the Chula Vista Center, creating a free, welcoming space to showcase local artists and bring people together through art. (for more about Art Through the Glass see the article in Issue 2 of www.TheTowneLocalChulaVista.com) Now imagine what we could do if we all shared the same goal. The goal to create a beautiful Broadway Avenue that brings pride to all.



A sample rendering of a possible revitalized Broadway

Jeff: Thank you, Julio for your research and proposals. What strides have the group accomplished so far?

Sarah: Over the past few years, we have made significant strides in revitalizing the Broadway Corridor through art, clean-ups, advocacy, and community engagement. Murals have been installed at Firestone North, El Patio, and Hotel Milagro. In partnership with SDG&E we have begun transforming Broadway's utility boxes into pieces of art and a long-term goal of completing all utility boxes along the corridor. We recently partnered with *I Love a Clean San Diego* to host a Broadway clean-up, with strong support from Chula Vista High School students, and plan to continue these clean-ups on a quarterly or biannual basis.

Members successfully advocated for the removal of long-standing litter at the Broadway and SR-54 interchange, and youth engagement has been further strengthened through an art workshop led by Julio Martha for Chula Vista High School students. To raise awareness and build support, members have met with city leaders, spoken at City Council meetings, and

launched a "Community Matters" video series to highlight Broadway's hidden gems. We have also shared our vision through presentations to community groups, such as Friends of Norman Park Senior Center, and welcome opportunities to present to additional organizations.

Jeff: What is mallArt?

Yvette Roman: mallART workshops are a free, all-ages, all-levels, art-making session in which everyone enjoyed creating art. Each Saturday from July through September, 10am-12pm, local artists shared their creative processes and led activities inspired by their artistic practices. Each workshop included a social-emotional component in which we discussed identity, community, self-love, memories, and our ancestry. It all took place in front of the *Art Through the Glass* exhibition in the Chula Vista Center, in a grassy area perfect for hanging out, relaxing, and making something beautiful to take home.

As a teaching artist, educator, and community organizer, I believe it's essential to provide free arts programming for everyone, especially for those who might be art-curious, or need a way to express themselves. Art is therapeutic, healing, and necessary, particularly now as our identities, history, and humanity are being challenged.

I'm also thrilled to share that we've had over 100 participants. For example, employees of the mall could participate during their lunch breaks, families came together to kick off their weekends with creativity, and some folks stumble upon the workshops while shopping and decide to take an art break. *Art Through the Glass* (curated art exhibits hung in the windows of unused business windows) and mallART have shown that all community spaces benefit from the arts, and that creativity can flourish anywhere with the right people,

energy, and support. The mall has become a place where everyone can explore their creativity, enjoy exhibitions, and connect with neighbors, coworkers, and fellow artists. mallART is a collaboration between Cr34tive Gathering and the Chula Vista Center.

Jeff: Thank you, Yvette. Your grass-roots movement continues to gain momentum. On Nov. 2, 2025 a community event called El After Life was organized to celebrate Dia De Los Muertos by the Chula Vista Center in collaboration with *Art Through the Glass*, *CR34TIVE Gathering*, and others. More than a thousand people enjoyed activities included face painting, folklorico dancing, art creation, local vendors, and an art exhibit. Its jubilant success provides a strong example of the power and need for art and community celebrations in west Chula Vista. As new

developments such as the Gaylord Pacific Resort & Convention Center bring tourists to the area, a revitalized Broadway corridor provides an opportunity for visitors to experience the cultural diversity of Chula Vista within walking distance of the resort.

More exciting news: On Nov. 18, 2025, the Chula Vista City Council discussed the need to revitalize Broadway and agreed to have the city manager begin relevant analyses and provide recommendations. Stayed tuned!

 **For more information** about Envision Broadway, contact Sarah Boyer at sboyer@publicstrategies.org. To contribute to *Art Through the Glass* or future mallART workshops, contact Julio Martha at julio@sdartsociety.com.



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The Starlight Parade:

PAST AND PRESENT WITH MAYOR MCCANN

Jeff Bettger: Thank you for your time, Mayor McCann. With the upcoming holidays, we have many events happening in Chula Vista, but I want to focus on the upcoming Starlight Parade on Saturday Dec. 6 (www.StarlightParade.com). I know it is a special event for you. More specifically, I want to talk a little about your memories of the Starlight Parade when you were growing up and to get information about this year's event. This type of event creates memories for families to remember and share in the future that really makes these types of community events important.

Mayor McCann: Exactly. Let's start with a little background. Before I became Mayor, the Starlight Parade didn't happen for a couple years. That was one of the things that I promised to bring back to the community. It was interesting because being in public office, you talk to people before you get elected and then once you

are in office, people will see you in Costco or the grocery store, and they'll say, "Hey, you promised to do this, or thank you for doing that." One of the most common conversations I had during my first year as Mayor was, "Hey, you promised to bring back the Starlight Parade." I would always replay, "You bet I am." I think it underscores how important it is to our city.

When you have an event each year, things sort of roll along and you are able to get it done a little easier the following year. But since it hadn't been done for several years, we almost had to start from scratch. And as always, there were some naysayers. But my goal was to bring it back and then make it an annual event again. I remembered from my childhood that it really brought the entire community together. So, my staff and I worked really hard to make it happen. We obviously had to go out and get sponsorships and raise a lot of money. Every week that went by, we seemed to gain a little more momentum.

About a month before, we had a lot of people signing up to be in the parade. But then we thought, okay, how many people are going to actually show up to the parade? We were thinking, it's probably going to be 10,000 or 20,000 people. Instead, we had over 50,000 people! And it was a great problem to have.

Unfortunately, there wasn't much walking room because it was like being at a sold-out concert and everybody wanted to be there, but it really was gratifying to see how the community embraced the parade. That's why I wanted to bring it back, because we had families and people from all walks of life having a good time with their neighbors and celebrating the season.

Jeff: That's wonderful. So this year will be the third parade since you revived it, correct?

Mayor McCann: Yes, this will be the third year. The Starlight Parade means so much to me, as well as so many other Chula Vistans, because it's part of our heritage, it is part of our history. As a child, I attended and participated in the parade. Now, as an adult, I'm able to go with my family, my children, and now my grandson to be able to experience it. We are creating lasting, positive memories for the community.

Jeff: Do you remember specific things about the parade when you were young? Something that really impressed you, whether it was a band or something else?

Mayor McCann: I mainly remember it being a fun time. It was a lot of fun just seeing all the participants in the parade and everybody being nice to each other. Everybody was very helpful and glad to see their neighbors and friends. One of my cherished memories was actually being in the parade one year as part of the safety patrol. It was neat just being able to walk and see everybody enjoying themselves.

Jeff: When you look at how successful the recent Lemon Festival was and the recent Chula Vista Arts Festival, they were all fantastic. I think people have a desire to be out with their neighbors, as you said, and just having a fun event that is for the whole family.

Mayor McCann: Yes, COVID was so challenging for so many people. Just being able to get out with your neighbors, friends, and family shows that we really support each other, we love each other, and that we're here for each other.

Jeff: Indeed! Is there anything new about this year's Starlight Parade?

Mayor McCann: Yes, we are looking to have some great parade entries. We are making sure that we have local artists, such as high school bands and other organizations, to highlight what they do for the community. We want to make sure that local residents can participate in the parade or be a volunteer.

Last year we actually extended the route. We want as many people as possible to get a good view and enjoy the parade.

Jeff: Thank you Mayor for your time and for your efforts to bring back the Starlight Parade.

If readers want more information, go to the parade website for maps, parking information, entertainment, food, seating and schedules. www.StarlightParade.com



Emerald THE SEA TURTLE

by Catrice Chan



Hi everyone! It's me, Tyto the barn owl! I'm back with another exciting story to share with you. This time, it is about one of my friends who loves to swim...or should I say, float! Allow me to introduce you to the one and only Emerald! Emerald is an Atlantic green sea turtle. She is kind, gentle, and an ocean-load of fun! She has been living at the Living Coast Discovery Center in Chula Vista since October 2022. Have you met her? If not, she is super easy to spot! Emerald is the unofficial greeter at the Living Coast. She is the first one to welcome you when you visit!

Let me tell you a little bit about Emerald's super cool story. Before arriving at the Living Coast, Emerald lived in the warm waters of the Florida Keys.

One day, she was swimming through the waters and munching on a bit of algae. Then, a boat hit her! Poor Emerald was hurt and could not dive underwater anymore. All she could do was float.

Thankfully, some brave humans from the Turtle Hospital spotted her and rescued her. It was quite a heroic rescue. Have you ever heard of the Turtle Hospital? Just like there are hospitals for humans like you and me, there is a hospital for turtles! The Turtle Hospital is in Marathon, Florida. They take care of so many sick and injured sea turtles like Emerald! Isn't that awesome?

After her rescue, Emerald traveled all the way to her new home at the Living Coast Discovery Center in Chula Vista. And

guess what? She got to ride inside a FedEx truck! How cool is that! Now, she lives in the Turtle Lagoon, right at the entrance! Because of her injury, she has something called a buoyancy imbalance. That means she cannot dive underwater like other turtles. So, if you see her floating "bottoms up", don't worry! She is just resting!

Here are a few fun sea turtle facts for you! Emerald is a green sea turtle but look at the color of her shell. Is it green? No? So, why is she called the green sea turtle? Because she eats seagrass! This turns the tissue and fat inside her body green! Cool, right? Oh, and another fun fact - Emerald loves to eat, just like me! Her favorite food is lettuce! Yummy! I'm curious, what is your favorite food? Be sure



Emerald is waiting for you to come visit!!

to tell Emerald when you come visit! Oh, and did you know that Emerald is the biggest turtle here? That's right! Her species, the green sea turtle, is the largest turtle species in the world! Would you challenge her to a flipper fight? I know I wouldn't! But don't let her size worry you! Emerald is super sweet and loves making new friends.

One more important fact about Emerald is that she is endangered. This means that her species is in danger of disappearing... forever. And it is not just the green sea turtle that is endangered. Many sea turtle species, like the loggerheads, are also endangered. Some, like Emerald, get hurt from boats. Other times, it is from ocean pollution. It makes me sad that so many sea turtles are in danger. But thanks to the Living Coast Discovery Center, you can learn how to protect animals like Emerald!



Emerald enjoying some delicious lettuce!

I had such a fun time talking to you about my friend Emerald! Now you know why Emerald is so amazing! Wanna learn more about her? Come visit her at the Living Coast Discovery Center in Chula Vista! Oh, and even better, you can sign up for a fun Private Animal Encounter to go behind the scenes and see her up close! You will get to talk to her (she is a great listener, by the way!) and learn more about her! Emerald loves meeting new people, so don't be afraid to flap your flippers and say hi! And of course, don't forget to say hi to me, Tyto the barn owl, and all my other friends like the sharks, eagles, and jellyfish! We are all excited for your visit! See ya soon!



CAN YOU FIND ME?

Look closely—I'm hiding in four more places throughout this magazine.



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SOUTHWESTERN COLLEGE

New Facilities, New Degrees

By Stephanie Kingston, SKingston@swccd.edu



Nestled in the southeast corner of Southwestern College's 156-acre Chula Vista campus, the new 80,000-square-foot University Center is quickly emerging as a transformative hub for higher education in South County. Designed to create a seamless pathway from community college to four-year universities, the center expands opportunities for local students to earn bachelor's degrees close to home.

South County in San Diego is home to more than 600,000 residents and anchored by the city of Chula Vista. The area remains the largest region of its size in California without a public university offering bachelor's degrees. This long-standing gap in access to higher education has limited opportunities for local students and hindered the region's ability to meet workforce demands in critical industries.

To help bridge that gap, Southwestern College (SWC) has partnered with several universities to bring bachelor's degree programs and shared academic resources directly to the community. By combining institutional strengths, these collaborations are building clear transfer pathways, innovative degree options, and workforce development programs aligned with the region's economic needs.

In October, SWC announced new partnerships with San Diego State University (SDSU) and the University of California San Diego (UC San Diego). Starting in Fall 2026, SWC students will be able to pursue a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology with an emphasis in Industrial and Organizational Psychology through SDSU, while UC San Diego will offer a Bachelor of Science in Public Health.

"This partnership marks a turning point for South County. Together, we are not only expanding access to high-quality, affordable bachelor's degrees, we are preparing our students to step directly into high-demand careers that power our regional economy," said Dr. Mark Sanchez, Superintendent/President of Southwestern College.

These new programs build upon recent progress, including the partnership between SWC and California State University San Marcos (CSUSM), which will launch bachelor's programs in Business, Computer Information Systems, and Cybersecurity in Fall 2026. In Fall 2027, CSUSM will expand to include Human Development with an emphasis in Wellness Coaching and Bilingual Speech-Language Pathology.

One of the first students set to benefit from these pathways is Joseph Leon, an incoming

CSUSM student who completed two associate degrees at SWC. Leon will pursue a bachelor's in Cybersecurity through CSUSM beginning in Fall 2025. Although the program will officially open in 2026, his journey reflects the kind of opportunity the new facility will provide for future students. Balancing his studies with a part-time job at the Chula Vista Police Department's crime lab, Leon embodies the type of local learner these programs are designed to support, students who want to stay close to home, family, and work. "I'm proud to be part of a college like Southwestern that's always seeking new opportunities for students like me," Leon said. "It means a lot to see institutions like CSU San Marcos reaching out and supporting students in South County."

Other partner institutions include Arizona State University (ASU), whose ASU Local program allows students to earn ASU bachelor's degrees while remaining in Chula Vista. Point Loma Nazarene University and National University also maintain offices in the University Center, offering programs such as Nursing (RN to BSN), Business Administration, Child Development, and Criminal Justice with many available in hybrid or online formats.

“ UC San Diego is committed to serving Californians by expanding access to a world-class education and ensuring that geography is never a barrier to opportunity.

Leaders from each institution emphasized the importance of collaboration in promoting student success and regional prosperity. "I think this partnership is critical," said SDSU President Adela de la Torre. "We have

about 500 to 600 transfer students each year from Southwestern College, and they do exceedingly well. These students will become managers and leaders in this area, strengthening our region and our nation."

"UC San Diego is committed to serving Californians by expanding access to a world-class education and ensuring that geography is never a barrier to opportunity," added UC San Diego Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla. "This new B.S. in Public Health program reflects our dedication to making higher education more accessible in the South Bay while advancing teaching and research that address the unique needs of this vibrant and diverse region."

The programs offered through these partnerships were guided by findings from the 2023 Workforce and Education Needs

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SWC and UC San Diego announce joint programs.

Assessment, conducted by the San Diego Regional Policy & Innovation Center in collaboration with SWC and the City of Chula Vista, with state funding provided by Assemblymember David Alvarez.

“As we push toward establishing a new university campus in Chula Vista, we must find creative solutions to expand access to four-year degrees in the meantime,” said Assemblymember Alvarez. “These program partnerships are part of a broader vision to close opportunity gaps, reduce student debt, and build a thriving local workforce. When students can study close to home, they are more likely to graduate and give back to their communities.”

The University Center is housed within SWC’s new Instructional and Discovery Complex, funded by more than \$101 million in voter-approved bonds (Propositions R and Z). The complex features purpose-built classrooms, labs, lecture halls, offices, and a planetarium all designed to support full four-year degree programs and cutting-edge learning experiences. But the new facility is about more than space, it’s about access and impact. Students now benefit from expanded academic advising, transfer support, and co-enrollment opportunities, while faculty collaborations foster joint research on binational, border, and regional issues.

For decades, Southwestern College has been known as the region’s academic launchpad, a place where students begin their higher education journey. Now, that foundation is stronger than ever. Whether through ASU Local’s online programs, CSUSM’s new on-site bachelor’s offerings, or transfer guarantees to SDSU and UCSD, SWC students have a growing network of pathways to success—educational opportunity, economic mobility, and community prosperity across the South County.





Why I Write Poetry

by Tre Jackson

My reasons for writing, I did not realize until the lens of time revealed.
 Poetry gives me satisfaction and replaces unhealthy attributes I place upon myself.
 When I write, my adult despair dissolves and something innocent appears.
 Before I dared to write, my mind was cloudy overwhelmed, and filled with stress.
 But when I dedicated myself to poetry my time, energy, and memories devoted, beautiful results materialized like magic.

My internal melodramas and fear vanished replaced by blossoming flowers of curiosity.
 I became child-like again, no limit on imagination as if holding a magic purple crayon in my hand allowing me to venture off to far away lands.
 Every adventure I wrote myself into came with either a lesson or a blessing profound.
 Each new revelation causing me to mature and become the person I am today.
 To the power of poetry I am thankful.
 Words became art, art became education, education elevated my human spirit, and my elevated spirit has led to a peaceful soul.

Meet the Artist

Hi, my name is Treondous Natorri Lee Jackson but people call me TRIIZIO for short. I am a nomad, the lonesome road is where I grew up, traveling through the United States since I was two from the midwest, to the south and eventually to the west coast. Currently I am 26 years old. I've just recently moved to Chula Vista from National City where I have been living in a housing program for about a year now. I became homeless at 19 years old after I left Job Corps in Imperial Beach and since that time, the world has opened my eyes to reality. Life can do that to you when you've hit rock bottom, makes you go deep, thinking about what truly matters and how much you want to succeed.

Last year I was caught in a flood that swept through San Diego and was left scavenging alone with no shelter, sleeping in a wooded ravine behind the Old Globe Theater in Balboa Park. I didn't know what was going to become of me. I could either lay down facing the dirt and throw in the towel completely while being smothered by grief and thoughts of worry plaguing my brain from exhaustion. Or I could rise up again and pull myself out of my own grave.

When I look around and I see the many mentally dead people wandering the streets, I'm not happy. I say to myself, "There's got to be a way to connect with these young fellas and repair their minds that have been damaged by emotional trauma." I've been blessed with a talent to push it to the maximum effect by reaching these lost souls, bring them out of their state of ignorance, and back to a sense of awareness. So that's what I'm doing in the world of creative art.

If you would like to be part of this journey by kindly supporting my work, please do check out my YouTube account @TRIIZIO_Odyssey or at TRIIZIO on SoundCloud by scanning the QR code below.

I have several songs posted that you will enjoy thoroughly from beginning to end. So stay tuned, because there's more coming to you!

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1495 East H Street, Chula Vista

619-737-2464

www.BonitaPoint76.com



DRIVEN TO *Perfection*: BONITA POINT AUTO CARE



The intersection of Otay Lakes Road and E. H Street is significant to all who live in the area. Bonita Vista High School, Otay Lakes Plaza, Southwestern College, and the Bonita Point shopping center occupy the corners. On the NW corner, you will find Bonita Point Auto Care 76. This family-run business has kept local

cars and trucks moving for the past three decades.

Owned by sister and brother Lori Hupp and Ron Ballard, they grew up working in the service stations owned by their father.



When he retired, Ron and Lori took over the business. Lori fondly remembers that even after their father retired, he loved to come down on Saturdays to talk with customers and to stay in touch with the business.

Bonita Point Auto Care 76 offers a full range of auto services. They proudly maintain several certifications:

- STAR Certified smog check location.
- AAA certified repair facility.
- State of California ASE Certified (Automotive Service Excellence) testing facility.

The staff can diagnose/repair/perform a client’s oil change, new tires, tire alignments, transmission work, brakes, cooling systems, and batteries. When you see the Check Engine Light come on or hear an unusual noise,

Bonita Point Auto Care 76 can help. They can also service all extended warranties. They service cars, trucks and commercial vehicles.

When asked what she is most proud of, Lori proudly mentioned that clients appreciate their customer service and honesty. “Even past employees bring their cars back to the shop because they know they will be treated well. We explain to clients what needs to be repaired now and what will need attention in the future. This way they can plan ahead.”

Lori also mentioned the importance of consistency. Bonita Point Auto Care 76 currently employees a staff of fifteen, including Lori’s son, Austin. On average, staff members have each worked there for ten years. This allows clients to know

the staff and the staff to know the vehicle and its history.

How has your industry changed over the years?

“It has changed so much. We constantly devote time staying current with the newest technology, scanners, and equipment.”

Tell me something funny that has happened at the shop.

“We went to look under a car, and a raccoon was hanging on. When he saw us, he let go and ran away fast! That was quite a surprise!”

What is the one piece of advice you can give to our readers regarding caring for their vehicles?

“I would say that a simple, but very important step, is to change the oil consistently.”

How can readers make an appointment?

“We are open Monday-Saturday. Call us at 619-421-7600 or visit our website at www.bonitapoint76.com.”

Omar B... Great to see everyone coming together, your gratitude is truly heartwarming! you're supporting local businesses, keep spreading the love

... Katia Callahan it is so amazing to see how a community can come together. Thank you once again Katia and all the people that were involved to make this possible. EFTG

... Katia Callahan, I cannot express my gratitude for what you do every single day! Thank you so much for the delicious meal and for all the wonderful blessings you have given to my family and me, and so much more. You are truly God sent. We are so blessed to have you in our lives!! Angelina M... Happy Thanksgiving!

... Katia, thank you for all you do!

... Katia Callahan You are an amazing person. Thank you for all that you do and for bringing our community together!! It was beautiful to witness so much love, generosity and kindness in one place!

... Katia Callahan it is so amazing to see how a community can come together. Thank you once again Katia and all the people that were involved to make this possible. EFTG

... IA our Chula Vista Eastlake Families and communities would be INCREDIBLY THANKFUL FOR YOU AMIGA

... you truly are a GODSEND
Love you

... Katia, thank you for all you do!

... Glad I could be a small part of it. Thanks to Katia, the best organizer ever, and everyone who contributed and volunteered!
Happy Thanksgiving everyone! 🙌🏻

... Katia you are such a bad ass!!!!



KATIA CALLAHAN

NOT ALL HEROES WEAR CAPES

In every community, one person seems to show up when the need arises. For Eastlake, that person is Katia Callahan.

Katia grew up in Mexico City, graduated college and was a teacher. When she was 23 years old, she decided to move to San Francisco to improve her English skills. That was 30 years ago. She worked in the loan business for 10 years. While there, she met her husband Mark and they were married two years later.



According to Katia, “My sister lived in San Diego at that time. Every time we came to visit, we noticed how nice it was here, the great weather, and how nice people were. We also noticed that there were a lot of people from Mexico City here as well. So, we decided to move.” They sold their food distribution business and moved to Eastlake. Being new to the area, she started volunteering heavily. She volunteered at Eastlake Middle School and then Eastlake High School as she, her husband, and son adjusted to their new surroundings, and then COVID hit. She began to ask local restaurants and businesses if they could donate anything for her various volunteer activities. She noticed that many of the restaurants were locally owned.

Katia is a cancer survivor who was left with only one lung. She explains, “When COVID hit, there was so much negating and anxiety. I felt like locking myself in my room. But I began to wonder who was going to bring me food, or this or that?” So, being the action person she is, Katia started a Facebook page *EastlakeFoodToGo* in order to connect people with those who could deliver food. She not only connected local restaurants, but also local farms and grocery stores. Katia explains, “It was just incredible. Everything was delivered. We were eating first-class meals. Chefs even delivered lobster to your house.”

“Other people started baking different kinds of breads and cakes. It was great trying food from different cultures.” One benefit that surpassed her expectation was how people got to know each other by sharing food and then became great friends. Katia remembers that some people even started dating after meeting this way.

Home Businesses

Her next project was joining the MEHKO coalition (MicroEnterprise Home Kitchen Operation). The goal was to make it

legal to cook food at home and sell it. After many meetings and planning, Diana Tapiz from Eastlake, was the first MEHKO approved home in San Diego. Katia remembers, “They even had a ribbon cutting and all. She is an incredible cook.” And the movement has since grown. Other homes are approved in LA, Riverside, and San Francisco. Katia sees it as a flexible way for people to make extra income doing something they enjoy.

EASTLAKE HUB

As COVID ended and people starting going back to work, it was decided to keep *EastLakeFoodToGo* up and running as a way for food vendors to continue connecting with the public. At this time, Katia had the idea to start Eastlake Hub. “This was an opportunity for people to come and meet each other, even if it was not about food. I still do it about four times a year. After COVID, it was great to meet people face to face,” Katia remembers. She found it to be a great way for people to make local business connections and friends. For Katia, “Supporting local businesses is most important because as you grow and support your neighbors, you know the revenue stays in our city.”



Katia receiving a Proclamation from Mayor John McCann

WISH WELL

During one of the Eastlake Hub meetings, Katia met the founder of Wish Well, a coaching and empowerment center for kids, teens, and their families. Coming out of COVID, the need for mental health was so widespread. Katia began volunteering and was impressed to see the great results the coaches achieved. Before long, Katia transitioned from being a volunteer to becoming staff.

VOLUNTEERING

I asked Katia why she has spent so much time and effort volunteering. She answered, “I believe that volunteering is magical. You meet many incredible people. For me, life is a gift and it is fragile. Anything that we can do to help each other and to love each other and to build relationships with people is so important. It's something that I love to do. There are many dark things in the world that we must go through, but I just wake up and think of somebody that I need to help or that I need to embrace.”

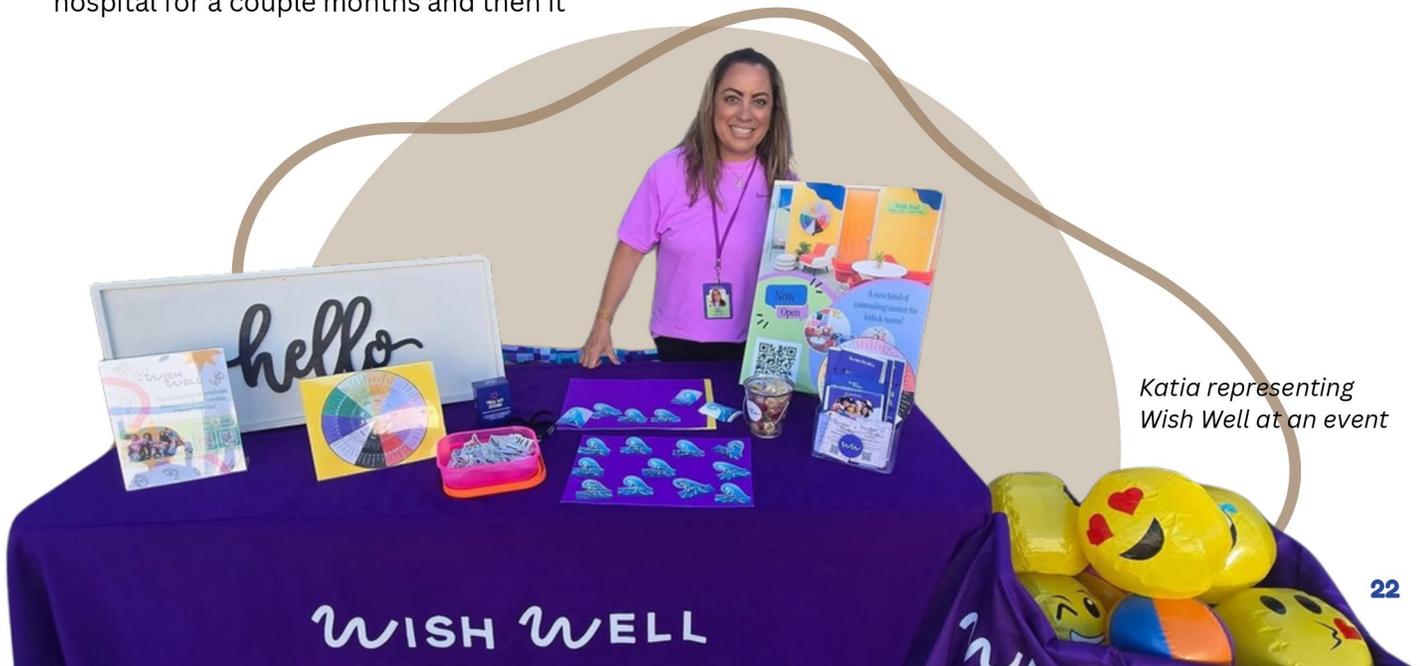
When I asked Katia at what age she started volunteering, she clarified, “My mom said I was always open about meeting people, always out talking to people, making little things to sell. When I was 18 years old, I had a really severe case of meningitis, and I couldn't walk or see for months. I was in the hospital for a couple months and then it

took me a while to recover my vision and to also learn how to walk again. The doctor said it was really a miracle. Also, when I entered the hospital, my heart stopped. I was really, really, really sick. They had to bring me back to life and everything. It was a very crazy experience. Looking back, I was only 18. I realized that every day we just must live life to the max. Life is a gift. That's why I just love helping, volunteering, and working.

EVEN MORE

Katia has also been volunteering for the Eastlake Educational Foundation for eight years and is now a board member. This has included working on the very successful Taste of Eastlake event. She has also organized Thanksgiving meals the past two years. With the cooperation of Brian at West Coast Barbecue and Rick Fernandez at 3N1 Sports Bar & Grill, they were able to feed 50 families in the first year.

I asked Katia to sum up her philosophy. She said, “My theory is when something bad happens, something good will come of it.” Talking with Katia for any amount of time, you feel her energy, passion, and kindness. Relatively speaking, Eastlake is a newer housing development. Katia has gone above and beyond to make it feel like a community. Thank you, Katia, for all you have done and all you continue to do!



Katia representing Wish Well at an event



South County Deserves Action: THE FIRST 100 DAYS

By Paloma Aguirre, Supervisor District 1

For too long, South San Diego County has been left behind, facing the burden of pollution, underinvestment, and rising cost of living that is making it harder for families to get ahead. When I ran for County Supervisor, I promised to fight for working people, to keep our communities safe and healthy, and to ensure that our region finally gets its fair share.

In my first 100 days, that's exactly what we've done, and let me say, it's about time.

While Trump and his allies work to roll back environmental protections, leave families hungry, and put the interest of his billionaire friends first, I'm fighting for working families – tackling the Tijuana River sewage crisis head-on, and demanding action from every level of government.

From day one, I made it clear that South County can't wait—so we got to work. In the first month, I brought together scientists and health experts to launch a long-overdue epidemiological study on how pollution is impacting our health. I've worked with the Hospital Association to strengthen local data collection so we can finally measure what so many families experience on a daily basis and better understand how our air and water make people sick.

Clean air and safe neighborhoods shouldn't be luxuries – they are basic rights. That's why I expanded the Air Pollution Control District's purifier program to schools and childcare centers, so that our children can breathe cleaner air. We're also expanding access for families to receive up to four air purifiers per household.

Within days of taking office, I directed new warning signage across the Tijuana River Valley to alert residents of potential dangerous hydrogen sulfide exposure, and I've been pushing hard in Sacramento for \$50 million in state funds to fix the Saturn Boulevard "hot spot," one of the worst sources of toxic gas in our region.

But my work doesn't stop at the river. I've been focused on the issues families feel every day – the high cost of living, housing insecurity, and community safety.

I helped establish a new Community Sponsor Group in Lincoln Acres, empowering residents to have a stronger voice in decisions that affect their neighborhood. I've supported reforms to the County's reserves policy, ensuring our fiscal management reflects community priorities and frees up funding for essential social services.

We've expanded the County's Immigration Legal Defense Program to include unaccompanied minors, ensuring every child facing our immigration system has access to fair representation – no matter their background.

As costs keep rising, I've supported efforts to lower utility bills and begun cracking down on excessive "junk fees" that hit renters hard. I'm also expanding access to detox and recovery programs, so people struggling with addiction or homelessness have a real chance to get back on their feet.

Every day, we're working to make South County a place where families can afford to live, where neighborhoods are safe and healthy, and where government delivers real results. We are just getting started. But in these first 100 days, we've shown what's possible when we put people over politics and focus on results for working families.

South County deserves nothing less.

Happy Holidays from THE TOWNE LOCAL CHULA VISTA



December HOLIDAYS

December is known for being filled with meaningful religious and cultural holidays celebrated around the world. Here are some of the most widely recognized observances throughout the month:

- December 8 – Feast of the Immaculate Conception
- December 8 – Bodhi Day
- December 14–22 – Hanukkah
- December 16–24 – Las Posadas
- December 21 – Winter Solstice / Yule
- December 24 – Christmas Eve
- December 25 – Christmas
- December 26 – Boxing Day
- December 26 – January 1 – Kwanzaa
- December 31 – New Year's Eve



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