

THE TOWNE LOCAL

Chula Vista

**LEADING THE WAY
IN ART**

JUNE 2026 | ISSUE 9

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Photo courtesy of GroundFloor Murals

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CHULA VISTA MUST DO BETTER



JEFF BETTGER
PUBLISHING DIRECTOR

The Bonita Museum and Cultural Center is leading the way for Art in the South Bay. The museum supports local artists, from students to seniors. It has a rapid rotation of new exhibits and performances. But the key to their success was the early decision to give the museum and the adjacent library each an expert director: Wendy Williams-Gibson and JP Baker. Both Wendy and JP bring incredible knowledge and enthusiasm to their jobs.

The City of Chula Vista is approximately 20 times larger in population than Bonita, yet all library, arts, and cultural decisions must flow through the same library staff. Unlike Escondido and Poway, Chula Vista shockingly still has no performing arts center.

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Interesting people are typically the most busy people. Thank you to City of Chula Vista Councilmember Jose Preciado for taking time to be interviewed. And thank you also to his Senior Assistant Diana Quintero.

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Do you have an idea for a future story? Please feel free to 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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The Heart & Soul of the
SOUTH BAY

A commentary by Jeff Bettger

In the cycle of life, a child is born. The parents take care of the child until the child has matured. Then as the parents age and become frail, the adult child becomes their caregiver. However, the challenges and hardships a caregiver encounters are rarely discussed. As such, I want to raise a toast of recognition to those who accept the responsibility of caring for their elderly parents.

CARING FOR ELDERLY PARENTS

As my friends and I count more birthdays, so do our parents. Suddenly, the tables turn and we are asked to care for them. A bone-breaking fall, a cancer diagnosis, or the onset of Alzheimer's can flip our lives sideways. We thought we had all the bases covered until we discovered that the long-term health care plans our parents had paid for over several decades do not cover nearly enough of the care needed. We deal with special beds, endless doctor visits, special meals, medicine refills, bleeding caused by the most innocent bumps against a wall, being "on call" 24 hours a day, and intra-family drama.

In past generations, it was assumed that the children who lived nearby would take turns taking care of an elderly parent. That is not the case

Here's to the Caregivers

anymore. Rarely do children live in the same town as the parents. Senior housing is expensive and not always of high quality. Consider the extra burden on the caregivers as they try to manage their own lives. Prior responsibilities such as taking care of their children and maintaining their careers still exist. Studies have shown that consistent sleep deprivation alone can take a tremendous long-term toll on a caregiver physically, mentally, emotionally, and financially. What support mechanisms exist for them? From my own experience, not many. Our systems for elderly care clearly needs additional support.

A caregiver wants to provide the best possible support for their parents and to make sure their final days are comfortable and dignified. Homecare is often the best option, but what happens when the care needed stretches from days to weeks to months? What happens when the parents wander off by themselves or do not recognize the caregiver or become violent? The trauma endured by the caregiver is real. Only recently has the concept of mental health gained significant discussion in our general culture. If you are a caregiver and have feelings of frustration, sadness, or stress, PLEASE reach out for help. Talking about your feelings with a trusted friend, clergy, or counselor can be extremely beneficial. Remember that while providing care for others, you must take care of yourself as well.



An Art Tsunami Hits the South Bay

MICHAEL LEAF WRAPS "IT" UP

A seismic Art-quake hit Bonita on May 16, 2026. Local artist Michael Leaf unveiled his groundbreaking project: a beautiful 3-D metal wrapping of the Bonita Museum and Cultural Center. Two attentional metal sculptures were also dedicated. The significance of this event cannot be understated.



Jeff Bettger: As way of quick overview, the Bonita Museum and Cultural Center, the Bonita Sunnyside Library, and a Sheriff's office all share the same general space. I believe the idea was to make the museum stand out as people drive by on Bonita Rd, correct?

Michael Leaf: Jeff, yes you are correct. In fact, when this project was thought up, the original intention was to address the following sentence..."People always say there is a museum across the street from McDonalds, how do we change that?" My immediate response, "I have an idea." :)

Jeff: Give us a little background. Why do you work with metal?

Michael: I am a third generation Chula Vista native. On my Mom's side, my grandfather, Burt Raynes, was the Co-Founder and CEO of Rohr. On my Dad's side, he ran one

of the largest metal supply businesses in South Bay. The metal company, Leaf Sales, was sold to my parents and they ran it for the past 53 years. (Recently retired Oct 1, 2026). In regard to your question, "why metal?" I supposed I've always been around it and it seemed almost natural to pursue given my exposure to that particular element.

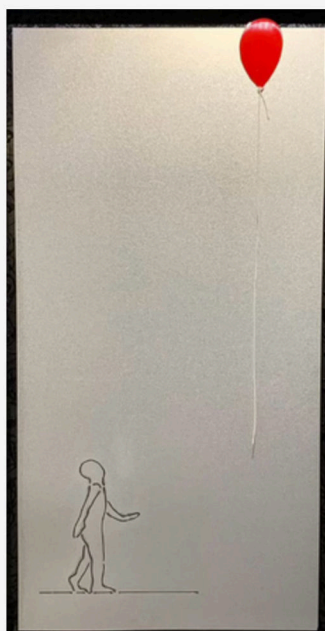
Jeff: You have named the beautiful blue creation "it". What was your inspiration?

Michael: "IT" is actually referring to the pattern cut out that makes up the 2,000 sq.ft. sculpture that wraps the Bonita Museum. Mannnnny years ago, I created a free form version of "IT" that appeared more like a metal vine that ran up the walls of my shop. I knew immediately upon it's creation I would one day wrap an entire building. :)

Jeff: From the time you first conceived the idea until it was revealed, how long did it take?

Michael: 3.5-4 years from initial conversations to celebrating the finished project May 16, 2016.

Jeff: What roadblocks did you encounter along the way?



Michael: In all honesty, I did not observe any road blocks. Somehow I knew in my heart and soul this project was “already completed” and we as a team, the Bonita Museum board members and myself, were just catching up to that reality. With a project as massive as this one was, each step presented a new level of “what now?” With each question asked, it was up to us/me to find that answer to make it a reality. I truly did not see this not happening given that amount of love, passion, energy, support, focus and purpose behind it.

Jeff: Tell us about the two other pieces.

Michael: “Inner Strength” is a piece I have envisioned for MANY years and have been waiting for the right space to come along for it’s debut. This piece has been donated by myself, my wife Stephanie Leaf and my son (9 years old at the time I write this) Canon Leaf. As viewed on the plaque fixed to the sculpture:

May “Inner Strength” serve as a reminder that true strength goes beyond physical strength; it is our ability to overcome challenges and rise above adversity. Please let this statue inspire you to recognize the resilience that lies within each of us.

May it stand as a beacon of hope and a symbol of unity for our community; encouraging us all to embrace our inner strengths and support one another on our journeys.

*With Love and Light,
Michael, Stephanie and Canon Leaf*



In regard to the “Lead with your heart” piece, this is another global project I am launching. Two other hearts are set to find their homes in San Diego very soon.

Third, the “Tall Communication Chairs” donated by the Barb and Scott Scott family, are part of a larger vision for the future of the Bonita Museum Sculpture garden. The backrests will be changed out annually by a selected artist chosen by the Bonita Museum.

Jeff: I’ve heard mention that you have additional goals for the area. What are they?

Michael: As of now it is safe to say we are in development of the largest sculpture garden walk in San Diego history.....(I think. :). The master plan at the moment is to create 25 separate art pads that will surround the golf course, creating an initial local and eventual national call for artist to submit their works. The chosen pieces will be on display for a set period of time. More details are in the works on the roll out of this project.

Jeff: Going back a bit, I have noticed that for many artists, there is





A 26 ft. tree created for a private collector

typically a defining moment when they know that they want to dedicate themselves to art. Was there one such moment for you? Since then, do you find that people enjoying collecting your work?

Michael: Yes there was a moment like that for me indeed. In fact, now that I reflect on it..it wasn't really my choice to dedicate myself to my art; when I discovered my first piece in a dream I was having, I woke up and said "I need to make that!" Since that dream almost 20 years ago, I cannot imagine doing anything other than this. I suspect ART chose me and I am simply the vessel bringing in ideas from other planes. It is truly a blessing to have had so many individuals, friends, organizations, corporations, governments, schools, museums, etc. that have enjoyed and collected my works. I can say I have become a friend to each and every person who has a piece of my work.

Jeff: You have very deep roots in the Chula Vista area. Your work can

be found internationally. Yet, many people in the South Bay do not know your work. How can we as a community continue to recognize and celebrate our many outstanding artists? And also encourage and support our up-and-coming artists?

Michael: I truly think the Bonita sculpture garden project is the next step in the evolution of answering this question. It will create and open more doors for soooooooo many people. I don't think there is a way to describe it's impact yet.

Jeff: Michael, I want to thank you for your time and for your artistic vision. You have opened many eyes regarding what is possible and how art can transform a community for the good.

Michael: Thank you Jeff for your interest and support of the Arts. You are supporting such a beautiful part of what makes us Human beings.

For more information, visit:
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S E R V I N G T H E P U B L I C :

CHULA VISTA COUNCILMEMBER JOSE PRECIADO

For some jobs, you can begin and learn as you go. Such was the case with my first paper route, then helping my father install carpet, and then helping my assigned UPS driver deliver packages during the holiday rush. Being a city councilmember is not one of those jobs! As one can imagine, the responsibilities, skills, and knowledge needed are many and diverse. I wanted to understand what the job of being an elected official requires and how one might prepare for it. Chula Vista City Councilmember Jose Preciado was kind enough to sit down and discuss these questions with me.

City Councilmember Preciado represents District 2 of Chula Vista. This district basically encompasses the northwest section of Chula Vista. An area with some of the oldest neighborhoods in Chula Vista, but also home to much of the new Bayfront development.

Councilmember Preciado: District 2 is unique in that we are almost fully built out. There are very few spaces where there's never been a dwelling or a house. We have neighborhoods and life experiences that span 100 years. These well-established neighborhoods have families who have been here for generations, and they have a life history that they think about and value. In many ways, we have higher density rates in terms of housing and population than many

neighborhoods on the east side, where they have about the same amount of housing, but they're spread out on much larger lots and they have more facilities.

Jeff Bettger: Let's start at the beginning. Tell me about your youth.

Councilmember: I grew up in Nestor. I went to Nestor Elementary, Southwest Middle, then Southwest High School. Like people who lived in Imperial Beach or San Ysidro at that time, I remember going to the Chula Vista Shopping Center, going to Third Ave for dentist and doctor visits, watching movies at the Vogue, and enjoying a meal at Marie Callender's or Red Lobster (off of F street). I also spent half my life in Playas de Rosarito. We commuted every week for at least two decades. It was a wonderful time living near the ocean and in two countries throughout my formative years. I think I share this experience with many residents here in Chula Vista. I was born in Tijuana in 1971. We immigrated as a family in 1976.

Jeff: I believe you went to San Diego State?

Councilmember: Yes, as you know, we have hundreds of thousands of SDSU alumni that live in the region. Many of them serve in a variety of public service roles. Some are elected officials. In fact,



Keeping Chula Vista Safe



Groundbreaking of Citrus Bay Park, a new half-acre public park on the corner of I St and Fifth Ave

four of us on the council graduated from SDSU as well as our current city attorney. My two brothers graduated from State as well. While I was a student, I became involved in student movements and student government. That experience has helped me tremendously. I learned how to run meetings using Robert's Rules of Order, how to speak in front of a crowd, and general leadership skills. I highly recommend that college students take advantage of opportunities they have outside of classwork.

Jeff: You work at SDSU, correct?

Councilmember: Yes. After finishing my undergraduate degree, I started my professional career in college admissions and have worked at SDSU for the past 28 years. So, in addition to being a councilmember for Chula Vista, I am an assistant dean for undergraduate studies.

Jeff: Tell me something the general public probably doesn't know about being an elected official.

Councilmember: I think most people don't realize that in every single organization I've ever been in as an elected official or an appointed official, we have

attorneys that are on staff. These public law attorneys have the responsibility of ensuring that everything we do is lawful and in compliance with local, state and federal laws. Even when we vote, they help us understand if there are conflicts and it's part of their responsibility. For example, maybe you are voting for something that is near to your home. The attorneys point out that this might be a conflict and advise on whether you should vote or not. All the contracts and all the purchases we make, everything goes through the attorneys before we can make it happen.

Jeff: Since serving, what issue has caused the most controversy?

Councilmember: I would say it was the trash pickup strikes. I received the most negative feedback from the public during that time. People were so upset. They were calling for us to resign.

Jeff: Tell me about your experience serving on various water boards.

Councilmember: I served on the South Bay Water District from 2008-2022. At that time, the Sweetwater Authority was

responsible for the drinking water going to 190,000 residents in West Chula Vista, National City and unincorporated communities of Lincoln Acres, Sunnyside and Bonita. During that time, I served as chair and as a member of various committees, such as the finance committee, the engineering committee, the operations committee, and the consultant selection committee. In 2014, I was appointed to represent the South Bay Water District on the San Diego County Water Authority.

The San Diego County Water Authority is responsible for imported drinking water and ensuring that the region has sufficient water, whether it's for special district such as the Otay Water District that uses 100% imported drinking water or like Sweetwater Authority that has reservoirs and wells and other sources of water that are supplemented with imported water to serve the ratepayers. Tasked with creating policy and rates, the Authority serves almost the entire county of San Diego.

This experience broadened my perspective. It's not just what's

happening in your neighborhood but ensuring that 3.2 million people and an economy in the billions of dollars are able to operate now and in the future.

One of the success stories for the entire region is that even though our population has grown over the last 30 years by 10, 15, 20%, water use in the region has been reduced by about 40%. That's been strictly through conservation. Less water use, people hardening their landscape, people not washing their cars every day, low flush restroom facilities, reduced flow shower heads. All that aggregates to less water use.

I am sharing this with you because something very important became real for me from this experience. I realized that even though people were using less water, we still, as a government, needed to maintain the system that delivers that water. And so the cost of delivering that water didn't go down dramatically when the water use went down. In fact, there were some fixed costs that were going to stay the same and maybe even grow over time. When the cost of living goes up, the cost of treatment supplies goes up, and the cost of importing water goes up, residents may have to pay more even though they are using less of the resource. This is necessary so that we can ensure that we can continue delivering clean, high quality, safe water. One of the challenges is convincing everyone that we are doing the best we can to save, to be accountable, and to deliver this

public service.

Jeff: What do you see in the future for District 2 specifically or Chula Vista more generally?

Councilmember: I am working on the future in two ways. I've been meeting with a group of seniors for about a year now. One of the things that I like about the group is we're always thinking about how to make Northwest Chula Vista better. So I get to hear directly from my neighbors and my constituents about what we like, what we don't like, what we wish we had, and how we could improve. These meetings really help me understand what people are looking for moving forward.

I have also started a new group of 18-39-year-olds that I call Chula Vista Forward. One of the things that I like about this group is that I'm thinking from a policy point of view of how we can serve them in the city context. Because I work at a university, I'm used to working with young folks. I asked them to consider the following three questions: Where will you work? Where will you live? When or will you decide to start a family?

It was interesting that some of the young men said, "Well, we really haven't thought about that." I said, "Well, that's interesting. But think about it from my point of view as a councilmember. What can I do now to ensure that five or ten years from now when you decide you need a job or you decide that you want to buy a home or move out from your parent's home, will there be housing that you can afford with the job you have? Will you decide

to have a family, or will you decide to wait?"

I want them to know these questions have major implications for everything we do as a city and we need to plan. What should I value when somebody is trying to bring a new development? Does it meet the needs of everyone? Or does it meet the needs of people today, but will it serve people 10 years from now?

I keep in mind that I won't be a councilmember in 10 years. My philosophy is that I want to have a positive effect and I want to leave it at least as good as I found it. That is the disposition I have towards the future. I'm hoping that by interacting with the public in this way, I'm building an understanding of what Chula Vista should be in the future by examining this feedback, together with my own life experiences. People have been responsive to my invitations to meet in many townhalls.

Jeff: Thank you Councilmember for sharing your time. And thank you for sharing your insights into the complex decisions the city council is asked to make and the wide range of skills and knowledge needed to make them.



Grand opening of the Sharp Rees-Stealy medical offices and labs on H Street

Expert Gardening Tips

by Daniela Mejia, Coordinator for the Sweetwater Community Garden



It's important to know that Chula Vista and Bonita are in Hardiness Zone 10b. When you're unsure what to plant and when to plant it, make sure to do a quick search for a planting calendar for Coastal Southern California (Zone 10b) and see what grows best during the current season. In June and July, your garden is likely blowing up with zucchinis, tomatoes, cucumbers, winter squash, flowers, and much more.



TOMATOES

- Staying on top of pruning. By pruning the plant, you're manipulating how and where it directs its energy.
- Prune the bottom leaves, make sure they're not touching the ground and thin it out for improved aeration.
- When watering, make sure not to spray the plant.
- Make sure there is a strong trellis for your tomatoes since they're likely at their peak growth or will get there soon.

If you're growing indeterminates like Black Krim or Beefsteak varieties, a wimpy tomato cage is no match for a monster tomato plant that can grow 6–10 feet tall!

Make sure you're using sturdy material and a trellis style that you can constantly add to. You must keep the "monster" happy by feeding it regularly during its growing season and following the fertilizer's label instructions for application rates and timing.



ZUCCHINIS

- Harvest zucchinis every couple of days. Large zucchinis are cool to look at, but they're often flavorless to eat unless you're making bread.
- Zucchini plants are susceptible to powdery mildew. Don't bother trying to cure heavily infected plants late in the season.
- Instead, succession plant by sowing or transplanting new zucchini plants every couple of weeks.
- Remove severely infected plants and dispose of them in the trash to help reduce the spread of spores.
- Don't trim infected leaves and leave them on the ground near your new plants.



FLOWERS

If you're growing flowers like zinnias or cosmos, make sure you're pinching the tops when the plants are young. This will encourage them to branch out and produce many more flowers. Once they're in full bloom, continue harvesting your zinnias, take bouquets home, and watch your plants triple their flower production!

Sweetwater Community Garden is open daily from 8 AM to Sunset and is located at 5354 Sweetwater Rd.. Garden space is available for rent on a yearly term. Check out our full interview with Daniela in the Dec. 2025 issue of The Towne Local Bonita magazine. www.BonitaMagazine.com

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YOUR GUIDE TO CUBAN FLAVORS

Are you craving delicious Cuban food? Luckily you do not need to travel to Havana or Miami. The House of Cuban Flavor, located at 1372 Third Ave, has been serving authentic Cuban food for ten years. Owner Guillermo Gomez explains its many influences and most famous dishes.

CONGRI RICE: We cook rice and beans and call it conгри rice. It comes from Haiti. When Haitians escaped and came to Cuba, they brought a lot of influences with them.

CASSAVA: When the Spaniards came to Cuba, they saw the indigenous people of Cuba cooking a root called cassava. They were able to make a flour that they could then turn into a bread.

SOUPS: Cubans make a lot of soups. The influence is from Spain. We typically use chickpeas, white beans, the red beans.

ROPA VIEJA: This dish came from the Canary Islands near Spain. This is where my family is originally from. During the civil war in Spain, many people from Spain came to Cuba. Ropa Vieja is a dish very similar to dishes found in Mexican and other Latin American countries. It is shredded beef with different kinds of salsa and vegetables. It is very popular here in the United States.





POTATO BALLS: We also serve our famous potato balls. Beef or chicken or Jalapeno cheese is surrounded by mashed potatoes and then coated and fried for a wonderful combination of tastes and textures.

EMPANADAS: Oven baked flaky on the outside filled with beef, chicken, or spinach & cheese.

Croquetas de Jamon: Breaded ham that is fried to perfection.

THE FAMOUS CUBAN SANDWICH: This sandwich is very popular. It contains roast pork, ham, Swiss cheese, pickles, mayo and mustard in a delicious bun. The sandwich is grilled until the cheese is melted. I marinate the pork for 48 hours and then slow cook it in the oven for 8 hours. It comes out tender and juicy.

ROASTED PORK PLATE: If you want to know authentic Cuban food, I recommend the roasted pork, congri rice, cassava, and soft boiled yucca.

ARROZ CON POLLO: We cook the chicken and the rice together. It is very popular and very Cuban.

SWEETS: The original pastries from Cuba were guava by itself and coconut by itself. A family in Los Angeles then invented the guava and cheese pastry.

They called it refugee, as a Cuban refugee. Here we also make mango, and mango & cheese pastries.

SPICE: Cuban food is full of flavor, but not spicy hot like many other cuisines.

CATERING: We can cater for your next event. Just give us a call and we can help you plan.

For more information, visit or call:

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Thank you Guillermo for explaining the diverse history of Cuban food. Everything on your menu tastes terrific. I highly recommend people return several times to try them all. (For me, the potato balls are so unique and delectable, I always order one of each). As an added bonus, patrons are always welcomed and served cheerfully by Guillermo's daughter Ana Maria. Great food and a smile make for a perfect dining experience. Chula Vista is lucky to have House of Cuban Flavor in our community!

TRIVIA: The famous Cuban sandwich did not originate in Cuba. Can you guess where it was first served?

Answer: Tampa, Florida



MY VIEW FROM A WHEELCHAIR

by Dana Sharai Little

“**Today, I pursue journalism not for recognition or praise, but to inspire others like me around the world. I want people with disabilities to understand that being different does not make their dreams impossible.**”

My name is Dana Sharai Little. I am a student at Southwestern College majoring in journalism. I have written for our nationally recognized and awarded college newspaper *The Sun*. I also have cerebral palsy and use a wheelchair to get around. While being a journalist, I am thankful for platforms to share my life experiences. Given that almost everyone has a disability or will face a disability sometime in their life, it is critical for society to stay vigilant regarding ways to improve accessibility. I would like to share some of my experiences and insights, . . .

I was born with a hole in my heart and several serious complications, including brain



bleeds. A year after birth, I was diagnosed with cerebral palsy. Cerebral palsy produces stiff, weak muscles and tremors. It also causes difficulty speaking. Because of these complications, some physicians believed I would not survive. My parents were devastated by the news, but they continued praying and hoping that I would live a long and fulfilling life.

I grew up as a military child, which meant I had to move around a lot. By age 6, I needed a wheelchair. I always knew I was different, even if I did not fully understand why. For many years, I struggled with anger and self-hatred because I did not understand my condition. Over time, I realized that my condition does not define me. It is only one part of my story.

MY WHEELCHAIR

One of the questions I am asked most often is, "What is it like being in a wheelchair?" The truth is that being in a wheelchair can sometimes feel confining and lonely. Many everyday tasks that others complete easily can require extra energy, planning, and determination for me.

I've had several different wheelchairs through the years. I started with a hot pink motorized wheelchair. I then graduated to an electric chair that could raise and provide more visibility and independence. My current chair is from the All-Star Wheelchair

company. They do a great job of considering the individual's comfort. Mine has a battery that needs to be charged every night in order to maintain a full charge. It has enough power to produce an impressive speed and can get me up ramps. Unfortunately, it does not have the ability to raise like my previous chair, so when needed I must find workarounds or ask for help. Those who know me know I won't actually ask for help unless I truly need it.

When it comes to being in a wheelchair, many people assume it gives you shortcuts in life. In reality, living in a wheelchair is much more complex. For some people, navigating the world is as simple as riding a bike or walking to new places. But for wheelchair users like me, the world was not always built with us in mind. There are many places I cannot go or situations where I must take long alternate routes because there is no accessible entrance. While Chula Vista is relatively flat compared to other cities, there are more hills than ramps. Without a ramp, there are many places I cannot go. I find this causes me to stay home more often than I would like.

STUCK UPON LANDING*

I want to share a recent incident that occurred to me at an airport. Traveling by air has become more difficult for most travelers, but it is especially difficult for handicap travelers. The TSA recently changed its security processes. They changed the color of the tags that go on wheelchairs. Our chariots are now supposed to get pink tags, when means the chairs are carefully stored and ready immediately as we deplane.

The problem is no one seems to have told TSA employees. My electric wheelchair received a white tag and disappeared into the innards of the plane like Jonah being swallowed by the whale. When I disembarked, my ride was nowhere in sight. After hours of detective work, my family finally found someone helpful. My chair had been routed to baggage claim while we were routed elsewhere. Another hour later--



long after other passengers on our flight were safely home or comfortably having dinner at a local restaurant—they located my chair in the Lost and Found. I was finally able to climb atop my steed and exit into the sunset.

As inconvenient as all that was, I consider myself lucky. Treating my high-tech wheelchair like luggage or a sailor's duffle bag could have damaged or destroyed it. Sending a wheelchair through the baggage process and dumping it at the Terminal 2 Lost and Found is insane. My wheelchair was carefully designed to help me transcend my cerebral palsy and have a way to get around. My wheelchair allows me to go places, including Southwestern College and my beloved journalism class. Without it, I am housebound.

The airline and TSA risked my chair being damaged or lost. The Americans With Disabilities Act and the Air Carrier Access Act clearly states that airlines are required to return all devices in the same condition as they were checked in. Damaged devices must be replaced or repaired with a device of equal or greater quality. Airlines are liable for compensation for lost or damaged devices, up to the original price. That's fine and dandy but repairing or replacing a chair like mine can take weeks or months. For me, losing my chair would mean losing mobility and a large degree of independence.

**This incident was previously published in Southwestern College's student newspaper The Sun.*

HANDICAP PARKING SPACE

It has been my experience that there is still a lack of handicap parking spaces. One problem is that people use those spaces who do not really qualify. It is illegal to park in a handicap spot without being officially registered and certified by a physician.

HOUSING

Everybody knows that there is a lack of affordable housing in Chula Vista. To make matters even worse, very few homes are wheelchair accessible. When people remodel their homes or build an ADU, I hope they will consider making it wheelchair accessible. This is important not only for the handicapped population, but for our aging population as well.

MY FUTURE

No matter how difficult life becomes, I continue to push myself forward. Even when obstacles stand in my way, I find another path ahead. Being in a wheelchair is not only about physical strength — it also requires emotional resilience, mental endurance, and courage. The support and love of family and friends have been vital throughout my journey but so has learning to believe in myself. Since I was young, my mother has always reminded me that I am destined for greatness.

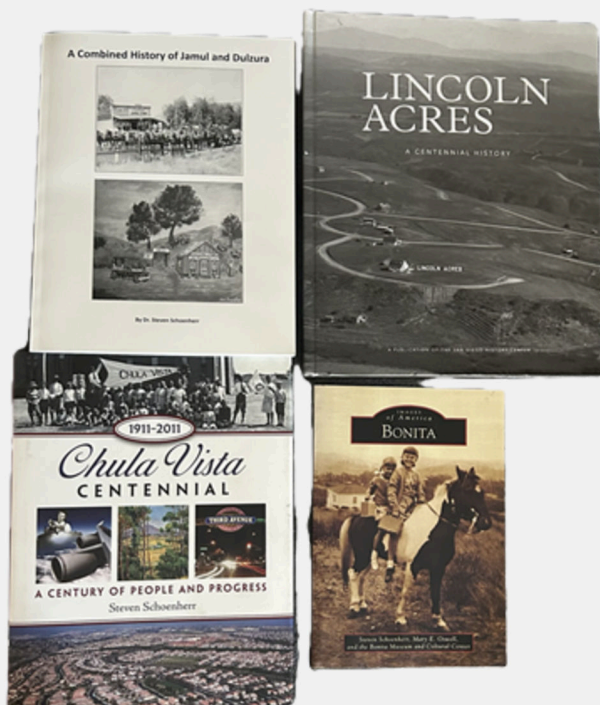
I know there will always be people who look at me differently or underestimate me. But I have learned that what matters most is not society's opinion — it is the way individuals see themselves. No matter how difficult life becomes, there will always be people who genuinely love and provide support through the hardest moments.

Today, I pursue journalism not for recognition or praise, but to inspire others like me around the world. I want people with disabilities to understand that being different does not make their dreams impossible. When people tell you that you "can't," sometimes that becomes the very reason to prove that you "can". At the end of the day, no obstacle, opinion, or limitation can stop you from pursuing your dreams unless you allow it to.

Tribute to Dr. Steve Schoenherr

Founder of the South Bay Historical Society, author, Historian and USD professor Steven Schoenherr passed away on May 27, 2026. Steve will be greatly missed. He was a good friend. Steve was a great inspiration to me and mentored me throughout my latter years to the history of Chula Vista and the South Bay. Our deepest condolences to his wife Carol and her family. The South Bay Historical Society will preserve his legacy in our community. Thank you, Steve for everything you gave us. Please visit <https://southbayhistoricalsociety.org/> to read many of the articles Steve left behind.

--Harry Orgovan



Dr. Schoenherr's books include the History of Bonita, Lincoln Acres Jamul, and the award-winning Chula Vista Centennial



Steven Schoenherr, 1945 - 2026

ODE TO STEVE.....

by Sandy Scheller

Chula Vista lost more than a historian.
It lost a keeper of memory,
a guardian of stories
preserved by Steve Schonherr.
He saw more than buildings—
he heard the echoes of families,
the heartbeat of a city finding itself.
Steve knew history was not just dates.
It was people, sacrifice, and love
passed through generations.
Cancer has taken the man,
but not the stories he saved.
Every remembered photograph,
every honored landmark,
every forgotten voice restored—
that is his legacy.
Some leave monuments of stone.
Steve left memory itself.
Tonight, Chula Vista feels quieter.
But in the pages of its history,
his spirit remains.
Rest peacefully, Steve Schonherr.
The historian is gone,
but the story lives on.....

PAINTING ABOVE THE GROUND



*Bayfront Charter High School,
830 Bay Blvd, Chula Vista 91911*

Driving around Chula Vista and San Diego, you have probably seen giant murals of Padres baseball players, a shark, domestic pets, and more. Paul Jimenez is the artist behind these stunning creations.

Jeff Bettger: Hi Paul. Thanks for joining me today. Tell me some background on yourself.

Paul Jimenez: Sure. I'm from Chula Vista. I was born and raised here. I moved around a little as a kid, but I've always wound up back here. My grandparents are from Chula Vista as well. I just bought a house here, so I'm happy to still call Chula Vista my home.

Jeff: Congratulations! How did you get started in art?

Paul: As a kid, I always doodled on my homework. But I never

thought there was an actual possibility I could make it a career. But then during COVID, I really had nothing else to do, so every day I would draw. I started an online drawing group. Every day we'd draw something and share it with the group. It was a lot of fun. So I just kept practicing and got better and better. Then one day I bought some spray paint. I had always wanted to try spray painting. I went to my mother's backyard, and spray painted a rooster on her fence.

I was pleased with how it turned out. I felt really attached to the medium already and knew I wanted to get really good at it. So from that day on, I just kept painting. I went from my mom's backyard to my aunt's backyard

to an alley in Chula Vista. When more people saw my work, I was able to start painting for money. It just grew from there. It's been about five years now of continuous spray painting.

Jeff: That's terrific. Your mom must be happy to have the mural that started it all! When I talk to artists, there seems to be a moment they remember when they got some positive feedback about their art. Do you remember a specific moment like that happening to you when you were young?

Paul: Not while I was young. In fact, not until I went to City College. I took a drawing class and the teacher, Wayne Hulin, was great. I learned a lot from him. He singled me out a few times in class and that gave me a lot of confidence because of how much I looked up to him. His confidence in me helped me leap forward even before I felt confidence in myself.

Jeff: That's such a great story! You know, if you are a runner, you can tell by your time if you are good or not. But for art, it seems it is important if somebody else can recognize an artist's potential. So now you paint under the name Ground Floor Murals. How did you pick that name?

Paul: My partner and co-founder, Signe Ditona, and I realized that there weren't a lot of murals around Chula Vista. We knew that if we took this seriously, we could paint everywhere. We felt like we were on the ground floor of this idea. We kept saying "we're on the ground floor." And it just kind of caught on after a while. I like that it reminds us to stay grounded. To let people know that our work is for the city and community.

Jeff: Very cool. How many murals have you painted at this point?

Paul: I don't know. Maybe like 120, 130 or something like that. I was keeping track for a while. Our first year alone, we did like 55. Now I do maybe five or six big murals a year.

Jeff: How do people hire you?

Paul: The cool thing about murals is that they're a big billboard. When you put one up, someone will see you painting or they'll see it online or they'll drive past it. So in fact, we've never done any outreach, which has been really cool. It's just been a lot of word of mouth, a

lot of social media. And then the Padres started working with us.

Jeff: Tell me more about how that happened.

Paul: During COVID, it was kind of getting tense. I noticed some racial tension, and I just wanted to remind the city who we were. And I knew that we could say a lot through sports. Tony Gwynn is a huge hero of mine. I just wanted to paint Tony Gwynn somewhere in the city to remind us all of who we are and how to be a stand-up citizen in our city. So I painted him in City Heights. I didn't know how important that was going to turn out to be. It ended up getting on every single news channel in San Diego. We were interviewed by five or six different channels, even in Mexico. I knew murals could be impactful, but that really taught me how serious they could be.

After that, we got followed by the Padres on Instagram and I thought, yeah, that's cool. But then about a month later, they contacted us and said we'd love

you guys to be a part of our new initiative. They would give us a location and we would paint a mural every month.

We started by painting Joe Musgrove at Grossmont High School. That one was pretty awesome. Then we did Fernando Tatis Jr. at Ocean Beach. And I believe the next was Manny Machado on 3rd Avenue in Chula Vista. And then Yu Darvish on Convoy. And then Trevor Hoffman in Encinitas.

Jeff: Did the Padres find those locations for you?

Paul: The only thing I insisted on was getting at least one on Third Avenue. I introduced them to Mayor Mary Salas. Before that, I don't think the Padres and Chula Vista had a strong relationship.

Jeff: How long did the Tony Gwynn mural take, for example.

Paul: The Padres gave us a week each for those murals. Sometimes it's easy, sometimes we're rushing and not sleeping.

Jeff: What are some examples of things you run into painting on walls as opposed to working on a blank canvas?



Collaboration with the San Diego Padres on murals throughout San Diego



Mural at La Concha Bakery at 334 E St, Chula Vista 91910

Paul: That's one of my favorite parts about spray painting murals is that it sticks on anything. It could be corrugated metal, textured stucco or brick. One of my favorite kind of walls is rough stucco. It adds like a grittiness to the painting. The cool thing about spray paint is it dries very fast and it's very forgiving. So I can just go over there and sketch with the spray can.

Jeff: It sounds like you've done work around San Diego. Have you done any work outside of San Diego County?

Paul: Yeah, we've done stuff in LA, Mexico, Las Vegas, and Texas. We even went to North Carolina. That was pretty cool.

Jeff: Why do you think it's important for the public to meet artists in person?

Paul: I think if I had met somebody that looked like me at a young age it would have really connected with me. That's why I like to visit schools. I feel like if I go to a school and just talk to the students like, "hey man, you

could do this too. I wasn't very good at school. I knew that it wasn't for me. I knew I had to figure something else out." And my message is, hey, if you're in love with something, you can make it happen. If you want to make cupcakes, you can do it and make a living. I'm just an example of somebody who figured it out and I know they can too.

Jeff: That's fantastic. What would you say is your long-term goal for your art?

Paul: My long-term goal is to keep it going and to grow into more collaboration. I want to be an avenue for talented artists to be able to make money with their art. My goal for the next couple years is to develop more of a team. I want Ground Floor Murals to be more of a label than just me being the face of it.

Jeff: One question for me as a non-artist. Spray cans are so interesting as far as being able to control where it goes. How do you make a small dot, for example?

Paul: It's kind of crazy because you just start to develop your calibration. It takes a while to know how much pressure-- it's a very minuscule amount of pressure that'll change the output. And also, the cans I use are low pressure compared to high pressure cans.

Jeff: My last question. What advice do you have for young artists?

Paul: I think one of the biggest pieces of advice is to just go for it. There's never going to be a best time to do it. You just got to do it. I hear a lot of people say that they'll do it when this or that, when A or B happens. I think you just have to start. You're not going to be as good today as you will be tomorrow. But if you get started today, that's how you will be better tomorrow. Just do your best on that day. Lead with passion, lead with who you are.

It was helpful for me that I went to school for marketing and advertisement. I really love that aspect of things and just promoting yourself is very important, especially for artists. We live in a world where social media exists and it's very accessible and a very helpful tool if you're trying to get yourself out there.

Jeff: Paul, thank you again for sharing your journey and advice.



To view more of Ground Floor Murals, visit their website gallery at GroundFloorMurals.com and follow them on IG @GroundFloorMurals.



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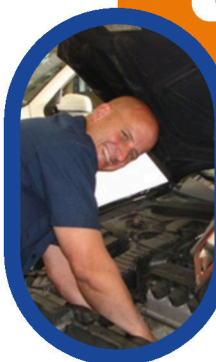
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Summer Safety Guide

What to Bring

- ☐  **Water bottle**
- ☐  **Sun hat**
- ☐  **Comfy clothes**
- ☐  **Sunscreen**
- ☐  **Towel**
- ☐  **Extra clothes**

Quick Safety Tips

-  **Drink water often**
Stay cool and hydrated.
-  **Stay with your group**
Keep a teacher or grown-up nearby.
-  **Take shade breaks**
Rest when the sun feels hot.
-  **Wash hands before eating**
Keep germs away.
-  **Tell an adult if you need help**
Speak up if you feel tired, hot, or hurt.

Water Play



Splash water where an adult can see you.

Snack & Hygiene



Wash hands before snack time.



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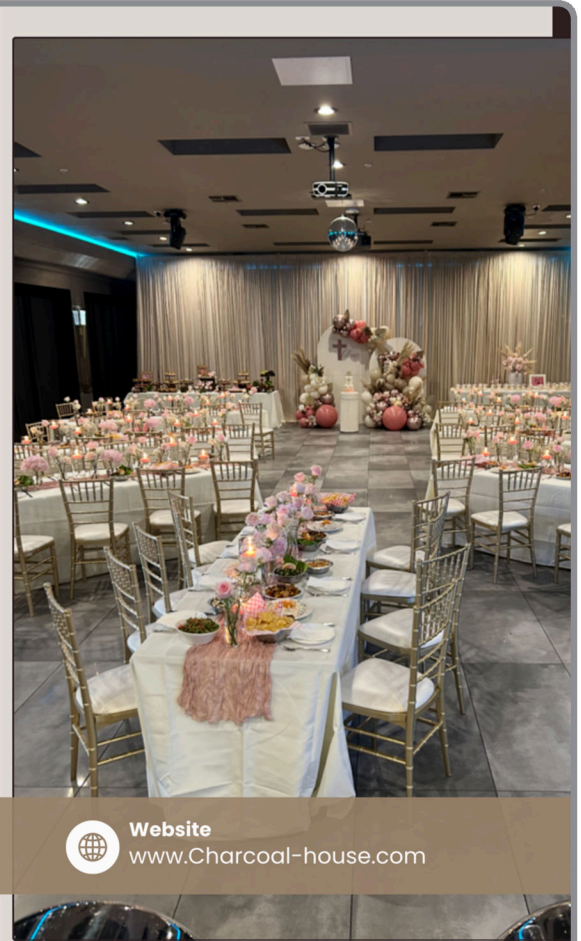
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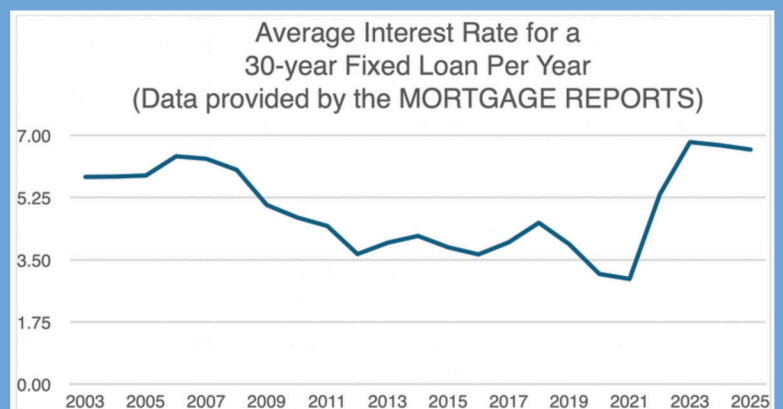
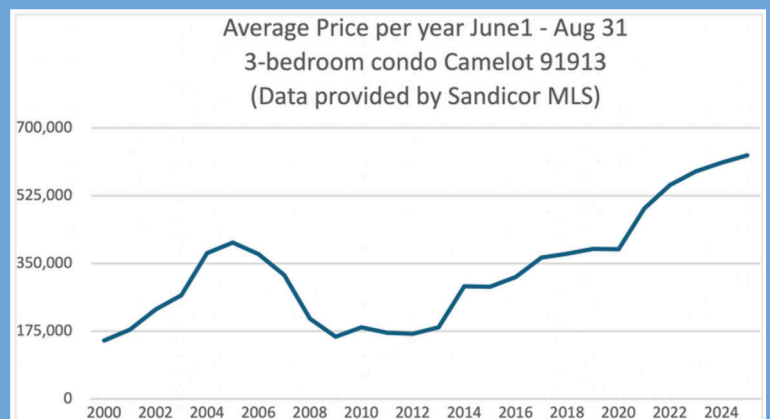


TIME FOR CONCERN?

by Jeff Bettger

By all accounts, the real estate market has been unusual during the past year. Low inventory while interest rates remaining steady in the 6% range have caused a slowdown in the number of transactions. Is this a forewarning of another significant price decrease? Let's look at some of the factors at play.

Many variables change over time, but looking at historical data can provide important insights. To compare apples to apples, the following chart shows the average summer sales price of a 3-bedroom condo in the Camelot neighborhood of Chula Vista, 91913. This development was chosen because of the large number of units with identical floor plans.



Jeff Bettger is an Associate Broker with BHGRE Clarity. DRE #01292879 He has been a Realtor for the past 25+ years serving clients buying, selling and investing in residential real estate.



INTEREST RATES

Let's consider the recent low inventory levels. One leading cause is that most sellers currently have a 2-3% mortgage. They know if they sell and buy a new home, they will be looking at a 6% mortgage. It is common for potential sellers to say that they want to wait for the interest rates to hit the 5% range. Inflation concerns have been a hinderance.



COST OF LIVING

In addition to fewer homes for sale, reduction in the buyer pool has been seen. Because of the cost of living in California, many sellers looking to downsize are now opting to move to more affordable states, such as Texas, Nevada, Oregon, etc. These are buyers who five years ago might have purchased their one-story retirement home in California.



INVESTORS

As rental rates started to climb sky high, investors saw the value in buying a property and renting it out. As the rents finally reached a point at which the typical renter could no longer afford to live in the areas that they wanted, rental prices started to stabilize and even reduce in some areas.



AFFORDABILITY

In addition to prices remaining some of the highest in the nation and interest rates not declining as hoped, many jobs have been lost. The sweeping removal of government-related jobs hit the San Diego area hard. Furthermore, many companies are now using Artificial Intelligence to replace previously highly paid employees.



GOVERNMENTAL RESTRICTIONS

These days, getting a loan is not as easy as it has been in the past. With many of the large insurance companies, such as Farmers, State Farm, etc., no longer providing property insurance in California, it becomes more expensive for a buyer to find coverage, especially if the property is in a high fire zone. Another relatively new issue is the requirement that HOA's provide certified clearance that all balconies and stairways are structurally safe. If repairs are needed, time and money can become an issue depending on the amount of reserves the HOA's are holding.



THE FUTURE?

So, what does the future hold? We've had 16 years of steady price increases, despite massive swings in interest rates. Certainly, San Diego is a wonderful place to live. Will we see more multi-generational families living together? Will Millennial's continue to live with their parents? When might world events or mother nature throw an unexpected curve ball? Will water availability limit the number of new housing developments? I've outlined some of the major factors impacting the future of real estate in San Diego. Only time will tell.