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A Monthly Community Newspaper

MARCH 2023



Photo courtesy Jordan Wu

Villa Park Mayor Robbie Pitts celebrates the Year of the Rabbit with costumed characters at the city's Lunar New Year observance, Feb. 11. See photos, page 16.

OUSD facing uncertainty under new board leadership

By Tina Richards

The abrupt resignation of Interim Superintendent Edward Velasquez, Feb. 15, amplified the uncertainty brought to the Orange Unified School District by majority members of the Board of Trustees who are reigning over change, with no explanation or clear direction.

Velasquez was hired to stand in for Superintendent Gunn Marie Hansen, fired by the board just as abruptly on Jan. 5. He was expected to stay for two months, commuting from his home in Idaho to Orange County at taxpayer expense. And just as the board offered no reason for Hansen's dismissal, Velasquez said little about his departure.

While the board seeks a permanent superintendent, day-to-day district operations will be handled by Assistant Superintendent, Business Services Dave Rivera; Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources Ernie Gonzalez; and former Canyon High School principal, recently named Assistant Superintendent, Craig Abercrombie.

Unclear on the concept

Even with Velasquez still at the helm for the board's Feb. 2 meeting, the uncertainty and confusion wrought by John Ortega, Rick Ledesma, Angie Rumsey and Madison Miner, as they set out to redefine the district, was palpable. The meeting began at 5:30 p.m. and lasted until 1:15 a.m., as public speakers took turns challenging almost every agenda item, airing grievances or praising the board majority for "bringing change to OUSD."

The confusion began almost immediately when the board convened to take public comments before its scheduled closed session meeting. President Ledesma advised the audience that only comments related to closed session items would be heard at that time. The rest would have to wait until the 7 p.m. open meeting. He explained that one item, "labor

negotiations," referred to interim Superintendent Velasquez.

Trustee Kris Erickson noted that the closed session items were "vague and confusing to the public."

Indeed, the first speaker, introducing the concept of chaos in the district, was interrupted by Ledesma, who told her she was not addressing the closed session topic, the interim superintendent. "That's exactly what I'm going to speak about," she answered. "The fact that we have a short-term person. We don't know the next step. It creates a lot of unknowns."

Read between the lines

Another speaker noted that the agenda item did not mention Velasquez by name, or that the topic even referred to the interim superintendent. "It's about transparency," he said. "Why don't you want to tell the public what you are doing? Why doesn't the agenda identify the person you're talking about?"

A subsequent public commenter, addressing the board's inability to be "upfront with your intentions" was cut off by Ledesma, who reminded him to stick to the agenda topic. "I'm not here because you're giving me answers I don't like, I'm here because you're not giving me answers at all," the speaker insisted.

Ledesma's charge that he was not on topic and the speaker's response that he was, escalated into a shouting match. Ledesma ended the argument by adjourning the public portion of the meeting and moving into closed session.

When the public meeting resumed at 7 p.m., the audience was standing room only, with dozens prepared to speak. It wasn't until 11 p.m. that the agenda item "academic audit data comparison" was heard. The project had been assigned to Velasquez as part of

See "OUSD" continued on page 2

Builders employ untested legal theory to bypass local zoning

By Tina Richards

Milan Capital, owner of the long-contested Sully-Miller property in East Orange, is one of three builders that has submitted preliminary development applications to the City of Orange, exercising untested provisions of state legislation.

Pro-growth advocates and developers throughout the state wedded an obscure 1990 law with the 2019 Housing Accountability Act (SB330), and coined it "builder's remedy." They believe it will allow developers to override local zoning ordinances, general plans and voter referendums. It theoretically gives developers free rein to build what they want as long as the municipality does not have a "substantially compliant" housing plan in place. Twenty percent of their plans, however, must be affordable housing.

Cities are required to complete a comprehensive housing plan -- "housing element" -- every eight years for California's Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD). The plan must identify future housing opportunities within a jurisdiction to meet projected population growth. The 2021-29 cycle includes specific requirements to accommodate low-income households. The process is arduous, lengthy and entails numerous iterations.

End run planning

Chapman Yorba VII, LLC and Integral Communities/TRC took advantage of the gap between HCD's notice to the city that its submitted housing element required revisions and the agency's subsequent Jan. 27 acknowledgment of those revisions. Milan Capital jumped in and filed a preliminary application on Feb. 9. It appears the developers relied on the notion that, lacking HCD's formal certification, Orange did

not have a substantially compliant housing plan and that the builder's remedy applies. None of these sites is zoned for residential, nor are they included on the city's housing element "site inventory."

Milan Capital's "Creekside Village" preliminary application consists of 200 single-family homes, with 20% classified as affordable. In an accompanying letter, Milan's attorney wrote, "The city does not currently have an adopted housing element in compliance with government code, which requires approval of any 20% low-income housing development project."

Never say never

This is Milan's third attempt to build on the property. A plan to build 395 units was denied by the city council in 2014. A 128-unit development was approved by the city council in 2019, but overruled by a voter referendum the next year.

With no approved housing tract on its horizon, Milan has used the acreage as a depository for construction waste. No records of what was dumped were kept. The resulting 40-ft.-tall dirt mounds contain contaminants (identified by the county's Local Enforcement Agency) and other unknown materials. Milan has been directed to clean it up.

No cleanup activity has been detected; Milan is now positioning 20 acres of the property for housing. The Creekside Village proposal consists of 30 3,055-sq.-ft. lots and 170 1,891-sq.-ft. lots. The dwellings will be two- to three-story. Milan says it will leave the remaining acreage as

See "Builders" continued on page 2

Hearing on construction waste dump in Orange postponed

The public hearing on the Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board's ruling on a plan to fill in a natural riparian area in Orange with construction waste has been postponed.

Originally slated for March 17, the hearing has not yet been rescheduled.

Chandler's Sand & Gravel has applied for a permit from the water board and asked it to accept a Mitigated Negative Declaration instead of a full Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

Neighbors of the site, behind the Blue Diamond Nursery on Santiago Canyon Road, just west of Cannon Street in Orange, have sent public comment letters to the water board opposing the project and demanding an EIR. So, too, have numerous nonprofits and environmental groups.

Among them, are the Center for Biological Diversity, Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks, California Native Plant Society, Naturalist for You, Orange Park Association, and Sea and Sage Audubon. All cite the project's disregard for native and endangered plants and animals, inadequate details and documentation, improper mitigation, the loss of natural open space, potential flooding and erosion, no air quality, greenhouse gas emissions or noise analysis.

Chandler has said it plans to fill the site with 1,240,000 cubic yards of dirt, via 60 truck trips per day to bring it up to street level. It has not indicated where the material will come from, or what the property will be used for when the five-year fill operation is complete.

NEWS INSIDE

The *Foothills Sentry* is returning to its roots! Only 54 years ago, kids on horseback and bicycles delivered the *Sentry* to each household. This year, due to skyrocketing postage rates, the *Sentry* -- with the Best Local News -- will be delivered to each residential driveway. Of course, it will continue to be available at libraries and civic centers, online at FoothillsSentry.com and via subscription.

ENOUGH SAID

Conversation with mall developers cut short by shrewd timing of preliminary plans filed with the city.

See Village, page 3

FROM MIGHT TO BLIGHT

Canyon oak trees are under attack by boring beetles spread by the transport of firewood.

See Canyon Beat, page 6; Oaks, page 8

RAPTURE OF THE DEEP

OUSD board majority wants to bypass needed lower school improvements for a new pool at VPHS.

See OUSD, page 7

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Letters	Page 4-5
Canyon Beat	Page 6
Service Directory	Pages 11-13
Prof. Directory	Page 13
Classifieds	Page 13
Community Sports	Page 14-15
Real Estate	Page 16

"OUSD"
continued from page 1

his contract. But no one, including the board, seemed to know what it was or what it was for.

"I've been an educator for 15 years," a speaker reported. "I've never heard of an academic audit. Why do you assume we don't want what's best for our kids?"

Is it an audit?

A fifth grade teacher questioned the necessity of an audit. "We are professionals in our fields," she said. "We plan lessons and work with the curriculum that we chose as a district. The interim superintendent has never taught in our district. You're making decisions without thought as to who will be impacted."

"You voted for something, and you don't know what it is," an OUSD parent asserted. "Your audit terrifies me." Another parent noted the agenda's "nondescript description" of an academic audit. "We're left guessing," he said. "You're looking at material that's a small, but vocal, group objects to. My daughter attends OUSD, and I don't see her being indoctrinated."

An audit supporter reported her objections to OUSD "sexualizing students and teaching social justice ideology and Marxism and that white people should abandon their born privilege." She commended the board for focusing on academics.

Trustee Andrea Yamasaki leapt into the discussion. She pointed out that the agenda did not contain a clear description of what an academic audit was, that audits were usually conducted by third parties, that this clearly wasn't an audit. She said when she asked Velasquez about it, he didn't know what it meant. She decried the lack of transparency, that calling it an "audit" was misleading to the public.

Ledesma explained that it was "an information item, the basis for the reasoning behind an audit. This is foundational." John Ortega added that the agenda "says it's an academic audit comparison. To me it's simplistic."

Or isn't it?

Velasquez attempted a clarification, saying that it wasn't a curriculum audit, but a look at other districts and how OUSD compares.

"It's clear the public has no idea what this is," Erickson pointed out.

Yamasaki added that Assistant Superintendent Cathleen Corella has been placed on administrative leave pending curriculum and education audits, "and this isn't that. What are we doing?"

"This is an ongoing process," Ledesma elaborated. "This leads into all that. It's a foundation for developing an audit plan."

"This is the beginning of a dialogue," Velasquez summarized. "Our teachers have to use this as they discuss what they're going to do for our ESL and Hispanic populations. We're below basic in those areas. And statewide, enrollment is declining. Where are the kids going? How can we get them back to Orange Unified?"

Velasquez recommended postponing the presentation until the next meeting. The board agreed to table it.

A power point presentation comparing OUSD test scores with other districts was given, without Velasquez, at a Feb. 23 special meeting.

"Builders"
continued from page 1

open space. The company claims that because its application is "ministerial," no environmental review is necessary.

Going all in

Equally bold is Chapman Yorba's preliminary application for 204 apartment units within two six-story buildings, and one three-story self-storage building. Slated for the 8.2-acre property adjacent to Santiago Creek behind Yorba, Malena and Wheeler Streets, the proposed project is larger than what the builder originally applied for last year.

At that time, the project was three stories, with 187 senior apartments. Noting that the buildings would loom over their single-story homes and backyards, and that any creekside development was unacceptable, the neighbors objected.

Seniors are no longer the targeted tenants; instead, the buildings will offer 163 market rate units and 41 low-income units. That earlier application is still active, meaning Chapman Yorba has submitted two different proposals for the same site.

Two of the three owners of the

Village At Orange, Integral and TRC, filed a preliminary application for 372 units to be built on the JC Penney's site and a portion of the mall. (See Village, page 3). The Penney's building and a vacant section of the mall will be demolished.

Not so fast

There is, however, a snag. Orange's lack of a "certified" housing element seems to be a technicality. It appears that the key to satisfying state law is a "substantially compliant" housing element, which was adopted in February 2022. An April 12, 2022 letter from HCD states that "the adopted housing element addresses most statutory requirements, however additional revisions are necessary."

The city made those revisions, which HCD accepted, and again acknowledged that "the revised draft element meets the statutory requirements." The Orange City Council formally adopted its revised housing element Feb. 14. The last step in the process is to submit the adoption resolution to the state for final approval. HCD approval, however, is not required for a housing element to be substantially compliant with state law. A city may adopt



Milan Capital submitted an application to build 200 homes on the contested Sully-Miller site in East Orange.

its own findings explaining why its housing element is compliant. If the jurisdiction is, in fact, out of compliance, HCD has the authority to retract its "substantially compliant" determination and refer the city to the state attorney general. HCD has done neither.

And there's the rub

The builder's remedy, as stated within state legislation, does not apply when, "The city or county has met or exceeded its Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA). The state determined that Orange's RHNA for the 2021-29 cycle was 3,936 units, including 1,671 very low to low-

income housing. Orange's adopted housing element exceeds those numbers. It identifies 1,121 sites as very low income; 619 sites as low income; 828, moderate income; and 1,784, above moderate income, for a total 4,352 units.

The use of the builder's remedy is a new phenomenon and has not been tested in court. If litigated, the legislation allows that "the burden of proof shall be on the local agency to show that its housing element does identify adequate sites with zoning and development standards to accommodate the agency's share of regional housing need for the very low and low-income categories."

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Village At Orange property owners short-circuit public meetings, file preliminary development plan

By Tina Richards

When Village At Orange neighbors convened for the final public meeting on the future of the mall property, Jan. 26, most were unaware that development plans had already been submitted to the city.

Integral Communities, owner of the JC Penney site, and mall owner TRC had filed preliminary plans for 297 housing units and 75 accessory dwelling units on the previous day.

The plans were submitted under an obscure clause in California's Housing Accountability Act (see Builders, page 1), which gives a builder "vested rights" if the project complies with the planning standards in place when the preliminary plan is submitted and includes 20% affordable housing.

Worth a try

The city is prohibited from applying new ordinances, policies or standards to the project thereafter.

Whether Integral/TRC's preliminary application will stand is, at this point, unknown. If challenged, the city must prove that its housing element identifies adequate sites with zoning and development standards to ac-

commodates its share of regional housing needs for low and low-income categories.

Empty words

With its preliminary development plans already filed with the city, Integral's and TRC's Jan. 26 presentations to residents were primarily recaps of what the property owners have been saying since the first public meeting last September. That is, malls are failing along with large retailers; restaurants and "daily needs" businesses (salons, dry cleaners, barber shops) attract customers if they have storefront visibility and pedestrian traffic; a residential component is essential for the future success of the mall's retail businesses; and 297 units are the minimum to make the project economically feasible.

Integral's Pete Vanek told the audience that the company's original plan for 500 apartments has been scaled down, that Integral was "listening to the community." The community was shocked, however, to learn that the planned 297 townhomes also included 75 ADUs to meet the state's affordable housing requirements. Those ADUs, bringing the unit total to

372 and requiring no additional parking, did not appear on site plans displayed at the meetings.

Doug Hamilton, president of North Tustin Street Preservation Group, noted that inadequate parking will force cars to park along Canal Street, unchecked traffic will plug up Tustin St., and the community needs a more comprehensive plan to see how everything relates, i.e., Walmart's planned expansion, housing, retail, infrastructure.

Empty debate

While some public speakers supported housing on the site, others advised that Orange needs retail/commercial outlets that generate sales tax, not housing units that cost the city more money than property taxes generate. "Once retail is gone, it's gone forever," one resident said. Another asserted that TRC "bought the mall when you knew malls were dying. Orange needs quality retail; it's a benefit to the community."

"We should not be driven by a developer," another insisted. "This is the tail wagging the dog. The mall property offers an opportunity to create a 'destination.'"

Right now, East Orange has nothing."

The consensus among the neighbors in attendance was that Doug Hamilton and son Matt are doing a good job keeping residents informed, creating a dialogue, attempting to find common ground and representing the community.


No meeting of the minds

Councilwoman Kathy Tavoularis, the meeting co-organizer with Councilwoman Ana Gutierrez, had the last word. Referring to the photos of trash, tents and piles of detritus surrounding the TRC property (shown in an earlier presentation), she said that she respected the company's property rights, "... but you have to respect Orange. It's hard to defend you. If your neighbor did that to you, you wouldn't like it. You've been here seven years, and now you want more."

Gutierrez suggested that TRC and Integral did not understand the city. "We are family here," she said. "You bought in Orange because you thought you could grow it. We are 140,000 residents who care about our city and want to see that area revitalized. We

were hoping you would come to the table with the community and have a serious conversation. We hoped you would understand that."

Nonetheless, Tavoularis told the property owners, "Your plan will get a fair hearing at the city council."



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Photos by Tony Richards

Orange Park Association board members are, from left, David Hillman, Nancy Flathers, Laura Thomas, Kate Bonnard, Kelley Chaplin, Sherry Panittaja, Jim Jackman, Cindy Reina and David Clemson.

OPA elects board officers at annual meeting

The Orange Park Association's annual membership meeting, Jan. 28, featured talks by local electeds, updates on issues of interest to the community and the election of three board members.

Board members Cindy Reina and Kate Bonnard were reelected; Dave Clemson was newly elected. Each will serve a three-year term.

Attendees were updated on the status of the Hurwitz site, the association's 26-mile trail system and OPA Women's League activities. Supervisor Don Wagner reported that the homeless count in Orange County is down by about 15%, and that federal money that "rained in" during the pandemic

is going away, but the \$1.2 billion received puts the county in a "good position."

Mayor Dan Slater assured the audience that the clean-up of the Sully-Miller site has the city's complete attention, and that it intends to look after OPA's interests.

Councilman John Gyllenhammer, representing District 6, is spending his early days on the council connecting with people and learning more about the history of the community. He plans to base his decisions on three things: does it make the city safer?, does it improve the quality of life? and is it financially solid?

Longtime OPA resident Julie

Maurer was presented with a citation recognizing the breadth and depth of her contributions to the community over the past 35 years (see OPA, page 10).



OPA Women's League President Emilia Sugiyama and Membership Vice President Carolyn Aliotta staff a table at the annual meeting.

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Guest Commentaries

OUSD wasn't broken -- but now it is

By Kathy Moffat

As a former trustee of Orange Unified School District, I'm heartbroken over the chaos forced upon our school district in a mere six weeks by the new board majority Rick Ledesma, John Ortega, Angie Rumsey and Madison Miner.

A major victory of my years of service was continual improvement in our district, thanks to outstanding teachers, support staff, and leadership and, of course, thanks to the fine students and families of our community. Under the leadership of award-winning Superintendent Dr. Gunn Marie Hansen, OUSD became a "District of Excellence," as dubbed by her predecessor, award-winning Superintendent Mike Christensen. It has lived up to that designation in so many ways.

OUSD Education Services, led by Assistant Superintendent Cathleen Corella, drew praise from the Orange County Department of Education (OCDE) for our exemplary Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP), our district's state-mandated template for student instruction. Our LCAP was held up as a model for other Orange County districts to follow.

Orange Unified's sound financial management of retiree benefits, district reserves, Measure S, and power usage has saved millions of dollars yearly for class-

rooms and taxpayers. OUSD's credit rating has been extremely high for two decades and was recently upgraded by Standard & Poor's to AA -- a credit rating few school districts can match.

Pre-COVID, when state academic testing was ongoing, OUSD schools won more than 30 California Distinguished School Awards, 23 California Gold Ribbon Awards, many state and national Model School Awards and three prestigious National Blue Ribbon School Awards.

When the pandemic hit and in-person learning was not permitted, OUSD immediately responded by providing digital devices for all students and online lessons for children as young as kindergarten.

As soon as in-class learning was allowed, OUSD implemented simultaneous distance and in-person learning, in the same class, taught by the same teacher. Parent choice determined which learning environment best suited their child and family. No other school district was able to offer that. It was a huge benefit to students and a Herculean task for teachers, but it was the best thing for our kids, so we did it.

When COVID suspended state testing, the California Department of Education (CDE) recognized outstanding efforts with California Pivotal Practice

Awards. OUSD, as a district, earned the new award, as did seven of our schools: California Inspire Academy, Santiago Charter Middle School, Anaheim Hills, Fairhaven, West Orange and Nohl Canyon Elementary Schools. All were honored for unique learning opportunities and strategies during and after distance learning.

"This accolade serves to validate the extraordinary steps our schools took to connect with and engage students during one of the most challenging years imaginable," said Orange County Superintendent Al Mijares. It was another testament to the creativity and dedication of our educators.

OUSD's comprehensive high schools appear on U.S. News and World Report's Best High Schools list and can offer even more rigor now with our new, state-of-the-art Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) centers completed through Measure S, OUSD's school improvement bond.

Our creative educators present a variety of Career Technical Education (CTE) classes for high schoolers, offering more career pathways than any other district in Orange County. These courses give students, who may or may not be college-bound, real-life educational experiences in a range of careers -- from construction trades to medicine and

aviation.

The most recent CDE dashboard shows OUSD students reaching improved levels of performance year over year on every measure tracked.

These honors and successes are not achieved by accident, but through the hard work of talented students and educators, undeterred by the global pandemic, and led by Superintendent Dr. Gunn Marie Hansen, who has been honored by fellow administrators, universities and national education organizations and was named 2022 Superintendent of the Year by the Orange County PTA.

Now, instead of an energetic, inspired, and determined cadre of educators marching together to continuous excellence, we have a school district thrust into chaos. We have a leaderless district. We have a school board majority so enthralled by its own imperiousness, and yet so clueless as to the actual impact of its actions, that it creates problems, rather than solving them.

We have an inept board majority whose knee-jerk response to a miscategorized online book was to shut down the whole online library, throwing students who relied on that resource into panic, together with their families who were powerless to fill the gap and teachers whose lessons were now

in jeopardy.

Our talented employees, once enthusiastic and positive, are now stifled and fearful -- not sure what outrageous edict will be next. Our excellent teachers and leaders, with creative genius enough to develop educational programs to meet the needs of thousands of students, are now fearful for their jobs.

Our business department is faced with the task of developing a budget that shifts hundreds of thousands in education dollars to the buyout of broken employee contracts.

We are witnessing the rapid, shameful, and wasteful destruction of a successful, living and breathing environment of excellence that OUSD worked so hard to establish.

As a member of the community whose best interests are not served by what is happening, and as a former trustee whose love and devotion to these wonderful students, families and schools will not fade, I say with all my might, *this must not continue*.

I will support every effort to end this educational tyranny and to restore OUSD to the status it's earned so well -- a District of Excellence.

Kathy Moffat served on the OUSD Board of Education from 2001-2022.

LETTERS to the EDITOR



Not so unified

Dear Editor:

Thank you to the *Foothills Sentry* for providing a much-needed forum for our community. I have two children -- 6th and 10th graders -- that have been in OUSD schools since the 1st grade. The most recent issue raises numer-

ous concerns about the OUSD Board's disregard of established procedures. For example, the OUSD Board has not provided any reason for its swift actions. One aspect that concerned me the most was that the board majority received campaign funds from a special interest group. Could there have been some type of an

agreement that the special interest group wanted to oust Superintendent Hansen? It seems that Rick Ledesma had a sudden change of heart after the most recent election. There were no concerns raised by Ledesma about Dr. Hansen's stewardship of OUSD over the last few years. In the Sept. 19, 2017, OUSD newsletter, Ledesma said, "*Dr. Hansen is extremely knowledgeable and has demonstrated great leadership as the Deputy Superintendent. During the process of identifying a superintendent search firm and interim superintendent, she has led the district and provided a valuable service to our community. The 2017-18 school year has started smoothly, and the continuity of her leadership as the Interim Superintendent will provide stability to the district students, staff and parents.*"

The board is supposed to be transparent about its decision-making process and should be following an ethical code of conduct. This OUSD Board's ears have been poisoned by special interest groups, and that is sabotaging the system that has worked so well for my children, other OUSD students, and OUSD staff over the last 10 years.

Nilay Patel
Orange

Dear Editor:

Every one of us has a story about a teacher whose caring made our child feel valuable, feel seen. Our stories could fill volumes. Now I have another story to tell about teachers, and this one is about courage.

The new narrowly elected majority on the Orange Unified School District board is doing its best to provide OUSD's kids with a 19th century education in 2023. Their tactics and policies aim to not only erase educational best practices, but bring back the "might means right" bullying cul-

ture of harsher times.

Parents, community members and teachers have all spoken out at school board meetings, decrying their shady back room tactics. But it's the teachers who take my breath away with their courage. They know that these board members have already exhibited capricious and retaliatory behavior, so they know they are risking their jobs to speak up. They aren't asking for more pay or shorter hours. They are only asking that their students don't lose access to the education they need to become well-rounded citizens and compete in our future global marketplace.

Upton Sinclair famously said, "It is difficult to get a man to understand something, when his salary depends on his not understanding it." It's probably even more difficult to speak up for what's right, when your salary probably depends on not speaking up. But that's what these teachers are doing.

Thank you to the teachers of OUSD who are putting their livelihoods on the line to protect children. They are the true heroes of this story.

Ronna Sarvas Weltman
North Tustin

Dear Editor:

As reported by the *Sentry* in December, on Nov. 17, Orange Unified School District Trustees Rick Ledesma, John Ortega and Angie Rumsey voted against the "good behavior" policy designed to ensure norms of "civil behavior" on district grounds.

Their behavior since becoming the board majority--with the election of Madison Miner--begs the question, "What norms do they value?"

They most assuredly do not value teaching and learning.

Without cause or reasonable notice, they fired the superintendent and assistant superintendent

of educational services, under circumstances that remain suspect. They hired, on a 4-2 vote, a retiree from Idaho to take the helm; suspended an online library used by both students and teachers; and ordered an as-yet-undefined academic audit.

To top it off, the Idaho retiree decided to go home after only 42 days. It seems Edward Velasquez couldn't stand the chaos either.

How can teachers teach and students learn in this climate of uncertainty and distrust?

As a retired teacher, grandparent and neighbor of OUSD students, I have an obligation to speak up. So does every OUSD resident.

Keni Brayton Cox
Anaheim Hills

Dear Editor:

At the Feb. 2 Orange Unified School District board meeting, the issue of building a new pool at Villa Park High School was on the agenda and discussed. The VPHS pool is a half-century old. It has been regularly and diligently maintained for 55 years.

Naturally, with time and sheer amount of use, there is a shelf life. Inner and underground workings have simply eroded to the point of being very nearly unfixable. Decisions about next steps, ideally made in advance of it becoming unusable, are facing the district.

It's a shame Trustee John Ortega inserted himself into the situation, making it political by promising a new pool in exchange for votes for Rick Ledesma, Madison Miner and Tim SurrIDGE during their slate's campaign for school board. He simply cannot go about business ethically and avoid placing a stink of corruption on everything he touches, including, now, the pool.

The VPHS aquatics program is the most successful in the district, and, at one point, the most successful athletics program at VPHS.

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Gary Johnson

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982 N. Batavia # B13, Orange, CA 92867

gary@johnsonmotorcars.com

I sincerely wish, as a VP aquatics family, that Ortega might have opted to avoid the politicking and let the strength of the program and condition of the pool speak for themselves. Understanding and respecting that years of effort from over 1,500 district stakeholders went into the Master Facilities Plan, and that the plan places other dire needs ahead of high school pools, we are nonetheless about to lose the pool. The need is there and, arguably, the need is urgent.

It's yet another blight on the process that the board must make critical decisions amidst the current chaos that the Ledesma-led board majority has created, and which Ortega made tit-for-tat deals to help achieve.

Stacey Kirschner Meis
Orange

Dear Editor:

After reading the December 2022 article on OUSD, I became concerned. The story neglected to tell us the reasons why the parents were so angry at the fall 2021 meeting.

Transparency is important. Parents are pulling their children from Orange schools. Why? All over the United States, there are those who are trying to infiltrate public schools with sex education starting in pre-kindergarten and up. Is this why parents are angry? Taking away our children's innocence at such an early age is truly sad. I'm hoping our young students' innocence will be protected, always. I am confident our newly elected board members will not allow this to happen in our schools. They will make sure the focus is on reading, writing and math. They will always be respectful of all parents' rights and

freedom of speech.

In closing, let me say, I am extremely pleased with the election of Madison Miner to the OUSD board. How her four children and all children in our Orange schools are taught is absolutely critical in raising intelligent, moral United States citizens who prize their freedoms.

Patricia Detterich
Orange

What's next

Dear Editor:

The Orange Unified School District Board (OUSD) is clearly implementing a new agenda.

Is the sale of the former Peralta site at Meats Avenue and Cambridge Street back on the radar? Several OUSD trustees who opposed the sale in the past are no longer on the school board. It is anticipated that the new majority may move to sell or lease the former Peralta School property.

History may repeat itself. In 2013, the school board proposed to sell/lease Peralta to a developer for high-density multi-story housing. This proposal was met with fierce opposition from the "Save Peralta" group of concerned residents. Opposition arose due to the community's desire not to sell the property and an express need for future school sites. In addition, residents recognized Peralta as an essential facility for the recreational needs of the students in the district.

The debate regarding a need for future school sites was well before the state-mandated 6th Cycle Housing Element Update. It requires the production of 4,000 additional dwelling units in Orange. It is likely that more high-density housing developments are in our future.

City officials currently state the zoning on the former Peralta School site should be changed to Public Institution (PI), as the current zoning is inconsistent with the General Plan. It is zoned for R-1-8 residential housing with a minimum 8,000-sq.-ft. lot. Residents do not support a zoning change to PI without limitations on how the former Peralta site will be used in the future.

To better explain the concerns about PI zoning, we turn to Orange Zoning Code Chapter 17.24, which addresses the proper use of the Public Institution zone. It states, "The Public Institution district is established to accommodate a wide range of public and quasi-public uses which, by their very nature, need special consideration to ensure compatibility with surrounding development." Please note the emphasis on "compatibility."

The zoning code goes on to state, "A Public Institution district may also accommodate housing and privately operated office activity that is functionally related to a public and quasi-public use. This district is further intended to be applied only to property clearly intended for such public and quasi-public uses."

Without restrictions, Chapman University could exploit the PI zoning and create high-density multi-story student housing. Neighbors are concerned about the well-deserved bad reputation earned by some Chapman students regarding housing.

To reiterate, "compatibility" is the issue and neighbors do not believe student housing is compatible with the surrounding neighborhoods.

Peralta impacts the entire

city, and, therefore, any zoning change needs to be done within the framework of updating the General Plan. The General Plan guides city development and determines what Orange will become during the next 10 years.

Peralta site decisions should be done with significant community outreach efforts and valuable input from the residents. Both the OUSD Board and Orange City Council have an important opportunity to make positive change with decades-long impacts.

For information on this topic and our 7 Recommendations Plan for the North Tustin Street Corridor, email northtustinstreetgroup@gmail.com.

Michael Fischer
North Tustin Street
Preservation Group
Orange

Village venture

Dear Editor:

Integrating residential with retail is critical to revitalizing the Village At Orange.

We can all agree the Village At Orange has seen better days. Powerful market forces, such as the rise of online shopping, have left it a relic of a by-gone era.

Integral Communities, in collaboration with TRC, proposes replacing the vacant JC Penney building and surrounding parking lot, and the largely empty interior mall building with a mixed-use community of 297 for-sale, market-rate townhomes that will be integrated with existing retail offerings, as well as future plans for a dining and daily needs marketplace.

The exterior tenant spaces facing Tustin Street – such as Sprouts, HomeGoods, Trader Joe's, etc. – will remain, and more experiential retail and dining offerings added.

As proposed, the townhomes will each have a two-car garage, and the community will feature HOA-maintained amenities, such as a recreation center, pool, green spaces and publicly accessible community park.

The marriage of new residential communities with new and existing retail is happening at malls all across Orange County. The Laguna Hills Mall, Westminster Mall, Brea Mall, MainPlace in Santa Ana are all planning for, or are, in the development phase of major redevelopment initiatives designed to position them as exciting, relevant centers where people will live, work, play, dine and shop.

Like the highly creative, experienced retail property owners and residential development companies that are investing their experience and capital to revitalize these aging malls, Integral Communities and TRC are committed to their revitalization plan for the Village At Orange.

With the community's support, the Village At Orange will re-emerge as a dining and daily needs marketplace that contributes to the long-term housing and economic development objectives of the City of Orange.

We encourage residents to find out more by visiting our "Village at Orange Revitalization" page on Nextdoor and our site VillageatOrangeRevitalization.com for more information and updates.

Peter Vanek, vice president
Forward Planning for Integral Communities, owner of the JC Penney portion of the Village at Orange.

Dear Editor:

My wife and I have called Orange home for many, many years, in a neighborhood not far from the Orange Mall [Village At Orange]. Let's face facts: the mall is dying and not coming back in its present form.

Almost every other mall in the county is incorporating residential into their long-term survival strategies. They're moving in this direction because they've studied the trends and know the market.

The Village at Orange property owners want to build a reasonable number of for-sale, two- and three-story townhomes that are attractive and well-designed. Compare that to plans to redevelop the Laguna Hills Mall with dense, multi-story apartment buildings or plans to demolish the Sears at the Brea Mall and replace it with 380 apartments. I prefer for-sale homes to apartments.

Furthermore, property owners have rights. Do we want an empty shell of a mall, surrounded by a sea of empty parking spaces that attract transients and other elements of blight? Ironically, those fighting this proposal are just making it more likely that any mall redevelopment will be bigger and more dense.

All those empty spaces aren't generating tax revenues for the city. New homes bring in property taxes, and the retail they'll attract will boost sales tax.

Change is hard. The mall has been a part of Orange for decades, and we all have memories and connections to it. No plan is perfect, but the development proposal from the property owners is a reasonable one and a great improvement on the status quo.

Adalberto Lopez
Orange

Dear Editor:

It's in our interest as Orange residents for the Village at Orange to succeed. The stores on the exterior like Sprouts and HomeGoods seem to be doing well. But if you go inside the mall, it's turning into a ghost town. Every year, there are fewer tenants inside.

I believe the proposal put forward by Integral Communities and TRC is a solid plan for turning the mall around and improving the area. It seems that the city will benefit from property and sales tax revenue.

The townhomes and the community look well-designed, and I appreciate that they're for-sale, market-rate town homes. There's a need for starter homes, but it also seems that they are designed in a way that will not bring down the value of surrounding homes.

And quite frankly, the alternative is the mall continuing its slow death. The property owners have investors they're responsible to. They're going to develop something. I'd prefer for-sale townhomes that will bring in new families, and help attract newer, better tenants that we can all enjoy.

If just filling the mall with new or different tenants was going to be a better option, it would have happened already.

I understand the apprehension being expressed by some residents. It's tempting to hope the mall can somehow be revived as a retail shopping center, but that's wishful thinking. The most likely negative impacts facing us are blight from the continued decline of the mall.

Jon Oskorus
Orange

Too close for comfort

Dear Editor:

I am among the many concerned parents of students at Oakridge Private School. It has come to our attention that there are plans to replace a block of open green space very close to our campus, with a dumping ground for construction debris.

Apparently a waiver was granted for the usual Environmental Impact Report that the State of California requires. This seems not only strange, but simply wrong in a situation where the environmental impact directly involves young children.

We owe it to our children to provide the best, safest conditions for their educational environment. The pandemic took a heavy toll on young students, so anything we can do to help them make up the lost ground matters.

I, and the other parents, are hoping to convince our elected representatives to hit the brakes on this project before it has a negative impact.

Priya Shah
Oakridge parent

Dear Editor:

I am the proud parent of a student at Oakridge School. I have just learned that there are plans to create an "inert dump" just across the street from the school. While I believe the developer should have informed the school and its student family first, I was relieved to see that we can still have a say about this project and whether or not it should be approved.

Among the many concerns I have, is the inevitable environmental effects on our wonderful campus. Dust, fumes, who knows what will be moving past the campus pretty much constantly. Has no one considered the effect on the children as well as the adults in the Oakridge community? After the difficulties we dealt with through the worst of the pandemic, it seems an unnecessary risk to the health of the children, the teachers, staff and parents.

As it is part of our community, it seems that we need to have the opportunity to, at the very least, ask questions of our elected officials as to what our options are. And it should be of interest to our local media as well.

Ashton Morris
Orange

Dear Editor:

My children attend Oakridge School in Orange. Our family put a lot of thought into the decision to choose Oakridge and have never regretted our choice. The 220 students are a wonderful cross-section of Orange County families, and it is an all-around excellent school.

But we are very concerned, and unpleasantly surprised, to learn of plans to build a construction waste dump less than 50 feet from the school grounds. Our concerns are many, not the least of which is the disruption to the education process by the many large, loud diesel trucks that will be accessing the facility while school is in session. This is a major health and safety concern for our students and faculty.

We would like to see an effort made to locate an alternative site for the facility that would not encroach on an excellent school and its operation.

Noelle Carden
Oakridge parent

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Publisher/Editor
Anita Bennyhoff
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Editor
Tina Richards
editor@foothillssentry.com

Sports Editor
Cliff Robbins
sportseeditor@att.net

Graphic Designer
Stephanie Gundran
graphics@foothillssentry.com

Advertising Sales
Andie Mills
advertising@foothillssentry.com
714-926-9299

Office Manager
Kathy Eidson
officemanager@foothillssentry.com

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I think that I shall never see...

... another oak.

That's what could happen if nothing is done about the goldspotted oak borers (GSOBs) now in our canyons.

We never used to hear about these beetles because they weren't here. Goldspotted oak borers (full non-scientific name: G*#?%& SOB) are not a problem in their native Arizona, but after surfacing near San Diego in the 1990s, they are now estimated to have killed over 80,000 Southern California oaks.

Last year, the Orange County Fire Authority (OCFA) led an effort to identify and destroy GSOB infestations in the canyons. But,

currently, there is no money to continue work at that level because OCFA is too busy with GSOB problems elsewhere in the county, according to Mike Boeck of Silverado. Speaking at the Feb. 7 meeting of the Inter-Canyon League (ICL), Boeck said that local residents now need to learn how to spot suspected GSOB evidence for themselves.

One sign of GSOB is small D-shaped exit holes in oak bark. Boeck provided credit card-size GSOB identification aids to meeting attendees. These sport photos of the small, dark beetles and their white caterpillar-like larvae (which do the actual damage),

plus a sample D-shaped hole in the card, all actual size.

Borers are typically spread here, unknowingly, as larvae in firewood, so it's best to avoid buying or transporting oak firewood. Eucalyptus and other wood is OK. If you already have suspect wood, burn or chip it as soon as possible.

Many firewood vendors may not be aware of the problem. Ideas floated at the ICL meeting for increasing public awareness included outdoor signs, informational mailers and community meetings.

In addition to GSOB information from the University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) at gsob.org, a video of UCCE's Dr. Beatriz Nobua-Behrmann discussing GSOBs at the December 6, 2022 ICL meeting is available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=me1HUyLX5uU.

Paintmobile

On Thursday, Feb. 9, an OC Public Libraries van pulled into the Silverado Community Center to deliver art lessons. Wait, what?

Yes, they also had books. But as part of a broader community resource mission, Linda Lomeli and Karina Millan provided instruction for an easy painting project, along with conversation and library information.

The Mobile Library program began in 2021 in order to provide Wi-Fi service to people stuck at home during the COVID-19 pandemic. People could also check out tablets. And then people asked where the books were, so now the Mobile Library carries those, along with DVDs, portable

Wi-Fi hotspots, and park passes that can be reserved using a library card. The van visits parks, senior centers, and other locations, from Brea to San Clemente, where people might not have easy access to a library building. It will visit Silverado the second Thursday of each month in 2023, probably with art every other month.

Meanwhile, over on Santiago Canyon Road, new Library of the Canyons Branch Manager Marisa Saam says that the crafts, games, and other programs offered there in February will continue in March. Books are still important, but she characterized OC public libraries as a community resource that can vary with the community. Some branches provide space for people to practice speaking English. Saam believes that besides providing a place for children to play, the canyon library also serves as a meeting place for adults.

Slam dunk

When California sycamore trees drop their leaves in winter, the clumps of green still left on a few branches are mistletoe, a native semi-parasitic plant that gets some nourishment from its host.

Mistletoe has been the official "floral emblem" of Oklahoma since before that was a state, honored for being the only source of greenery to decorate graves of settlers who perished in the winter following the 1889 land rush.

There are actually two kinds of mistletoe in our canyons: the kind that grows on oaks, and the kind that doesn't. Scientists do not recognize the kind that hangs around basketball courts as a separate

species, but it clearly wants to be included in games.

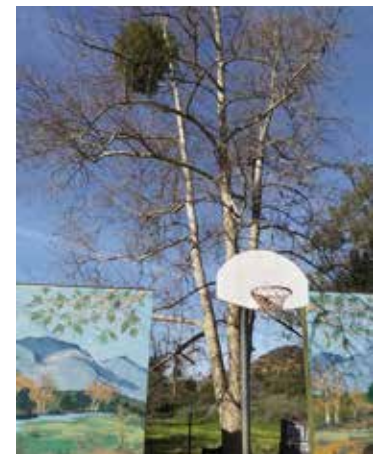
"Feed me! I'm open!" it implores hustling hoopsters scurrying below. "Pass! I can sink it easy!"

"No way!" respond the recreational roundballers. "You're out of bounds."

"Am not!" argues Big Toe. "I'm not touching the ground!" Which is true: its roots only go part way into the tree.

Unmentioned, though, is the potential problem if the plant were to actually grow over the court. Tradition would require any two basketball players who encounter each other under the mistletoe to kiss. Naturally, that would corrupt the morals of any youth observing or participating in such behavior, but more importantly, IT WOULD SLOW THE GAME DOWN.

Above all else, basketball abhors becoming like that other B-ball "sport" that consists mainly of a dozen or so people standing around in a park waiting for something to happen.



Parasitic mistletoe

MAYOR DAN SLATER

Happy St Patrick's Day!

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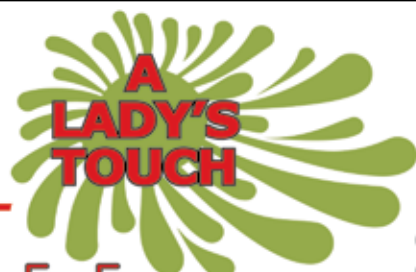


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South Coast College named finalist

South Coast College, an Orange-based institution that offers classes for court reporter, medical assistant and paralegal careers, was named a 2022 finalist for the Better Business Bureau Serving the Pacific Southwest Torch Awards for Ethics.

The award signifies the school's commitment to ethics and trust, its authentic culture, integrity and positive impact in the community. The college offers certificates in court reporting and medical assistant, and a paralegal Associate of Arts degree. Financial aid information is available. For information about the school and its programs, see southcoastcollege.edu. The college is located at 2011 W. Chapman in Orange.

New windows give rise to post 132 open house



New windows have spruced up the American Legion Post building.

American Legion Post 132 will host an open house, Sunday, March 26, from 1-5 p.m. to celebrate the installation of new windows in its nearly 100-year-old building. The new windows, at a cost of \$100,000, are described as the single most expensive project the Post has ever undertaken.

The open house is free to the public, and will feature snacks, drinks, music and tours. There will also be information booths about the four branches of the American Legion: Legionnaires, Auxiliary, Riders and Sons.

The Post is located at 143 S. Lemon St. in Orange.



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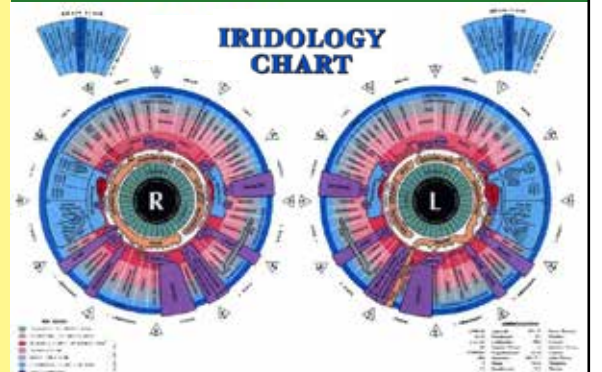
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Old Town Tustin

OUSD board members advocate for new pool at VPHS

By Tina Richards

The Orange Unified School Board, encouraged by President Rick Ledesma and Trustee John Ortega, is considering construction of a 51-m. swimming pool at Villa Park High School.

The urgency, they said at the Feb. 5 meeting, is because just as the El Modena pool failed suddenly five years ago, the Villa Park pool is likely to fail in the same way. It took four years to replace the El Modena pool, and neither Ledesma nor Ortega want to see that happen again.

"ElMo was a catastrophic failure," Ledesma recalled. "When the board took action at ElMo, Villa Park helped out. ElMo swimmers went there. This is another ElMo. If the Villa Park pool dies, this board has to take action. We have to study this and prepare."

Cynical members of the public, however, question moving a pool for VPHS to the top of the district's major projects list and ignoring the promises made to

the community during the Measure S bond campaign that the next round of money would be spent on elementary and middle schools.

Deep water

As one public speaker pointed out, Ortega was (and still may be) on the board of the ORCA swim club. ORCA uses the Villa Park High pool. During the November election, ORCA urged its members to campaign and vote for Ledesma and Madison Miner.

The speaker read from an email ORCA had reportedly sent to 1,100 parents advising that "the condition of our home pool (VPHS) will be up for discussion and a vote in the near future. If we want a state-of-the-art facility to replace the VPHS pool, these candidates (Ledesma, Miner) plus John Ortega, are our best bet."

Ortega, the speaker advised, along with ORCA, "bought votes" with the promise of a new 51-m. pool. As a nonprofit, she

added, ORCA can't participate in political campaigns. "Emails like this are illegal and John knows this. You're trading away my tax dollars for back room deal."

The 30-m. El Modena pool, built on the same footprint as the failed pool, cost \$7,962,595. That included such extras as an equipment room, locker room and restrooms. According to Assistant Superintendent of Business Services Dave Rivera, a 51-m. pool, if bid today, would cost about \$16,375,000, including facilities and soft costs. But it isn't being bid today. Rivera told the board that going through the definition, approval and state review process could take 18 to 24 months. By that time, inflation could boost the cost to \$18 to \$19 million.

Bare bones budget

Asked what district funds were available for such a project, Rivera said \$30,549,752, which includes \$2 million for the already-promised Orange High

Little Theater. That \$30 million is meant to cover all major facilities improvements.

"It would be great for Villa Park to have a pool," Trustee Andrea Yamasaki said, but she had concerns about transparency and campaign issues. "Is John Ortega on the board of ORCA? Did you promise them a pool? We told the community we'd divert non-Measure S funds to lower schools. Have you been to West Orange or Olive? They need a lot of work. We've put a lot of money into high schools. We need to put money into schools that serve the Latino community. How does this fit into our priorities at the moment?"

"The information provided by the public is false," John Ortega countered. "Yes, I participate in organizations with my kids. Stop telling lies. ElMo was a highly political pool. We could have built two pools in the time it took. I'm not going to get into the politics of inflation, but the pool will

cost less than what's being estimated here."

There was a plan

Ana Page brought up the Facilities Master Plan. "Are we ignoring it?" she asked. "There were five other things ahead of this. Elementary schools need things, they need classrooms."

"I'm concerned about the process," Kris Erickson remarked. "Seems to be a done deal. That's the way we do business now, but we created a Facilities Master Plan, spent hundreds of thousands of dollars over two years. There were 10 official meetings. It identified needs for the whole district. We unanimously adopted it. We must be careful that we're balancing needs, not doing pet projects."

The board ultimately agreed to have all three high school pools inspected and get cost estimates. A suggestion that a single pool be constructed on the Peralta site for all to use was dismissed.

Elks host appreciation dinner for Orange public servants

By Bill Neessen

One of the best events the Orange Elks Lodge 1475 holds each year is the Law Enforcement & Firefighter Appreciation Dinner.

At this event, the Orange Elks show their appreciation to those who risk their lives protecting our city and making it a better and safer place to live.

This year's Appreciation Dinner recognized both 2021 and 2022 police and fire personnel.

Elks Co-chairmen Janine Strom and Jennifer Weerheim organized volunteers to set up the room, prepare and serve the dinner. Boy and Girl Scout Troop 1475 presented the colors and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Orange Mayor and Orange Elks member Dan Slater welcomed the group and introduced members of the city council; former Orange Police Chief, current interim City Manager and Elk Tom Kisela presented the keynote address.

Chief of Police Dan Adams presented awards for Police Officer and Detective of the Year; Orange Fire Chief Sean deMetropolis presented awards to members of the fire department.

Each year at the Elks Grand Lodge Convention, the Enrique Camarena Award is presented. Enrique S. "Kiki" Camarena was an 11-year veteran DEA agent who was kidnapped, tortured and then murdered in Mexico in 1985.

The award is given to an officer who has made a significant contribution in drug prevention and personifies Enrique's belief that one person can make a difference.

This year, Investigator Nykolo Gonzalez, 2021, and Orange County Investigator Kevin Ruiz, 2022, were given the award.



From left, Miss Orange Madeleine Chocholaty; Officer Robert Sanko; Officer Nick Tiano; Officer Ashley Christy; Detective Leslie Franco; Officer Maurice King; Chief Dan Adams; and Elk Janine Weerheim.



Left to right, Miss Orange Madeleine Chocholaty; Eileen Ruvalcaba, Fire Reserve of the Year, Elk and Orange Fire Chief Sean deMetropolis; Cole Ingle, Firefighter of the Year 2021; Robert Collins, Fire Cadet of the Year 2021; Blake Kasler, Fire Cadet of the Year 2022; Matt Nelson, Firefighter of the Year 2022; and Elk Janine Weerheim.



Left to right, Miss Orange Madeleine Chocholaty; Kevin Ruiz; Shannon Back, OC District Attorney; John McEntire, California Hawaii Drug Awareness Chairman; Mike Cash, Orange Elks Drug Awareness Chair, and Janine Weerheim.



American Legion Post 132 in Old Towne Orange welcomed National Vice Commander Doug Uhrig, left, and Dan Seehafer, candidate for National Command, right. They were given a tour by Post 132 Commander Victor de la Rosa (center).

Dems offer program on the politics of health care

The Central Orange County Democratic Club (COCDC) will present a program on Planned Parenthood and the politics of providing reproductive health-care, protecting access to affordable and compassionate care, and protecting women's rights to choose on Wednesday, March 22 at 7 p.m. COCDC includes Tustin, Tustin Hills, Orange, Villa Park, and surrounding communities.

COCDC meetings are held on

the fourth Wednesday of each month at 7 p.m. at St. Paul's Episcopal Church at 1221 Wass St. in Tustin. COCDC is not affiliated with St. Paul's.

Anyone wanting to connect with fellow Democrats, get informed, help increase community involvement in civic engagement, and hobnob with an affable group of people, is welcome to join the Central Orange County Democratic Club. Inquiries can be sent to CentralOCDems@gmail.com.

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Orange Plaza

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Orange City Council will meet twice each month, beginning in March. The council meetings are slated for Tues., Mar. 14 and March 28 at 6 p.m.

Amazing places in the Canyons featured in self-guided tour



St. Michael's Abbey

home, 29042 Modjeska Canyon Road. Guided tours of the Abbey will be available throughout the day, no reservations required.

St. Michael's Abbey is home to some 80 priests and seminarians, and houses a "must-see" cathedral and library. Vera's Sanctuary, perched on a mountain top, consists of five homes for abused teens. Madame Modjeska's estate is a step back in time, featuring period furnishings and gardens.

Immediately above the Modjeska home is "Islandia." Rumored to be one of Madam Modjeska's guest cabins, it is now a tropical residence with a touch of Jurassic Park, including dinosaurs, dragons, a treehouse and historic Asian art.

The public is invited to visit the Amazing Places of the Canyon via a self-guided tour, on Saturday, April 1.

Stops include St. Michael's Abbey in Silverado Canyon, Vera's Sanctuary in Trabuco Canyon and Madame Modjeska's Historic "Arden," the Tucker Wildlife Sanctuary, the dome home and the "Islandia" home in Modjeska Canyon. The tour is open from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Maps can be picked up at the Madame Modjeska

The dome home, built completely of concrete and inured to fire, flood and earthquakes, is down the road. Tucker Wildlife Center, at the end of Modjeska Canyon, has recently been redone and is rife with nature trails, exhibits and animal habitats.

The Amazing Places Tour is the brainchild of Greg Killingsworth, a Modjeska resident who created the Islandia home and is active in the community. Call him at (310) 995-0976 for more information.

Canyon oaks threatened by invasive beetles



By Mike Boeck

Orange County is now experiencing an invasion of Gold Spotted Oak Borers (GSOBs), who weaken and kill our beautiful coast live oaks. The Orange County Fire Authority and Cal Fire have a countywide program targeting these beetles (no, not THOSE Beetles!) and eastern OC has multiple "hot spots" that we are currently addressing. This is serious stuff: in San Diego County alone, roughly 75,000 acres have been infested by the GSOBs. Researchers estimate at least 100,000 oaks have died, and possibly as many as one million.

What can we do? First and foremost, we need to halt the purchase and/or movement of oak firewood. GSOBs spread slowly in their natural state, as they are poor flyers. However, the inadvertent movement of infested

firewood has resulted in them now being distributed to Silverado, Modjeska and Trabuco Canyons. Not only that, but there is a large infestation at the Anaheim Hills Golf Course, and the OCFA is dealing with 12 major infested areas countywide. The Irvine Ranch Conservancy (IRC) has been removing dead oaks killed by GSOBs and treating minor infestations by spraying/injecting affected oaks in Weir Canyon, close to Orange Park Acres.

As Fire Safe Council East Orange County Canyons project manager, I have been surveying the canyons for GSOBs in collaboration with the University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) based in Irvine. Cal Fire is funding this effort with a grant administered by the OCFA. Beatriz Nobua-Behrmann of the UCCE is in charge of the surveys and can be reached at benobua@ucanredu. RPW Services is a local licensed applicator of pesticides, approved by the OCFA. For more info and an appraisal appointment, call their office at (714) 870-6352 and ask for Chris Burke.

We can fight the spread of this bug only if we heed warnings to stop moving oak firewood, and if we inspect and properly treat affected oaks. Don't let your oaks die!



The families are proud to announce the marriage of Alexandra Gabrielle Guerrero, daughter of Tanya Owed, and Russell Joseph Barrios Lochrie, son of Brian Lochrie and Arianna Barrios. The couple were wed on Feb. 18, at the Chapel of Orange.

TAWC announces Young Women of the Month



Kayla Kashima



Alyssa Voorhis



Kitty Pham

The Tustin Area Woman's Club named Kayla Kashima, Alyssa Voorhis and Jessica Sanchez its Young Women of the Month for February. Kitty Pham was honored for January.

Kayla Kashima, from Foothill High, is a triathlete, and competes in swimming, cross country and cycling. She recently represented Team USA at the 2022 Triathlon World Championships in Montreal. She earned the Girl Scout Gold Award, and volunteers at the Pretend City Children's Museum. Kashima is an International Baccalaureate candidate, and a member of the California Scholarship Federation and National Honor Society. She plans to attend a

four-year university studying public health or journalism.

Tustin High's Alyssa Voorhis has been on the Superintendent's Honor Roll for the past four years, maintaining a 4.6 GPA. She was the vice president of THS's National Honor Society and has received the State Seal for Bilitieracy. She lettered in volleyball and is currently the Women's Volleyball Team Captain. Voorhis is a three-year member of the Model United Nations Program and serves on the High Secretariat Board. She volunteers for the TIDES beach cleanup and NEGU Club, raising money to promote awareness of pediatric cancer. She plans to attend a

four-year university majoring in biology.

January's honoree, Kitty Pham, also from Foothill High, is an International Baccalaureate candidate. She participates on the marketing team for Knights for Knowledge, a peer tutoring program, and tutors students in English, Spanish and other foreign languages. Pham serves as historian of the FHS Key Club, and is a Homework Helper at the Orange Public Library. She is an accomplished pianist and plans to achieve the last and highest level of recognition in the Certificate of Merit program.

Jessica Sanchez, Beckman High, is not pictured.

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Cascading water is a little known feature of Santiago Creek.

Orange council committees will sharpen city's focus

Orange Mayor Dan Slater recommended that the city council create two new committees to focus on issues important to constituents.

The Santiago Creek Grand Central Park Preservation and Protection Committee will, as Slater outlined it, pay attention to this "amazing" asset. Santiago Creek runs from the city's northeast border to its southwest border at Hart Park. The committee will look for opportunities to acquire properties along the creek and make recreational space for citizens.

Approved by the council in a 7-0 vote, the committee consists of Ana Gutierrez (District 5) and John Gyllenhammer (District 6), as their districts include the creek. They will likely expand the committee to include knowledgeable residents. Slater has also allowed that the name of the group can be changed.

The Clean Orange Committee will concentrate on code enforcement, illegal signage, street vendors and unruly Chapman students, e.g., anyone and anything that compromises the quality of life in Orange. Also approved 7-1, the committee includes Arianna Barrios (District 1) and Kathy Tavoularis (District 3).

The Homeless Outreach committee, established previously, is looking for a site (vacant land, industrial building) to serve as a temporary shelter for the homeless. Slater reports that a faith-based group wants to help, as does U.S. Representative Young Kim. The Orange Police Department HEART team is on board. Funding will be sought from County Supervisor Vicente Sarmiento, who represents most of Orange.

Homeless Outreach committee members are Jon Dumitru (District 2) and Denis Bilodeau (District 4).

Nature Center to be renamed in honor of founder

In commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the El Modena High School Nature Center at El Modena High School, the OUSD Board of Trustees voted unanimously, Feb. 2, to rename the center the "Jeanne Carter Nature Center" in honor of its founder.

ElMo High chemistry teacher Jeanne Carter established the Nature Center in 1972, and has dedicated herself to its growth, maintenance and use as part of the high school curriculum and as a community resource. The Nature Center is dedicated to teaching water conservation, ecological principles and research techniques to students and community members.

Today, the Nature Center continues to provide a significant hands-on learning science environment for students and community members. The Center occupies approximately one acre; a large pond was dug in 1975, and a 200-foot stream with wetland areas added. Over 45 Boy Scout Eagle projects and Girl Scout Gold Awards have transformed the gardens through the years, such that the Center now includes over 100 different native California plants.

The Nature Center has served and educated over 50,000 students through high school student-led tours developed by Carter. She continues to build strong part-



Jeanne Carter

nerships with such community organizations as the Orange Rotary Club, Love Orange, Circle K (Kiwani) from California State University, Fullerton and the Boy Scouts to support the flourishing Nature Center.

On June 2, 2022, the Board of Education issued a proclamation for the El Modena High School Nature Center's 50th Anniversary, acknowledging Ms. Carter and her significant role in developing and maintaining the Nature Center. Her active participation continues, even though she has been retired from full-time teaching since 2001.

The naming ceremony is slated to take place in March.

Bernard Smith celebrates a century



Bernie Smith with his great-grandson, Colton Fearn, enjoying ice cream, a family favorite.

Bernie Smith was born Feb. 25, 1923 on his family's farm in Charlotte Courthouse, Virginia. He was the fifth of eight children, five boys, and three girls. He attended Randolph Henry High School where he played on both the baseball and basketball teams. Shortly after graduation, Smith enlisted in the army during World War II where he served as a medic in the CBI theater (China-Burma-India), until 1945.

After he returned home, he courted and married Clara Hall before starting college at the University of Richmond, which later established an award for excellence in his name at its Business School in 1995. He began a career with a pharmaceutical firm that ultimately became a part of Pfizer. He worked there for over

45 years, moving across the country with each promotion, to Villa Park in 1974, where they lived even after his retirement in 1990.

Clara passed away in 2016 after almost 70 years of marriage. When asked the secret of his longevity, he responded "keeping a positive attitude, and having a close and loving family".



Bernie and Clara in 1947

Esplanade Elementary reveals library surprise



The surprise vending machine was revealed at an assembly with Kassie Bravo as the fun dinosaur, Hana Ahmed as the Esplanade Eagle, inaugural user Devi Campos and Librarian Beth Cipres.

Beth Cipres, Esplanade Elementary School librarian, works hard to interest the 330 students in reading, as a number of the students in the Title I school are from disadvantaged homes.

When she saw a full-sized vending machine for books, she knew the novelty of the machine would intrigue the kids -- especially since the vending machine

would allow them to select a book that they could keep as their own.

Thanks to a \$2,500 grant from the Kiwanis, school funds and other sources, the vending machine was delivered to the library, where it sat wrapped and hidden, tantalizing the students. There were many guesses as to what the big box-like thing might be, but only one student, second grader

Oscar Moreno, guessed correctly. After the big reveal to the school, Feb. 9, fourth grader Devi Campos was the first to select a book from the machine, followed by Oscar.

Tokens -- not money -- for the vending machine will be earned via the school incentive program which rewards good behavior and from school reading challenges.

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Orange Park Association honors Julie Maurer

Orange Park Association surprised Julie Maurer, a tireless community volunteer for the last 35 years, with a special recognition at the Jan. 28 annual meeting.

Maurer has been an integral part of the OPA Trails Committee from its inception in the 1980s. She coordinates and brings together countless groups to work on trail improvements and maintenance, operate heavy equipment, recruit volunteers, and do general community cleanup. With OPA's David Hillman, she co-created the OPA Adopt-a-Trail program to promote volunteerism for trail projects.

She maintains relationships with local parks for sustainability, trail growth and connections to OPA's 25-mile trail system. She is currently working to develop the Colt Trail, which will complete the 10-mile East Orange Loop segment.

A recipient of the Gary Bandy Memorial Trophy for "Outstanding Devotion and Effort in Pre-

serving and Maintaining OPA Trails and Equestrian Facilities" almost 30 years ago, Maurer continues to demonstrate that devotion every day.

Recently, she has been instrumental in the revitalization of the OPA Women's League.

She has never hesitated to walk neighborhoods to inform residents of local issues, support petitioning efforts and, most recently, to support the election of Mayor Dan Slater.

In addition to a celebratory plaque given to her by OPA, District 3 Supervisor Don Wagner presented a Certificate of Recognition to her for Years of Volunteer Service.

When you see her on a trail or around town, say "thank you."



Julie Maurer and Jesse

Apply for Assistance League honors and scholarships

Assistance League of Orange will recognize the bright futures of dozens of high school seniors through two of its philanthropic programs later this spring.

"Salute to Service," a celebration dinner, May 17, will honor students who plan to enter the military following high school graduation. Held at the Assistance League Chapter House, the event will feature guest speakers and musical entertainment acknowledging all branches of the military. Names of students who should be invited must be submitted to program chair Nancy Clark at nmarieclark@gmail.com by April 15.

Granting scholarships to students who demonstrate a commitment to community service, show

academic merit and have a financial need has been a tradition for Assistance League since 1948. These awards recognize students who are enrolled in an OUSD high school or reside in the OUSD district. Eligible students can apply for general scholarships, as well as those for several specialized fields. Last year, 19 scholarships totaling \$47,000 were awarded to seniors from Orange, El Modena, Villa Park, Canyon, and Richland High Schools, as well as Unity Middle College High School.

The deadline for submitting the online application is midnight Thursday, April 6. For information about the selection criteria and to access the downloadable application, visit Assistanceleague.org/orange/scholarships.

New programs at VP Library

Children in grades 1-4 are invited to participate in the Reading Buddies program on Saturdays from 2- 4 p.m. Children will be paired with a teen volunteer to practice their reading and build confidence reading aloud.

Teens and Adults are invited to join the monthly Knitterati Craft Group on Sat., March 18 at 2 p.m.

Programs are always free! The VP Library is located at 17865 Santiago Blvd., in the Villa Park Towne Center.

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Karen and Bill Masters outside their "retirement" laundromat

Are clean clothes now in jeopardy?

Residents were blindsided by soaring gas bills, but businesses have also felt the squeeze. The trickle-down costs to the consumer also hits hardest on those who can least afford it. The cost of simply getting clean clothes is increasing.

Six years ago, after running the numbers and careful analysis, Bill and Karen Masters invested their savings into a laundromat, seeking passive income for their retirement years. Always involved in the community, Bill as a reserve OCFD firefighter, Orange Chamber of Commerce Ambassador, and Karen at OUSD, the couple also knew a clean, safe laundromat would benefit their community, too.

They installed new equipment, laid new vinyl flooring, put in a new ceiling and lighting to make "The Orange Laundry Room" on 476 N. Tustin, a comfortable and friendly place. On weekends, the 1,800-sq.-ft. business is filled with families, many of whom do not have their own appliances. During the week, the parking lot

is filled with Teslas and Mercedes, as busy people do multiple loads of laundry at once, utilizing many of the 42 washers and 27 dryers, saving time for their families.

It is also economical, with 30-lb. top load washers priced at \$2.25 per load, and dryers at only a quarter for nine minutes. But the gas bill soared, from \$950 in January of 2022 to \$3,250 in February of this year – more than a 340% increase. Begrudgingly, Masters has had to raise the prices for use of the washers and dryers, which he fears may very negatively impact his customers. The price to wash a load of clothing was increased 150%, to \$3.50 per load; the 40 lb. washer, which holds 4 loads, is now \$4.25; the price for the dryers escalated to \$.25 for only six minutes.

The surprise skyrocketing gas bill directly impacts every family the laundromat serves.

Other city laundromats have also posted price increases for a load of laundry, due to the increases in the cost of gas.

Citrus trees under attack

A new pest in town is attacking Orange citrus crops.

The Asian citrus psyllid is a tiny, brown insect about the size of an aphid, and feeds on the new leaves of all types of citrus trees, including oranges, grapefruit, lemons, mandarins. It can kill a tree within five years. Mostly undetectable until serious damage is done, in about two years,

the pest spreads the HLB (huanglongbing) or citrus greening disease, carrying bacteria to healthy plants. At this time, there is no remedy but to destroy the infected trees. For further information and detailed photos of the pests, see pim.ucanr.edu. Call the exotic pest hotline immediately at (800) 491-1899 if you suspect your tree may have the disease.

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OPAWL meets many interests

Friendship, philanthropy and community make up the core pursuits of the OPA Women's League, and their slate of activities brings the community of women together in those pursuits.

Whether you are interested in pickleball, bridge, literature, bunco, homestead and garden, entertaining, pack walking, or horses, you will find kindred spirits and new friendships waiting to be made. Check them out at opa-women.org.



The new OPAWL evening bunco group celebrated new friendships and Valentine's Day.



The groundbreaking for the Hilbert Museum of California Art expansion included, left to right, Matt Parlow, Chapman executive vice president and chief advancement officer; City of Orange Mayor Dan Slater; museum founders Janet and Mark Hilbert; Chapman University President Daniele Struppa; and Hilbert Museum Director Mary Platt.

Hilbert breaks ground for expansion

Ground was broken, Feb. 15, for the long anticipated Hilbert Museum expansion.

The year-long construction project will triple the size of the existing museum, from 7,500 sq. ft. to 22,000 sq. ft. The adjacent building (former Partridge Dance Center) will become the north wing of the Hilbert. A spa-

acious events courtyard, topped by an architectural element dubbed "the floating rectangle," will join the two buildings, and the museum's façade will be graced by a 40-foot-long Millard Sheets mosaic, "Pleasures Along the Beach" (1969), comprised of thousands of tiny pieces of colorful Murano glass. The expansion will allow

the museum to add many more exhibition galleries, including the Hilbert Collection's paintings by California artists from the 1890s to today, the animation and movie arts collection, an Indigenous American arts gallery, and an American Design gallery. A café, research library, and a community space will be added.

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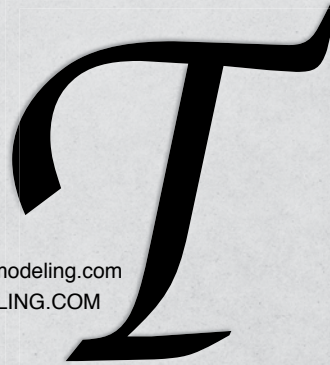
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Dinosaurs in California to be discussed

A discussion of dinosaur remains found in California will be led by Chapman University Schmid College Professor Jack Horner on Sat., March 11 from 10 to 11:30 a.m.

Horner was technical advisor for the Jurassic Park and Jurassic World movies.

The event, hosted by the Town & Gown (community and alumni) program at Chapman, is free to the public. It will be held at the Irvine Lecture Hall, near Waltmar Theater on campus.

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Elks donate to ElMo Family Resource Center



The Orange Elks donated a check for \$1,500 to community partner, El Modena Family Resource Center. Resource Center Manager Natali Pliego Roman is surrounded by Elks, from left, Mike Cash and Janine Strom, JC Cortez, Lynn Butler and Gary Doeberiner.

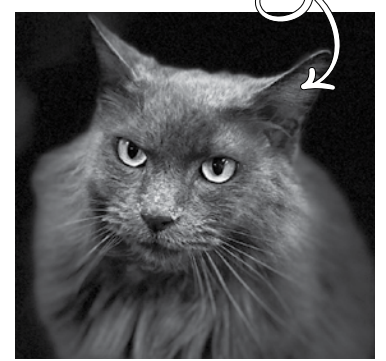
Flash is almost three, loves attention and being with his family. Cosmo is 11, and wants to be snuggled next to you, ideally enjoying head scratches.

To see these sweet bundles of fur, schedule an appointment any day from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., except Thursday.

Contact MeowwzResQ, a nonprofit that has been saving cats and kittens for over 22 years - more than 2,700 every year; phone (714) 997-0868 or MeowwzResQ@aol.com.

For information about adopting, fostering or donating, see Meowwzresq.org.

Looking for love



Flash and Cosmo, pictured above, are only two of the adoptable felines available from MeowwzResQ.

CPOC meeting will focus on education

The Conservative Patriots of Orange County Education Committee Chairs Linda Cone and Bob Walters will present their perspective on education at the group's Thursday, March 16 meeting. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. at the Santa Ana Elks Lodge, 1751 S. Elk Lane. A buffet supper is \$30. Purchase online at conservativepatriotsofoc.org or contact Peggy Baranyay, (714) 828-1289 or swtmthr@sbcglobal.net.

The public is invited to join CPOC online; members may also renew online. Visit the website for more information.



Over 200 congregants, church officials, friends and family turned out for a Mardi Gras-themed celebration for Rev. Jeannie Martz, left, upon her retirement from Trinity Episcopal Church of Orange, Feb. 19. She had served as rector for the last 15 years. Also shown are Event Chair Ann Walker, center, and Senior Warden Lindsay Whiddle.



COMMUNITY SPORTS

BY CLIFF ROBBINS AND CHAD CLINE

ElMo athletes sign to play



El Modena High School athletes signed their NCAA Letters of Intent on National Signing Day. Left to right are Ryan Guzman, Jonathan Tabb, Elodie Danet, Elishah Jackett, Spencer Jacobs, Mayson Hitchens, Katelyn Beaman and Sebastian Metoyer.

South All-Stars are victorious for seventh year

The South All-Stars' 24-7 win over the North All-Stars in the 63rd Annual Orange County All-Star Classic made it seven in a row.

The South scored first on a one-yard run with 5:59 remaining in the first quarter. The South stopped the North at the five-yard line, and turned it into their second touchdown. The South scored again with a touchdown pass, going up 21-0.

Late in the second quarter, the North got on the board as Christian Lundsberg (Canyon High School) found Jacob Apodace (La Habra High School) passing for a nine-yard touchdown with 1:42 remaining in the first half. A South drive stalled, ending the first half.

A South interception resulted in a North 37-yard field goal to start the fourth quarter.



Christian Lundsberg from Canyon High launches a pass in the Orange County All-Star Classic Football game.



Canyon Dietrich (right) from Villa Park battles a lineman in the Orange County All-Star Classic Football game.



Owen Smith (11) from El Modena High School follows a block from Vince McGlenn (77) of Valencia High School in the Orange County All-Star Classic.



Football All CIF-SS

Presented by the LA84 Foundation and selected by the Football Coaches Association, the following athletes received post season All-CIF awards.

In Division 1, from Orange Lutheran High School, the award-ees are: Jackson Weng (12, WR); Kireh Moe (10, DL); Talona Ili (9, LB).

In Division 3, from El Modena High School were Owen Smith (12, Skill); and Mayson Hitchens (12, Skill).

In Division 5, from Canyon High School: Christian Lundsberg (12, QB); and Troy Mills (12, LB).

From Villa Park High School, Carter Christie (12, RB/LB); Lucas Simone (11, LB); Zach Alefosio (12, LB); and Luke Terrones (12, DL).

In Division 6, from Orange High School were Kahalil Lawrence (12, DL); Ardwon Morris, (11, LB); Kobe Boykin (11, RB); and Hype Grand (10, QB).

In Division 10, from Tustin High School was Benaiah Faletoi (12, LB).



Elishah Jackett (23) from El Modena High School hauls in a rebound against Diamond Ranch. El Modena won first round playoffs, 56-55.



Cade McCarville from El Modena High School gets an easy bucket against Diamond Ranch in the CIF Boys Basketball Playoffs.



Nick Weed (13) and El Modena teammate Drew Rodriguez (right) team up to block a shot.

COMMUNITY SPORTS

BY CLIFF ROBBINS AND CHAD CLINE

Foothill upset in CIF Girls Water Polo finals



Rachel Gazzaniga (right) gets a shot off over Laguna Beach goalkeeper Lauren Schneider.



Eva Hourigan (10) from Foothill High blocks a shot against Laguna Beach's Cleo Washer. Foothill's win advanced the Knights to the CIF Girls Water Polo finals.

Foothill High School, ranked No. 1, held off No. 4 Laguna Beach, 12-11, in the water polo semifinals to advance to the Open Division Championships against Orange Lutheran.

Foothill (27-5) took control of the game, jumping out to a 4-0 lead before giving up two goals by OLu's Sofia Umeda and Allison Cohen late in the second period. Gabrielle Graniello put Foothill in a comfortable position, scoring with 1:09 remaining in the first half.

Orange Lutheran's Michelle Urkov scored and tied the game up, 5-5, and scored the go-ahead goal to take the lead, 6-5. Foothill wasted no time tying the score 7-7, as Graniello found the net with :49 sec remaining in the third period.

Orange Lutheran controlled the fourth quarter. Lady Knight Deirdre Murphy got a shot to roll in, bringing the score within one, 8-9. Sofia Umeda and Kate Sloman sank two goals to seal the championship, 11-8.

Rachel Kirchner from Foothill blocked eight shots on goal. Deirdre Murphy finished with two goals, Gabrielle Graniello and Chloe Patist with three goals each.



Kailah Perry (17) from Canyon High School scored two goals in the Downey CIF Girls Water Polo game.



Kyla Snell, Canyon High School goalkeeper, deflects a shot in the Downey game. Canyon lost the playoff game, 6-4.



Makena Gray from Canyon High School gets the ball from the Downey player.



Villa Park goalkeeper Sean McEwan (right) attracts a lot of company in his goal against Yorba Linda. Villa Park won, 8-3.



Rylee Lewis from Villa Park High School scored the tie-breaking goal in the second half against Redondo High School. The team swarmed Lewis after the shot. Conner (left) comes in to congratulate Lewis. Villa Park won, 2-1.



Villa Park Spartan Jacob Gregory scores against Yorba Linda in the first round of the Commissioner's Cup playoffs.



Rylee Lewis from Villa Park High sets up for a shot. Lewis scored and broke the 1-1 tie against Redondo High School in the quarterfinals.



Cindy Conner from Villa Park High School scored in the first quarter against Redondo High School in the semifinals of the Girls CIF-SS Soccer Playoffs.



Here we go -- again?

By David Silva

In recent months, we have seen record leaps in the interest rates for home purchases, and equity from record gains take a dip. As we head into what should be buying season, our rates have been flexing around the 6 and 7 percents for the last few months, and even dipped back into the 5s. What does this mean for buyers and sellers? What might the future hold?

Before we dive into that, we need to take a look at inventory. You might remember homes sitting on the market a little longer as we ended 2022 and even at the beginning of 2023, when inventory was slowly starting to build up.

A healthier inventory gives buyers more choices, even with higher interest rates. A buyer may be willing to pay a higher interest rate now and look into refinancing when the interest rate drops. Remember the “professional” phrase: “Marry the house, date

the rate.”

In January, the number of houses on the market appeared to be increasing. As of press time, the number of salable properties is back at a low number, close to historical lows, with even fewer homes available: Orange has 58; Tustin, 43; and Villa Park has 12 for sale.

March is a key month, and will be looked at very closely. Homes

usually begin to come on the market then so that families can move during the summer, when school is not in session.

But will potential sellers risk putting their home on the market, when it may be difficult to then buy another property? Will they want to give up their low 2.25-2.5% interest rates? Can they qualify for a different rate and price?

Now that it is after the holidays, prices have dropped on many properties and buyers are starting to come out. In some instances, there are multiple offers in certain areas and price ranges.

Will interest rates ramp up, push down -- or stay relatively the same? Will we have more buyers versus sellers? Many indicators point to a steady market with less

inventory and increased demand – a seller’s market.

As daylight savings time is scheduled for March 12, the sun will shine a little longer, and both buyers and sellers can get in that extra hour of showings. Buyers

may push prices up steadily as we roll into the second quarter.

When buying or selling real estate, be sure to have a professional realtor working hard for you. Now, more than ever, you’ll be glad you did.



Happy Lunar New Year!

The Year of the Rabbit, a symbol of longevity, peace and prosperity, was celebrated in Villa Park, Feb. 11, as part of the Villa Park Community Services Foundation commitment to diversity and community.

The dragon dance, commonly performed during the New Year to bring good luck and drive away evil spirits, was performed by the Villa Park High School Vietnamese Students Association. Students from the North Orange County Chinese School also performed.



Photos courtesy Jordan Wu

From left, Villa Park Councilmembers Jordan Wu and Nicol Jones, Mayor Robbie Pitts, North Orange County Chinese School Principal Jeffrey Wu; VPHS Vietnamese Students Association Co-presidents Arianna Phan and Emily Vu; California State Assemblyman Phillip Chen’s representative Jenna Poffenberger; U.S. House Representative Young Kim’s Veteran Liaison Brandon Moeller; Tamsen Reinheime and Ed Carter, Villa Park Community Services Foundation.

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Students don bunny ears to celebrate the year of the rabbit.



OUSD Board Members Ana Page and Andrea Yamasaki celebrate the Lunar New Year in Villa Park.

