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## Natural wildlands in City of Orange under threat

By Tina Richards

The reclamation company that wants to fill in a riparian habitat with inert construction waste, just one-half mile from the Sully-Miller dump site in East Orange, has one more hurdle to breach before it can approach the city for a grading permit and commence work.

OC Reclamation is a subsidiary of Chandler's Sand & Gravel, which owns 14 acres near the northwest corner of Cannon and Santiago Canyon Road, bordering Santiago Creek. According to Orange Public Works Director Chris Cash, Chandler asked the city for a permit to backfill the site some five years ago. At that time, the property owner was told that other agency permits were needed first.

### While no one's looking

The permit from the State Water Resources Control Board, which reviews impacts on wetlands and waste discharge, is the last box Chandler needs to check. And, as of Dec. 2, it was on a fast track. Claiming that no Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was needed, the water board is relying on a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND), a report filed instead of an EIR when any expected environmental damage is not sig-

nificant.

The Water Board released the MND with a deadline of Jan. 2 for public and agency comments. A public hearing on the issue was slated for Feb. 10. That 30-day turnaround was squeezed around the Christmas and New Year holiday period. When stakeholders complained about the unforgiving deadline, the Water Board granted a one-week extension. The City of Orange also asked for an extension. The comment deadline is now Feb. 10, and the public hearing March 17.

Chandler claims it is filling in an abandoned mine pit. The site was a gravel mine until 1963. Since then, nature has reclaimed it. Over the past 70 years, it has transformed into a forest of willow trees, wetland habitat and seasonal waterfalls. It is populated with birds, reptiles and small mammals, as well as a few endangered species. The wetland portion of the site was declared a "water of the state" in 2020.

### Dirt can hurt

Chandler's plan is to bury the site under 1,240,000 cubic yards of dirt, bringing it up to street level. The project will demand 60 truck trips per day, traversing Orange and Villa Park streets for five years. The fill site is within



Eighth grade McPherson Magnet School students Malia Tek and Daniel Dillon, with ninth grader Vincent Chen (not pictured), with a nod to the times we live in, created an Ammo-Alert app to identify gunfire at a school site for the school's Science Fair. See McPherson, page 14

100 yards of a drinking water recharge basin. Chandler has not disclosed what it intends to do with the property once it is level.

The City of Orange hired a consultant to review the MND, and numerous questions were raised. As Interim City Manager Tom Kisela reported at the Jan. 10 city council meeting, the consultant found the project description vague, with no explanation of daily activity or how the trucks will access the property. Where is the inert material coming from? How far is it from residences? What is the impact on Oakridge Private School? How will roadways be maintained? What about

noise from machinery, dust and air quality?

### Missing links

The document also neglected to mention the wildlife, wetlands, water, trees, geology and soil stabilization. These concerns were dispatched to the Water Board. "This is a process right now," Kisela explained. "We've submitted letters asking the board to take a deeper look and give the public the opportunity to state their concerns. We will evaluate the situa-

See "Wildlands" continued on page 2

## OUSD Board majority to finance out-of-state superintendent

By Tina Richards

Fears that the new majority on the OUSD Board of Trustees is prepared to "burn down the district" seemed prescient when the Jan. 19 meeting was interrupted by smoke filtering into the meet-

ing room from an overhead vent.

The audience was evacuated and the fire department summoned. First responders determined that a malfunctioning HVAC unit on the roof had generated smoke, but no flames. The

all-clear was given, and the meeting resumed.

While there was no literal fire, there was rhetorical heat. The meeting was to approve the contract with the interim superintendent hired to replace Gunn Marie Hansen, who had been summarily terminated without cause Jan. 5 (see OUSD, page 3). Edward Velasquez, a retired school superintendent, was chosen by the board majority that same day. Velasquez has a longtime business relationship with John Ortega, who knew him when they both worked for the Montebello School District over a decade ago. Velasquez is also employed by the recruiting firm OUSD hired, and subsequently fired, in 2017 when it was then seeking a superintendent.

pected to serve for seven weeks, as his current retirement package restricts his additional annual income to \$49,000.

OUSD parents and community members, still stunned by the sudden termination of a well-respected superintendent, were ablaze with anger and disbelief. That was reflected in three-plus hours of public comments, which took place before and after the evacuation. Constituents raised concerns about Ortega's relationship with Velasquez, the cost of importing an interim superintendent from Idaho, and paying some \$47,000, plus expenses, while continuing to pay Superintendent Hansen's salary.

### The one and only

Audience members questioned why a person from Idaho is being given a temporary job that could likely be filled by any number of more geographically desirable candidates, or even a senior OUSD staff member. And, how is it possible to hire someone who hasn't filled out an employment application, been interviewed or thoroughly vetted? Was anyone else considered for the job?

"This is cronyism and back room deals," one speaker asserted. "Velasquez was employed by John Ortega. The information was on his website, but has been taken

See "OUSD finances" continued on page 2

## 86th Miss Orange crowned



From left to right, Third Runner-Up Sophie Cambra, Second Runner-Up, Cassidy Aslay; Madeleine Chocholaty, Miss Orange; and First Runner-Up, Elizabeth Raburn.

Madeleine Chocholaty was crowned the 86th Miss Orange, Jan. 14. She will serve as the official ambassador to the City of Orange, and will be the first Orange May Queen in over 30 years.

Chocholaty graduated from Orange High School in 2022, and is currently a student at Cal State Long Beach, majoring in theater and English education.

She performed a vocal solo for her talent, and plays six instruments. She has been a participant in the 3rd of July program

for four years, the Orange Tree Lighting for seven years, and was a soloist in 2021.

She has been involved with the Orange Little Theater and Kids Musical Theater.

During her year of service, she will work with Greater Orange County Arts Theater (GOCAT), assisting them in building a multipurpose performing arts center.

Miss Orange is available for appearances at professional events, upon request to misscityoforangeED@gmail.com.

## 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](http://FoothillsSentry.com) and via subscription.

## BOARD DROPS A BOMBSHELL

OUSD trustee majority sets off an explosion of public opinion.

See stories, page 3, 6 and 10; Letters, page 4

## A PALL ON THE MALL

Revitalizing Village at Orange requires caution, cooperation and compromise.

See Guest Commentaries, page 4

## ALTERED STATES

New Orange council agrees to change long-held protocols to encourage citizen involvement.

See Orange, page 7

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**"OUSD finances"**  
*continued from page 1*

down. You're hiding it. This is a clear conflict of interest."

"I'm here as a taxpayer," another said. "You [Ledesma] claim to be fiscally conservative, but this isn't. It doesn't look good for you."

Several OUSD parents noted how hard they worked to raise funds for student programs that the district "couldn't afford." "You are using taxpayer money for a buyout, and not for student services or education," one shuddered. "Every parent who has ever volunteered for OUSD should be sickened by this."

An OUSD father acknowledged that, "I used to be concerned about Tim Surridge, but Ortega is the undercover influence. Ortega and Ledesma had Velasquez waiting in the wings. This is cronyism, pure and simple. It's not how school boards should act."

"A shameful political stunt," another called it. "He's from Idaho. He's the only person you could find? We should cut our losses now and not fund travel for a superintendent who lives out of state."

**Not taking questions**

Trustee Kris Erickson had a lot of questions for the impending superintendent. "The process in this situation was rushed, rash and outrageous, we don't know anything about Velasquez," she stressed. Ledesma stopped her, noting that it was inappropriate to question him because he hadn't been named interim superintendent yet.

"But you're asking me to approve his contract," Erickson countered, "I have questions." Ledesma suggested she should have asked questions and done her investigating before now. Erickson responded that she didn't have time because his appointment was "such a surprise."

"It was a 24-hour notice, special meeting," Ledesma offered. "Who wouldn't be surprised?"

"If I could ask questions," Erickson conceded, "I'd ask if he was interviewed by anyone? Does he have any real knowledge of OUSD? Does he have any awareness of California requirements? What does he think an academic audit is? You're asking him to start an audit, he'll be looking at programs you all approved. I'm concerned how this appears." She also noted that Velasquez

**Elks join Wreaths Across America**



Orange Elks Lodge 1475 members and their families placed 100 wreaths on the graves of veterans at Fairhaven Memorial Park. Orange Elks member Brian Lawrence's son Seth is seen placing wreaths. On the drive home, Seth said the event "meant a lot to him, and he can't wait to do it again next year."

faced a sexual harassment lawsuit in 2010 that was settled out of court by the Montebello School District. "It was 10 years ago," she said, "but it gives me pause."

**Need to know?**

Andrea Yamasaki interjected that she didn't get a copy of the contract until Tuesday morning, and that she had to ask for it. She also noted that the original meeting agenda did not allow time for public comments, and a time slot was added only after she pointed it out. A big concern, she said, was that the employment contract did not have a cap on expenses. "There should be a cap," she insisted. "It shouldn't be open-ended."

Erickson subsequently motioned to amend the contract, with a \$1,000 per week cap on expenses. After some grumbling by Ledesma, who worried that Velasquez might not agree, the motion passed with Erickson, Yamasaki, Ana Page and Angie Rumsey voting "yes." Ortega, Ledesma and Miner opposed the cap.

The board went into closed session midway through the meeting. When it returned to the boardroom to address the rest of the agenda, Velasquez was seated in the superintendent's chair.



Aerial view of the proposed fill-dirt dump on the Hurwitz site in East Orange.

**"Wildlands"**  
*continued from page 1*

tion once the Water Board makes a decision."

**Pay attention**

Councilwoman Ana Gutierrez suggested the city hold a public study session on the topic, inviting all stakeholders, including Chandler. Interim City Attorney

Mary Binning advised against a public meeting. Better to wait until the Water Board makes a decision, she said, then we'll know how it answered the questions.

"Our status at the Water Board is as a citizen," Binning added, noting that council members could attend the March hearing and make public comments. The permit is a discretionary action by the Water Board. It does not have to approve it.

Chandler's Sand & Gravel is the company that illegally dumped construction waste on the Sully-Miller site until the Local Enforcement Agency (LEA) issued a cease and desist to property owner Milan Capital. Negotiations are currently underway regarding the site clean up. Since no records were kept, no one knows what is buried there; LEA has reported the presence of contaminants.

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# OUSD Board majority ousts superintendent at surprise meeting

By Tina Richards

The new Orange Unified School District Board majority fired Superintendent Gunn Marie Hansen and put Assistant Superintendent for Educational Services Cathleen Corella on administrative leave "without cause" at a hastily called special meeting, Jan. 5.

President Rick Ledesma's surprise announcement at 4 p.m. on Jan. 4 met the 24-hour requirement for public notice of special meetings, but the posted agenda's reference to "public employee discipline/dismissal/release" caught at least three of his board colleagues off guard and threw OUSD constituents into shock.

Despite the short notice and 4 p.m. start time, the meeting attracted a standing-room-only crowd of parents, community members and teachers. While the decision to terminate Hansen and Corella was to be made in closed session, the public was allowed to address the board first. Sixty people chose to do so.

### Bad form?

The three hours of public comments had a common theme. Speakers stressed that "this meeting is a travesty, called during winter break when both Hansen and Corella are out of the country." Both superintendents "led the district through hard times and deserved accolades, not dismissal." "Neither deserved being fired when they are not here to defend themselves." "Buying out their contracts and hiring placeholders would cost the district

\$1 million that could be spent on students and schools." "The disruption to the district will harm students, teachers, staff and the entire community."

Ledesma offered no explanation. He called the meeting because he could, he said, and the board majority was within its legal right to dismiss Hansen and Corella for no reason, even though Hansen had received positive reviews by the board as recently as July. When asked if he had notified either of them of their impending fate, he said no.

Some meeting attendees surmised that the new board majority was "flexing its muscle." Madison Miner's narrow win over Kathy Moffat in November gave Ledesma, John Ortega and Angie Rumsey the fourth voted needed to shift the board's direction.

### More dark than light

At the meeting's onset, Trustee Kris Erickson made it clear that she had not received any information or documentation about the supervisor's dismissal other than what appeared on the agenda, and didn't know anything more than the audience.

Trustee Andrea Yamasaki pressed Ledesma about the legality of the meeting's timing and subject matter. Despite Ledesma's assurances that all was well, Yamasaki insisted on hearing from an OUSD attorney. She did not back down until Ledesma agreed to bring the attorney to the podium.

"Yes," attorney Mark Bresee



Orange Unified School District Board of Education, from left, John Ortega, Kris Erickson, Angie Rumsey, Rick Ledesma, Andrea Yamasaki, Madison Miner and Ana Page.

said, the meeting was legal, as was the board's intent to fire the superintendent without cause and without notice. Yamasaki asked that the meeting be postponed, but the four-vote majority chose to continue.

Many public commenters noted the gap between what Trustees Ledesma and Miner said when they were candidates, and what they were doing now. "You ran on parental choice," Ronna Weltman noted, "This isn't it. This is the opposite of listening to parents and giving them a voice."

### Walk the talk

"I'm disappointed," a father of two OUSD students said. "You campaigned on parents' trust. Yet your first action is to call a special, little-noticed meeting, keeping parents in the dark."

"I'm so mad, I'm shaking," teacher and parent Michelle Canto fumed. "This is underhanded and sneaky. Just because you're the majority, doesn't mean you're right. Public education will suffer, and that is your goal. This is detrimental to the district, but that is your goal."

Kris Erickson stepped from the dais to address the board as a citi-

zen, not as a trustee. "Just because you can do something, doesn't mean you should," she advised. "221 votes gave you the majority. It was not a mandate. After two years of pandemic hell, we're finally back to a normal year. And you're going to burn the district down. This is not about children's education, it's political."

Her reference to politics was what several speakers called "the elephant in the room." That is, they said, that the board majority members were "bought and paid for" by Mark Bucher, Jeff Barke and the California Policy Center, all known for their opposition to public schools, teachers unions and inclusive curriculum.

### Pulling strings

"You are bankrolled by the Policy Center and Mark Bucher," a parent charged. "You four are a unique group, and it's disgusting. Do you work for Bucher and the Policy Center, or we parents?"

"I think people are getting the picture," another speaker said. "You are being paid to do this. You are in Bucher's and Barke's pockets."

"I feel like I'm living in the Soviet Union," a parent lobbed at the board. "You fire people who don't think like you."

As the public attempted to dis-

suaude the board majority from ousting the superintendent, Angie Rumsey and Madison Miner received special attention.

Heather Colter told them she'd been praying for them during the meeting. "I know you claim to be women of faith, but I think you are being manipulated. Ask yourselves," she suggested, "what would Jesus do?"

### New hands on deck

After the 4-3 vote to terminate Hansen and Corella in closed session, the board majority named Edward Velasquez as interim superintendent. Kris Erickson reported afterwards that the first time she had heard of him was when his name came up in the motion to appoint him. When asked for information, she was told she could "google him after the meeting."

"Either the board violated the Brown Act by coordinating his appointment in advance," she said, "or they voted to approve someone they knew nothing about. Either way is just wrong."

Ledesma, Ortega, Rumsey and Miner also named Craig Abercrombie, Canyon High principle, as Interim Assistant Superintendent for Educational Services.

Angry parents vowed to launch a recall campaign.

## Crescendo features "Behind the Scenes" of FBI



Former FBI agent Kristen von KleinSmid will present "Behind the Scenes," a look into the career of an FBI Agent, at the Celebrity Speakers Series on Thursday, March 9.

She supervised Squad CT-9, a Critical Incident Response Squad in the Los Angeles Field Office, and had oversight for the Evidence Response Teams, Rapid Deployment Team Weapons and Special Events Program, and the Boston Marathon Bombing investigation.

The program begins at 10 a.m. at the Bowers Museum, 2002 N. Main Street, Santa Ana. Tickets are \$35. Bowers Museum members may buy one discounted ticket for \$30. For ticket information, contact Maggie Hart at (714) 356-6720. Parking is \$6.

The Crescendo Chapter is part of the Guilds of Segerstrom Center for the Arts, which raises funds to support the Center's community engagement and arts education programs. The Celebrity Speakers Series is held monthly.

## Peggy Hall to address CPOC

Peggy Hall, Healthy American, will speak at the Thursday, Feb. 16 meeting of the Conservative Patriots of Orange County.

Hall sued the OC Board of Supervisors for failing to review the emergency health act at 30-day increments to continue/discontinue the COVID lockdown.

The meeting will be held at the Santa Ana Elks Lodge, at 1751 S. Elk Lane, beginning at 5:30 p.m. A buffet dinner is \$35 per person. Purchase tickets online at conservativepatriotsofoc.org or contact Peggy Baranyay, (714) 828-1289 or swtmtmr@sbcglobal.net.

At the group's Jan. 19 meeting, Steve Baric, chairman of the Republican Lawyer's Association, observed that party candidates were chosen based on donors, rather than grassroots constituents. He suggested that needed to change if Republicans wanted to win future elections.

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## Guest Commentaries

### Why is Sears holding Orange neighborhoods hostage?

By Kathy Tavoularis

Property rights are a cornerstone of the American way of life – foundational to the enduring system of ordered liberty from which our prosperity and quality of life flow.

But with rights come responsibilities. When those are ignored, the community suffers. That is the situation in Orange, where the indifference and neglect of an absentee venture capitalist is bringing blight and crime to the doorsteps of his longtime neighbors.

The Orange Mall, as it was known for decades, was the heartbeat of north Orange. However, like shopping malls across the country, the online retail revolution has spurred the once-bustling Mall into a steady decline.

For the families living in the adjacent neighborhoods, the quality-of-life impacts have become increasingly worse since the April 2021 closure of the Sears store, the lone remaining anchor store from the mall's opening in 1971.

Sears is owned by Transformco, which in turn is owned by ESL Investment, a hedge fund owned

by Edward Lampert from Connecticut. During Lampert's tenure as Sears president and CEO in the 2010s, the company lost half its value and closed half of its stores. Lampert controls the Sears property through a 90-year lease that continues through 2054.

The closure of Sears at the mall is the primary source of the growing blight that is impacting surrounding neighborhoods. Lampert has every right to take steps he deems necessary to ensure Sears' profitability, but that does not relieve him of the responsibility to be a good neighbor.

Instead, Lampert has allowed the parking lot between the vacant store and the adjacent residential neighborhoods to become a magnet of derelict vehicles, criminal activity and homelessness. There is a constant barrage of calls for police and code enforcement services, including numerous attempts to break into the abandoned store, domestic violence calls, reckless driving incidents and calls to check on suspicious people, activity and vehicles. Hu-

man feces have been found in the parking lot.

And it is only getting worse.

I attended Taft Elementary and Peralta Junior High across the street from the mall. My first job, at 16, was at this Sears in the Orange Mall. Now, as the Councilmember representing this area on the Orange City Council, I understand and share the frustration of residents who bombard City Hall with pleas for help. Lampert's contempt is directed not only at his neighbors, but the City of Orange, which has remained a long-time partner until recently, and even his landlords.

City staff – at all levels – have called Lampert and his investment fund numerous times in order to bring these issues to his attention and demand that he take steps to rectify them, but are met with a stone wall of silence from the Connecticut resident.

The longtime Orange family who owns the land has implored Lampert to clean up his act and behave as a responsible neighbor. Lampert sends them a lease pay-

ment every month, but otherwise ignores them. Sears intends to collect lease payments from its tenants until 2054. Orange residents should not be required to live with this blight until then.

Every other stakeholder wants to revitalize the mall site. The Villages at Orange owner, and the owners of the other parcels that comprise the entire mall properties, are supportive of redeveloping the Mall as a thriving economic and community asset that complements surrounding neighborhoods and elevates our residents' quality of life.

I applaud them for their effort, and offer my assistance to find a balanced approach that protects our neighborhoods while also stimulating economic growth. Unfortunately, Edward Lampert's neglect of the Sears property and indifference to how these impacts are harming his neighbors are a huge obstacle to reinvigorating the mall site. He is effectively holding our community progress hostage while degrading the quality of life for those residents who,

live, work or play near the mall.

Not only that, but his irresponsible behavior reflects badly on each of the property owners and businesses that go to lengths to be good neighbors.

As the City Councilmember of the district in which the Village shopping center is located, and as a 41-year Orange resident, I view this matter with the utmost seriousness and pledge continued action on behalf of residents. The first step toward solving a problem is holding Sears and Mr. Lampert accountable. And it is past time we, as a community, call out and name the source of the blight taking root in Orange, at the Sears property: Edward Lampert of Connecticut. Be the partner to Orange that Sears was for more than half a century. There is an opportunity for you to win, and the neighborhoods to win, and increase everyone's property values and quality of life.

*Kathy Tavoularis represents District 3 on the Orange City Council.*

### Village mall redevelopment needs the right solution

By Doug Hamilton

The topic of the Village at Orange/Orange Mall and the North Tustin Street Corridor involves many complex issues and a decade-long history of community involvement. Picking the wrong solution has the potential for negative consequences. Responsible decisions and reasonable compromise are necessary to get to a "yes" solution, and ultimately that's a win-win for everyone.

The original North Tustin Street Specific Plan (NTSSP) allowed 4-5 story high-density dwelling units and high-density zoning changes on many properties from Katella to Lincoln. The NTSSP had the potential to undermine the city's sales tax revenue by rezoning commercial retail properties for housing. It also

would have been a disaster for the area's quality of life. Progress was made when the city council voted to end the NTSSP.

AB2011 now puts that progress at risk. The law creates new options for property owners at the mall. Understanding the new law before digging in on a "yes" or "no" housing position is critically important. Keep in mind a "no compromise" position most likely equals "no resolution."

AB2011 was designed to develop a larger pool of skilled construction labor, in addition to the production of "affordable" housing units. With AB2011, the state takes away local control that might prevent high-density housing. In other words, prior city zoning restrictions and a "hell no"

attitude won't work after July 1.

AB2011 brings 4-5 story high-density affordable housing back into the mix of possibilities at the mall. The law gives qualifying property owners a pathway to move forward without compromise. As a result, residents and the city may have no ability to stop high-density housing, regardless of the negative impacts. The consequences could be devastating to the city's sales tax revenue and the quality of life in the surrounding neighborhoods.

So how does AB2011 affect the mall? The former JCPenney/Integral Communities property does not appear to qualify. The property lacks frontage on a corridor street. Only Tustin Street qualifies as a corridor because it measures at least 70 feet wide.

The TRC property on the mall's east side does not appear to qualify for AB2011 "mixed-income" housing because the site is larger than 20 acres. However, the property appears to qualify for 100% affordable housing because it has 50 feet of corridor street frontage.

The former Sears property presents the greatest risk for negative consequences. It appears to

qualify for both AB2011 "mixed-income" and "100% affordable" housing. The property is less than 20 acres and has more than 50 feet of frontage on a corridor street. The highest bidders for this site will, most likely, be developers with their eye on 4-5 story high-density housing.

AB2011 requires that construction be done with skilled labor and imposes unfavorable deed restrictions that last for 45-55 years. It may not be an option that developers actually want to initiate, unless they plan to use the "threat" of AB2011 as a bargaining chip. If they want to use AB2011, they will have that right. However, under no circumstances should our city council strike a grand bargain and trade threats of "mixed-income" or "100% affordable" housing for a more profitable and superior mixed-use zoning upgrade. Doing so would allow developers to avoid the use of skilled tradesmen, avoid unfavorable deed restrictions and increase their profit with an ability to charge market rate rents.

We recommend a stated doctrine that "our city will not upgrade zoning with AB2011 or

other similar threats." When developers purchase property in Orange, they must follow the General Plan. Once the city council buckles under, even one time with AB2011 compromises, a precedent will be set. And that precedent will be exploited by other developers.

The community supports redevelopment and re-visioning at the mall. However, each project has a direct impact on others. These projects must be considered as a whole, and require related infrastructure improvements.

Because of the complexities, redevelopment should be done with a Specific Plan just for the mall. The city could disallow uses no longer appropriate for the area. The Plan could then include new zoning and a streamlined entitlement process.

No projects should be approved without a comprehensive Specific Plan that addresses all foreseeable issues.

*Doug Hamilton is a third generation Orange resident; Doug and son Matt are co-founders of the North Tustin Street Preservation Group.*

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## LETTERS to the EDITOR

### Sign of the times

**Dear Editor:**

For many years, I have happily looked forward to receiving and reading the local happenings. I am noticing that your paper has taken a move to a more political stance. Your letters to editor posts have become littered with uncivil posts that tend to defame other residents who oppose their position. I don't think these letters best serve the spirit of our city.

Tom Wills  
Orange

### Barrio brush-off?

**Dear Editor:**

The following was sent to HUD Field Representative, Eunice Cho:

We in the El Modena Barrio are requesting HUD to investigate the City of Orange CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) Program for fraud, waste, abuse and discrimination.

The El Modena Barrio has been a poverty pocket since the 1940s, and has been on the CDBG map for the last 50 years. Now the city has moved the El Modena Barrio out of the CDBG map, and excluded the community from receiving any federal funds.

We believe the Barrio was excluded after Councilwoman Ana Gutierrez was elected in District 5, against the wishes of the past city council who retaliated by excluding the El Modena Barrio from the CDBG map. Also, in the last 20 years, CDBG monies have not been spent in the El Modena Barrio, and federal monies have

been allocated to special interests in the city.

We are asking HUD/CDBG to provide oversight and transparency to ensure that federal monies allocated to the City of Orange are spent in accordance to HUD guidelines and procedures. We believe the City of Orange has violated the rights of the El Modena Barrio by denying the community access to federal money designed to help the poor and disadvantaged. We ask for fairness and justice in this request for an investigation.

Sammy Rodriguez  
Orange

### Dirty densing

**Dear Editor:**

In the January *Foothills Sentry*, I read and reread the letter to the editor about Village Mall housing. I agree with all the writer said except that he'd rather have high-density near his home than

duplexes in his neighborhood. I am not disagreeing about where our single-family neighborhoods are going. I believe that the death of single-family neighborhoods is so close that it's not hard to see how quickly it is happening.

In my neighborhood we have apartment parking that overflows into our neighborhoods. Some neighborhoods have opted for "permit parking only," which means that the overflow from the permit parking and the apartments/duplexes branches out into our neighborhoods. It's just laughable (although the laughter is only disguising the frustration and tears of anger) what "progress" has brought upon us.

My neighborhood doesn't have high-density dwellings yet. We do have duplexes, old apartments, grandparent units, and over filled homes with more persons than a single family. University students are here in full force.

The state's claim that we need more affordable housing and more units should be built in single-family communities discounts those who bought homes in a neighborhood that was supposed to be single-family only. We are doomed if something doesn't change. Actually I wonder who can afford to live in those "so called" affordable units anyway?

Mary Keough  
Orange

**New sheriff in town**

**Dear Editor:**

Hooray! Citizens of Orange, we have a breath of fresh air in our city council. Mayor Dan Slater has publicly announced his open door policy. Twice a week, Mayor Slater is available to listen one-

on-one to community concerns regarding the City of Orange. Of course, it is by appointment only, so be sure to set one up. I can confirm this works. Not too long ago, I made an appointment and met with Mayor Slater. This is the type of change and communication the City of Orange needs for its future. I look forward to seeing the continued growth and prosperity of Orange with Mayor Slater at the helm.

Laurie Burnett Cesena  
Orange

**Dear Editor:**

The value of the new mayor and city council was apparent in the first meeting of the Orange City Council on Jan. 10. It was obvious from the start that this mayor is vastly different from his predecessor.

Mayor Dan Slater proposed, and it was unanimously approved, that the city council have meetings twice per month, instead of once. This will allow more access for the citizens to be heard, and more issues addressed.

The highlight of this meeting was the agenda request by Councilmember Ana Gutierrez to obtain more information about the proposed project on the Chandler-Hurwitz site. Kudos to Gutierrez for standing up for the rights of citizens to have real information on an important issue. The project aims to fill in part of the area behind Blue Ribbon Nursery with approximately 750,000 cubic yards of unknown material, from an unspecified site.

The citizens of East Orange are against this project for many reasons, and Interim City Manager Tom Kisela did a commendable job in listing some of the city's (and residents') concerns.

Kisela said that this project is "vague, and lacks details that are important to address" and that a "deeper, and more in-depth look at all possible issues" is needed.

East Orange residents have been fighting to protect this entire area of Santiago Creek for over 25 years, and this is the first time that the city council and mayor have recognized, and openly support, preserving this area of open space.

Perhaps this time, an enlightened mayor and an educated, responsive city council will not be unduly influenced by donor money, outside investment groups and self-interested lobbyists.

John Reina  
Orange Park Acres

**Pile it on**

**Dear Editor:**

Orange residents were shocked during the holidays to learn that Chandler Sand & Gravel is proposing to turn the Hurwitz wetland habitat into a waste disposal site. This same group got caught in 2020 operating an illegal dumpsite on Sully-Miller. Now they want to repeat the offense and destroy a beautiful natural habitat along the Santiago Creek.

It was notable that Interim City Manager (former police chief) Tom Kisela raised some of the concerns the city has regarding the proposal at the Jan. 10 city council meeting. Important and specific questions were asked.

I applaud Chief Kisela for his candor. It's a refreshing change that I know the public appreciates.

I encourage the city to take all needed action to expose Chandler's half-baked proposal and the

flawed documents they are using to get approvals.

Arlene Johnson  
Orange

**Dear Editor:**

Chandler's Sand & Gravel is proposing to operate a waste dump at E. Santiago Canyon Road and Cannon St. The company has applied for a grading permit, but the Santa Ana Regional Water Board is requiring a Waste Discharge Permit before the city may approve a grading permit. A Notice of Public Hearing to adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) was issued, but no public notice was mailed to any nearby residents to this project.

Chandler is calling the site an open mine pit, but for the last 60 years it has been reclaimed and restored by nature. This project will cause extensive damage to natural habitat and endangered species.

The MND has many errors and inconsistencies. There was no independent peer review of the technical studies, which are at least 4-6 years old, and often refer to the Trails at Santiago Creek Project (decertified) Environmental Impact Report.

The MND doesn't appropriately analyze many impacts such as biological resources, traffic, noise, air and water quality. It doesn't discuss specific impacts to the Oakridge Private School, which is within 20 feet of the proposed diesel truck traffic, estimated to be 60 trips daily. Truck traffic on Santiago Canyon Road is incorrectly calculated and missing sufficient information on the surrounding streets and exact routes.

The project setting has continued to evolve, and some State Environmental CEQA criterion has changed, which leads me to question the defensibility of the MND. An Environmental Impact Report should be required.

The public comment period has been extended to Feb. 10. Send comments to Claudia Tenorio at Claudia.Tenorio@WaterBoards.ca.gov.

Leslie Manderscheid  
Orange

**Elections matter**

**Dear Editor:**

By now, you've heard about the ambush firing of Orange Unified's Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent. For parents like me, finally finding peace and stability after a hellish pandemic, it felt like a betrayal. For elected leaders like California Senator Dave Min, it felt like corruption.

But beyond the investigations into Brown Act violations, there are things you probably haven't heard. Things that all of Orange needs to know.

As I write this, I'm fresh from the first regularly scheduled school board meeting of the year. I watched dozens of speakers take the podium. Bright and brave El Modena students. Ordinary moms and dads. Educators with binders and bifocals. They spoke from their hearts. They spoke for their schools.

Then, there was someone else. A man whose comments were so reprehensible, so far from the values we share here in Orange, that his words will echo in my mind for months to come.

Teachers in attendance speaking out against the majority board "should be suspended or fired," he said. A collective gasp went

through the crowd. He doubled down. He called our teachers, there in their sensible shoes after a school day that likely started before sunrise, "animals." He implored the room to imagine what these teachers "must be doing" to our kids.

So who was this guy? He sits on a foundation board for the Orange County Classical Academy. The same Orange County Board of Education-backed religious school where Trustee Madison Miner sends her children. The same school she routinely raises construction funds for.

And this ghoulish, anti-teacher rhetoric isn't a glitch. It's a central part of a script being used nationwide to dismantle public schools and replace them with religious charters. If that sounds extreme, that's because it is. The OUSD majority board has opened a Pandora's box of outside chaos agents and set them loose to lie about our schools and disrupt our normalcy.

But actions, especially ones as reckless as these, have consequences. When teachers are attacked and access to quality, equitable public education declines, so do our property values. More importantly, so do our moral values.

Nicole Barlow  
Orange

**Dear Editor:**

The following remarks were given as public comments at the Jan. 5 OUSD board meeting:

I'm Sara Pelly, proud principal of Fletcher Mandarin Language & GATE Academy, and also a concerned OUSD resident.

After watching CSPAN and the attempt to elect a new Speaker of the House, it occurred to me that when someone becomes an elected official, they are granted instant power. However, they are not immediately given instant information, knowledge or wisdom.

I respectfully acknowledge that I work for you, the OUSD Board of Trustees, and this is your decision to make. However, I also respectfully suggest that you not make this decision in haste, and first collect as much information as you can to ensure this decision is "what's best for kids."

I invite you to come to Fletcher Academy, to see the amazing learning taking place, and the wonderful, rich programs we have, including the Mandarin Dual Immersion program, thanks to the years of dedication of Dr. Gunn Marie Hansen and Cathleen Corella. While I am only speaking on my own behalf, I am certain my fellow principals would invite you to their schools as willingly as I, to see more great things happening in OUSD.

Making a decision now, without having witnessed first-hand what is actually happening in OUSD schools, would not only be in haste, but it would cause a disruption in learning that would be detrimental to our students. As a principal, I am deeply concerned and ask you to consider my request.

Sara Pelly  
Villa Park

**Dear Editor:**

The Orange Unified School Board's secretive and hasty actions are appalling. The newly elected majority demonstrated a willingness to shun their elected commitment to public education, refused to listen to the community, and took action that damaged

the integrity, quality and consistency of education for OUSD students.

The dismissal of the superintendent and assistant superintendent, followed by two interim appointments, negatively impacts students, teachers, parents and the community. There will be a steep learning curve for the two men appointed to replace Dr. Hansen and Ms. Corella that impacts the preparation and administration of state testing, ongoing curriculum development, and support for educators. The time it takes for the two interim appointees to "get up to speed" is time away from academic progress and support for students. This decision wastes taxpayers' dollars with contract buyouts, interim staff and a superintendent search process.

As a resident of Orange and an educator, I do not want my elected officials to dismantle public education systems and ignore the greater good of public education. I do not want a school board that caters to special interests at taxpayers' expense and diverts taxpayers' money from the general fund to make political statements. I do not want a school board that engages in cronyism and demonizes educators and administrators.

That means we need to participate more. Participating starts with awareness. We need awareness for ourselves, and we need to make others aware. After awareness, we need action. Action includes speaking out and supporting public schools by holding elected officials accountable. We cannot allow the tyranny of the minority to overrule the greater public good.

Nancy Watkins  
Orange

**Dear Editor:**

Personal political ideologies are fueling a fight at OUSD. The dismissal of Gunn Marie Hansen and Cathleen Corella spurred a huge uproar in politics and political preferences. Our school children are being used.

Reading blogs and community pages regarding this meeting, I couldn't help but note all the political bias. Words that stood out were "extremists," "bigots," "misogynists" and "radicals." What does this have to do with my child's education? I am assuming there was a reason for these two employees being dismissed. Was it misuse of funds? Did they treat their employees and/or co-workers badly? Was nepotism rampant within the Orange Unified School District?

Why must it come down to the left versus the right? To the ladies who are fueling the recall of the board members, can we wait until the investigation is complete? You cannot blindly throw stones if you do not know the truth. We do not have time for politics. Public school enrollment is down, state test scores are down, and social/emotional/health issues are at an all-time high. And here we are, spiraling out of control. Enough! To everyone who is affiliated, do not use our children for your political agenda.

Jana Lee  
Orange

**Dear Editor:**

For the last six months, I have opened up the *Sentry* to find writers using the Letters to the Editor

See "Letters" continued on page 13

**FOOTHILLS SENTRY**  
The Best News In Town

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### Family Circle of Orange opens membership rolls



Corey Vane with sons Cody (left) and Parker (right) participates in a Family Circle of Orange activity.

Family Circle of Orange (FCO) is hosting a breakfast and playdate, Saturday, Feb. 25 at Grijalva Park. The playdate is open to the community; FCO invites parents to fuel up on coffee while their children use the playground. Coffee, donuts, juice and water will be served.

FCO is opening its membership to those with children under 17 who live, work or go to school in Orange and Villa Park. It provides resources, activities and support for traditional and nontraditional families.

Founded in 2021, Family Circle was started by a few local moms who saw a need for a group that

would include all members of the family – no matter how that family looked. Since then, the group has grown to serve dozens of families.

FCO offers playdates, holiday-themed parties and service opportunities that get children involved in the community. In addition, parents can take part in moms' or dads' nights out and group date nights. This unique family-centered model provides a "village" of connected families that can share experiences and friendships.

Grijalva Park is located at 368 N. Prospect. For information visit [familycirclefororange.org](http://familycirclefororange.org).

### Open letter to the Orange Unified Board of Education and OUSD community

Dear President Ledesma and Trustees Ortega, Rumsey and Miner:

As members of the Orange Unified School District Board of Education, duly elected by the voters, we are troubled by the recent action taken by the Board majority in releasing the Superintendent without cause, with just 24-hour notice, and appointing your pre-selected Interim Superintendent immediately thereafter. We are equally troubled by your decision to place the Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services on administrative leave pending an undefined and non-agendized "academic audit" and immediately appointing your pre-selected Acting Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services.

We are deeply concerned by the appearance of wrongdoing created by the Board majority's actions, which raise questions about improper collusion and conspiracy to violate the Brown Act, questions of cronyism, and the exclusion of at least three elected Board members (Erickson, Yamasaki, Page) from any meaningful opportunity for input, discussion, or deliberation. These decisions are among the most important decisions we make as a Board. The fact that two offers of employment were made by Mr. Ledesma prior to us even knowing who the candidates were, and without any vetting of candidates, public notice of candidates, interviews, or anything else that would constitute due diligence with industry-

established standards, is outrageous and reckless. This act has created chaos and fear among employees, and it chips away at the trust parents, students, and the community have in us.

Elections have consequences. But those consequences cannot include a total abdication of a duty to govern responsibly, to ensure the stability of our organization, to protect our students, to work as a governing team, and to ensure the very best qualified and vetted candidates are placed in charge of our students' education. Decisions like these must be done with careful deliberation, based upon objective qualifications, and without regard to personal political agendas or personal relationships. Further, they must be done with the full participation of the entire Board of Education. The public had a right to know who was being considered, and they must feel confident that the people chosen to fill these powerful positions were fully vetted and fit for the jobs.

We demand that you rescind

all actions taken in closed session on Jan. 5, 2023 and start the process over. We also demand the appointment of a neutral party to commence an investigation of possible Brown Act violations on your part.

Sincerely,  
Kris Erickson, Orange Unified School District Trustee  
Andrea Yamasaki, Orange Unified School District Trustee  
Ana Page, Orange Unified School District Trustee



The 2023 Orange May Parade theme has a 70s retro vibe, "Peace, Love & Orange."

Applications are now open for the hip, groovy Orange May Parade that will begin at 10 a.m. on Saturday, May 6. See [OrangeMayParade.com](http://OrangeMayParade.com) for sponsor and parade info.

MAJOR DAN SLATER

Happy Valentine's Day!

[dan@DanSlater.com](mailto:dan@DanSlater.com)  
714-744-2219

### Looking for a new primary doctor?

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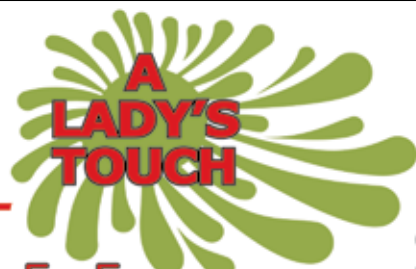


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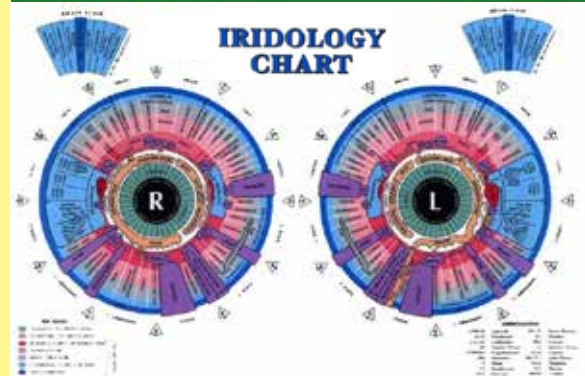
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## The way of water

### Specific Plan

Justin Kirk --- not the “Weeds” actor, but Planning Division Manager, OC Public Works --- was the star, all-around expert and good sport in the well-produced, well-attended Tuesday, Jan. 10 performance of the Inter-Canyon League (ICL). It was a Zoom meeting hosted by ICL President and civic impresario Geoff Sarkissian, re-elected later that evening. Kirk promised specifically to not be specific about one specific circumstance of alleged illegal grading and construction on a historic olive-tree lined stretch of Modjeska Canyon Road. He instead offered a helpful overview of code enforcement activities, resources, and responsibilities, taking questions from engaged --- and several enraged --- participants, assessing along the way both the legitimacy and practical limitations of the Sil-Mod plan. But wait! Reliably prepared Janet Wilson, ICL Land Use Committee member who

knows the Sil-Mod Site Specific Plan by heart, unshyly shared its extremely specific legal precedent, established via a judge’s March 2019 ruling, in *Save the Canyons Coalition v. OC Board of Supervisors*: “... there is nothing in the SMSP that supports an argument that these provisions are merely general policies subject to exceptions.”

### Neighborly and naughtily

A meeting like this brings people out, and mostly brings out the best in people. Everybody’s got a story of reporting, or being reported on, and while residents like the Plan, some dislike the county. One Zoomer suggested a one-year code enforcement moratorium, a period for owners with illegal or unpermitted structures, fences, or additions to fix to code without penalty after improvements. Kirk gently reiterated his agency’s limited resources. Confusing the word “reactionary” with “reactive” to describe

Public Works’ mission may not have been purposeful on his part. When inspectors visit following any complaints, they seem to try hard not (!) to notice more than one specific violation.

### Clear as mud

Jean Chapman identified debris and mud from the thus-far unidentified parcels as a safety threat. She resides downstream. Kirk agreed, responding that the unnamed site was being monitored. Private roads complicate, as in Silverado last year, where the ideological commitment to private property rights was abandoned when folks needed help from Big Government. Jennifer Crocker offered helpful historical perspective on the property everybody was talking about, or not talking about specifically, until they were. Daughter of the one-time owner of many Mo Canyon properties, she read chapter and verse restrictions and responsibilities falling to developers, right down to plants removed and replaced per area plan. She was disappointed at potential harm to Count Bozenta’s old trees, as was Francesca Duff, who noted their historic and symbolic importance.

### Code coda

All pretense regarding loca-

tion of the specific alleged violation was abandoned after Janet Wilson asked, finally, the question everyone wanted to. How to stop development, restore the property, and assure safety from debris flow? And who’d pay for remediation from damage so far? Kirk confirmed documented encroachment on the adjacent county easement as within his purview. The county would absorb costs of short-term remediation. Long-term reparation would be assigned to the property owners. Several overly enthusiastic citizens offered to do the work themselves.

Kirk indicated that at least one parcel owner had already actually sold. Correspondence between Janet, owners and the county regarding the case was, all agreed, part of the public record after Janet generously offered to perform a dramatic reading of emails she’d already shared. That’s the way she rolls. Documents will soon be on the ICL website, and anybody can file a public records request. By way of follow-up on all complaints, specific or general, Kirk suggested always asking who the assigned officer is. If the case has been closed, its resolution might not have been “noticed” even after somebody noticed. Residents can request it be reopened.

### Weather permitting

Inspectors, Kirk promised, would be out the next day due to the rain event, a nice bit of synchronicity, or only obvious. The next morning, tap water was out in Modjeska, IRWD having failed to complete a routine procedure. It was back in four hours. The reservoir of irony is always full.

### Other agenda items?

ICL Secretary Scott Breedon was also re-elected, after reporting \$750 raised through canyon recycling. Donate soda cans and bottles on the second Saturday of the month at the Community Center. Melody McWilliams shared news and artifacts from the History Committee, including a photo of a handsome young Ed Fredette in front of The Castle, site of historic criminal hippie drug culture hijinks featuring Timothy Leary. Friends, if this exciting meeting report and civics lesson hasn’t persuaded you to join the ICL, nothing will. Voting membership means an annual \$5 donation and attending three meetings.

### Hot water

Serrano Water District reports a 40% increase in capacity at Irvine Lake. That’s about 3,500 acre-feet, with more flowing in. The lake had been at a historic low.

## Orange city council embraces change

### By Tina Richards

The new Orange City Council, led by Mayor Dan Slater, dove into the new year with a unanimous agreement to change several long-standing council protocols at its Jan. 10 meeting.

Those changes include: meeting twice a month, instead of just once; and increasing city committee and commission memberships to seven people, to allow each council member to nominate an individual for each citizen-led body. Of primary import is the planning commission, which, at five members, has, according to some council members, left parts of the city underrepresented.

Slater also announced the formation of a committee focused on the homeless and the need to establish a shelter within the city. Charter committee members will include Councilmembers Denis Bilodeau and Jon Dumitru.

Residents are encouraged to apply for city commissions and committees via the city’s website. Applications should be sent to the council as a whole. Any council member can make a recommendation for a committee membership, regardless of district. “I maintain final approval,” Slater said. “That’s the mayor’s job.”

### Meeting two nights

The council used to meet twice monthly, but that was changed to once a month 10 years ago. The reduced meeting schedule resulted in long agendas that often took until 11 p.m. or later to get through. Residents who came to address a specific agenda item would often give up and go home as the hour got later and their issue was yet to be heard.

“One meeting a month doesn’t get the job done,” Slater said. “When can we move to two meetings?” The council’s desire to begin meeting twice monthly in February was quashed by Interim City Attorney Mary Binning and Interim City Manager Tom Kise-la. “We can bring the resolution back in February,” Binning said, “and it can be effective March 1.”

Kise-la agreed to look into a

February start, but noted that the increase “might take more staff work than we know. We haven’t done it since 2013. When we switch, we need to step up.”

### Modest member benefits

The council also agreed that members should have the option to get medical insurance, a benefit not available to them in over a decade. Orange is the only city in Orange County that does not offer council members medical coverage. Stressing that it would be “bare bones, Slater asked Kise-la to come back with suggestions on what that would entail.

Starting this year, council members will be paid a \$600 monthly

stipend, an amount based on the city’s population and established by state code. Orange councilmembers used to get stipends, but they (like medical insurance) were discontinued by a council vote a decade ago. None of the changes, except for the stipend, will take effect immediately.

Mayor Dan Slater is joined by newly elected councilmembers Denis Bilodeau, District 4, and John Gyllenhammer, District 6. Returning members are Jon Dumitru, District 2; Arianna Barrios, District 1; Ana Gutierrez, District 5; and Kathy Tavoularis, District 3. Barrios was elected Mayor Pro Tem, also by unanimous vote.

## Covenant presents “From Broadway with Love”



Tom Horvath

tenor, and has performed in numerous productions throughout the U.S., including off-Broadway in New York, television commercials, and at Disneyland in the “Fantasy Faire” show. He performs an array of Broadway and classical music, religious hymns and soft pop.

The program is open to the community, and will be presented in St. Andrew’s Hall 1855 Orange-Olive Road. The doors open at 11 a.m.; the program begins at 11:30 a.m. Men are always welcome to attend.

The cost for the program and catered lunch is \$15 per person, payable in advance; reservations are required before noon on Feb. 13, by calling Linda at (951) 237-9888. If you wish to attend the program only at 12:30 p.m., reservations are required; the cost is \$5, payable at the door.

The Women’s Fellowship of Covenant Presbyterian Church will present singer/performer Tom Horvath at its monthly luncheon on Thursday, Feb. 16. Horvath’s theme, “From Broadway with Love,” celebrates Valentine’s Day. Tom Horvath is a theatrical

**FOOTHILL COMMUNITIES ASSOCIATION**

**ANNUAL MEETING**

*Save THE date*

**March 6, 2023 / 6:30pm**

The Foothill Communities Association (FCA) is a nonprofit corporation located in the unincorporated area known as North Tustin, and has strived since 1964 to preserve and enhance our neighborhoods of over 10,000 homes, the largest unincorporated area in Orange County.

Please attend our annual meeting to meet your local agencies, representatives, FCA board members, your neighbors, and to discuss local concerns.

For more information on the FCA and updates on the annual meeting, please visit <https://www.fcahome.org/>

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### TAWC solicits scholarship applications

Tustin Area Woman's Club (TAWC), an all-volunteer philanthropic community service organization, has announced that its college scholarship application forms are available at tustinarea-womansclub.com, or via each Tustin high school's website.

For over 60 years, TAWC has given college scholarships to deserving Tustin Unified School District students. This year, TAWC will offer a \$1,000 scholarship to one or more graduating senior(s) from each of the four high schools in the district. The deadline is March 1.

### Villa Park Rotary Club sponsors new club to combat human trafficking

By Jay Applebaum

The Rotary Club of Villa Park awarded a \$1,500 grant to help establish a new online club, the Rotary E-Club of the West for Prevention of Human Trafficking.

Villa Park Rotary became aware of the scope of the human trafficking problem in Orange County through an Anaheim-based nonprofit, Kherut, founded by restaurateur Yves Masquefa.

That organization's goal is to help rescue victims of sex or human trafficking by providing training in the culinary arts and long-term employment in a safe and supportive environment.

Villa Park Rotary has support-

ed this effort by donating funds to outfit a food truck that will provide employment for these individuals.

The new E-Club President Rima Nashashibi is no stranger to this issue. She is an internationally known political and community leader who has over 20 years of experience in speaking out on women's issues, gender equality, and racial and religious discrimination.

She has won numerous awards including, "Women Making a Difference in Orange County 2012" by the California State Senate, and a recognition award

from the U.S. Congress in the same year.

Rima is determined to raise awareness of human trafficking through presentations at schools, religious and community organizations to prevent our youth from becoming victims. The Villa Park Rotary will work with her in supporting these goals.



Villa Park Rotary Club President Vito Canuso and Rima Nashashibi

### OTPA meeting features what's new in town and city hall



Photo by Tony Richards

OTPA members sample appetizers provided by the Richland.

The annual meeting of the Old Towne Preservation Association (OTPA) was held at the new Richland hotel, Jan. 15.

About 150 people attended the meeting, which featured updates from newly elected Mayor Dan Slater, District 1 Councilwoman Arianna Barrios and Interim City Manager (and former police chief) Tom Kisela, as well as a tour of the boutique hotel.

Slater was met with enthusiastic applause following his introduction by OTPA President Sandy Quinn. He noted that the last time he was in the building, it was a mortuary, and he was there for a funeral, adding that some 7,000 funerals had been held there. More than half the audience indicated, by show of hands, that they, too, had attended funerals at that location.

The mayor recapped the first city council meeting that he had presided over, and previewed an item on the February agenda. He said he plans to initiate two committees. The goal of the Santiago Creek Preservation Committee will be to turn the waterway into "park land that we all can be proud of." The Clean Orange Committee will focus on code enforcement, illegal signage and vendors.

"We can't wait to get started,"

Councilwoman Barrios said of the new city council, "everyone has ideas and projects they want to pursue." Her pursuits, she said, include protecting the treasures that are in District 1. "We've invested in our properties and our neighborhoods, and that's worth protecting." The Plaza district, she added, needs to be a balance of retail and restaurants, not too many of one over the other.

Interim City Manager Tom Kisela explained that this "temporary assignment" is keeping him busy. Because so much of the city's infrastructure is old, public works has been doing a lot of construction on streets, sewer lines, piping and potholes. Much of the work is financed by federal dollars, he explained, and it is doled out incrementally; that's why work is one block at a time.

As a resident of Old Towne, he said, "my problems are your problems." He's working on parking issues and recognizes that the increase in ADUs (accessory dwelling units) is challenging. "We'll fight the good fight," he assured the audience.

The Richland, 137 E. Maple, opened Jan. 27. "We want to be part of this community," General Manager Cassandra Miranda said. "Join us for dinner or cocktails, or hold your event here."

### Orange Park Women's League adds Bunco



Karen Ashford, left, and Jamie Spence

The Bunco Babes of the OPA Women's League are organized

and ready to start rolling the dice. Leaders Jamie Spence and Karen Ashford have put together an enthusiastic group which will meet the first Thursday evening of each month at members' homes.

You don't need any experience to play this simple and fast-moving dice game. It is well-known for its contagious laughter and the new friends it cultivates. Very simply, the rules go like this... Roll - Chat - Repeat! It's that easy.

For more information about this interest section or the many other sections enjoyed by members, see opawomen.org.

### Save the date for WCO Flower Show

Get those flowers and plants growing! Enter those special blossoms and blooms in the 84th Annual Woman's Club of Orange Flower Show, "Old Towne Blooms."

The show will be held from 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. on Thursday, April 13 at the clubhouse, 121 S. Center St. Be sure to get the young folks involved, and enter them in the preschool through 12th grade divisions for homegrown plants and flower displays. For further information, see womanscluborange.org.

### Elks combat drugs through education



Orange Elks J.C. Cortez and Mike Cash address parents about the realities of drugs and their kids. The Elks partner with Orange Unified, the Orange County Department of Education and Orange GRIP, and provide literature and resource information in English and Spanish.



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# A reinvented Mary's Kitchen is back to serve the homeless



Mary's Kitchen volunteers celebrate the facility's new mission.

By John Underwood

For almost 30 years Mary's Kitchen provided safety and refuge behind its gates at the end of an industrial cul-de-sac leased from the city of Orange. And for those three decades it was by the city's own accounts a mutually beneficial partnership.

Then in 2021 the City of Orange turned on it, calling the non-profit food pantry an "attractive nuisance" and a toll on its law enforcement services it could "no longer tolerate." Despite the fact that a federal judge found no statistical evidence of Mary's Kitchen as a societal or criminal burden on the city, local officials pressed forward with a hasty eviction of the homeless kitchen, which up to that point had been no financial burden to the city, the non-profit paying its own way.

After a lengthy court battle, Mary's Kitchen was evicted from its Struck Avenue enclave in the summer of 2022 so the city, it was eventually revealed, could make way for a truck logistics depot.

That might have been the end of Mary's Kitchen and its illustrious run as a last-chance resource for the unhoused and the hungry of Orange County. It certainly was presumed dead by its critics and many homeless advocates who seemed resigned to write Mary's Kitchen off as the end of an era. But these voices heralding the demise of Mary's Kitchen underestimated its formidable CEO and matriarch Gloria Sues.

Since the passing of the kitchen's founder Mary McAnena, Gloria Sues has been the driving force and guiding light behind Mary's vision of service to the homeless and hungry. Drawing on her pragmatic experience as a real estate broker, Gloria elevated Mary's Kitchen into a connected network of partnerships in the surplus food world even before the City of Orange pulled the welcome mat out from under her.

Gloria never wavered in her mission, and soon gathered her supporters, volunteers, friends and like-minded partners who saw in this crippled giant of a resource a connection to the hungry and unhoused of OC that was ir-

replaceable. Floundering at first in false starts and broken promises trying to relocate the kitchen, Sues realized there was a larger role the nonprofit could play. It could connect surplus food and services to the homeless by creating a distribution and delivery network crisscrossing all of Orange County.

Pulling together decades of old partnerships and creating new ones, Mary's Kitchen is back with a warehouse in Anaheim. It is at the center of a growing surplus food distribution hub renamed Mary's Kitchen and Pantry.

Currently, Mary's Kitchen and Pantry is delivering donated food products to over a dozen nonprofits and faith-based congregations at least three days a week, with hopes to expand distribution service soon to six days.

The new Mary's Kitchen and Pantry has also adapted its mission to new forms of giving. At Calvary Chapel in Tustin, for example, where drive-through giving is the order of the day, Mary's volunteers, including Gloria, arrive early and stay late to provide surplus food and helping hands for the monthly drive up-load up-and-drive-off event they call Pop-up Pantry. "All this couldn't happen without the partnership of Mary's Kitchen," says Tustin Calvary Chapel Associate Pastor Matt Doan, who oversees some 200 families matriculating through the back parking lot. "We used to service maybe a few dozen families in cars. Gloria and her volunteers have allowed us to expand with the need."

Another food outreach program on Gloria's to-do list is a return to serving the homeless directly. "I made that promise to the homeless on the streets and to Mary. I intend to keep it. At this moment we are where the Lord wants us, on His timeline, serving and delivering to large numbers through other outreach groups. But my heart is always with those who are on the street struggling to help themselves."

To that end, Gloria and her staff will also begin serving families and individuals once again, not

quite on a scale as before, but out of its warehouse by phone appointment only, five days a week. Staff will take orders for food and an assortment of household items and arrange for pick up at the warehouse.

Gloria's personal commitment to the plight of the homeless has been recognized numerous times, three times just in the past year, including being named as one of the OC Register's most influential people, and also honored in 2022 with a National Freedom Foundation Award for her humanitarian efforts.

When asked how she dealt with praise and condemnation all at the same time, she said, "You just have to smile through it all ... and go with the good."

John Underwood is a journalist and documentary producer based in Orange County who has reported extensively on homeless issues. Links to his reporting can be found at [losaltv.org](http://losaltv.org). Mary's Kitchen can be reached at (714) 633-0444.



Empty tables dominate the former Mary's Kitchen patio.



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## Assistance League invites you to Embrace Orange

Assistance League of Orange will hold its annual "Embrace Orange" gala fundraiser, "Passport to Generosity" on Sunday, April 16, beginning at 4 p.m. The event, including a live auction, lavish silent auction, an opportunity drawing, dinner and dancing, will be held at the Balboa Bay Club in Newport Beach.

A highlight of the evening will be the presentation of the Community Circle Award to Vikki and Mark Murphy, in recognition of their civic leadership and extensive philanthropic endeavors, both individually and jointly, in the greater Orange community.

In addition to being Executive Vice President of Wilson Automotive, Vikki has also served on the Orange Chamber of Commerce, the Santiago Canyon College Foundation Board, and the Board of Directors of Orange-wood Children's Foundation. She has received numerous awards for her contributions to the community, including "Good Scout,"

Orange's "Citizen of the Year" and Community Foundation of Orange "Community Champion." Vikki is also a published author, conducts seminars for women's groups and raises Monarch butterflies.

Mark is an Orange native, Orange High Panther and served as Mayor of Orange and as a councilman as well as on various commissions and committees. During his tenure, he was instrumental in the completion of such community projects as Grijalva Park, the Outlets at Orange, Main Orange Library expansion, the preservation of Plaza Park, six other parks, and the creation of the Paseo. He was previously named "Citizen of the Year" and Orange County's "Local Elected Official of the Year." He serves on a number of regional boards and is active in local organizations, including the Orange Elks (32 years), the Friendly Center, the Orange Public Library Foundation and Community Foundation

of Orange.

The couple, married since 1997, represent the core values embraced by Assistance League of Orange: Respect, Integrity, Compassion, Commitment and Service.

The public is invited to honor the Murphys and support the programs of the Assistance League of Orange.

For sponsorship or ticket information, see [alorange.org](http://alorange.org) or contact chair Deena Arnold at (714) 287-3795. Tickets are \$150 prior to Feb. 20; \$175 until the March 27 deadline. All funds will benefit the organization's numerous community philanthropic proj-



Vikki and Mark Murphy with Harley

ects, which assist veterans, students, babies, foster youth and unaccompanied women.

## Mardi Gras to benefit Alzheimer's Orange County

Oakmont of Orange, an assisted living and memory care facility, is sponsoring a Mardi Gras Casino Night on Wednesday, Feb. 22 to benefit Alzheimer's Orange County. The event, which will be held from 4 to 6 p.m., will feature casino games, hors d'oeuvres and refreshments. The public is invited to attend, be a sponsor, or donate to the silent auction; RSVP to (714) 912-8980 before Feb. 19.

## When? What? Why? Whodunit?

The Anaheim Public Library Foundation's 26th Mystery Authors Luncheon, "Anatomy of Mystery," will be held on Sunday, April 30 at the Sheraton Park Hotel at the Anaheim Resort.

The extensive silent auction,

with every basket or item riffing off the name of a mystery novel, will open at 11 a.m., with the luncheon and program following at 1 p.m.

The author panel of David Putnam, George Fong and Rachel

Howzell Hall will share insights on the mysterious process of writing a mystery. Individual tickets are \$75, a table of 10 is \$700. See [anaheimlibraryfoundation.com](http://anaheimlibraryfoundation.com) Proceeds support books, programming and library services.

## OUSD Board majority supporters raise concerns

The wrath of OUSD parents and community members directed at Trustees Rick Ledesma, John Ortega, Angie Rumsey and Madison Miner for the abrupt firing of Superintendent Gunn Marie Hansen and the suspension of Assistant Superintendent Cathleen Corella has been tempered by supporters who believe they did the right thing.

"Change is always hard, but change is good," was the predominant theme among the pro-board speakers at the Jan. 19 meeting. "Two hundred people shouting you down are not the majority," one insisted. "Changing the superintendent is what we voted for."

"Hansen's social/emotional curriculum does not jive with this board," said another. "I applaud you for starting a curriculum audit. The sex, gender, equity and critical race theory contracts should be reviewed. Bowing to popular sentiment is against the education code. We voted for change, we want a higher academic standard."

The speakers favoring the board's actions cited low test scores, lack of distinguished schools, mask mandates, COVID policies, teachers union influence and inappropriate sex education as reasons to overhaul OUSD. Many of the speakers were affiliated with Orange County Classical Academy, a charter school which is no longer part of OUSD.

Concerns about test scores and distinguished schools were challenged by other public speakers. Test scores are lower everywhere

due to COVID; OUSD has some 20 distinguished schools, but none last year because the district was too busy with the pandemic to apply for them. Mask mandates were set by the state, not the district. Vaccines were never mandated. Parents can opt-out of programs they find unacceptable.

One parent brought an issue to the board that horrified everyone. "My second grader has a tablet provided by the district. It has a digital library app on it," she reported. Within that digital library, she found a book that contained profane language and sexual content. The passages she read aloud were clearly not meant for a second grader.

Board members were stunned; Ortega demanded that book be removed from the digital library app immediately and his colleagues agreed. That material should not have been there, and several board members vowed to investigate the publisher that provided it.

The app is supplied by a third party and contains over 10,000 digital books, sorted by age appropriateness. Districts throughout the state use it, and OUSD adopted it by unanimous vote during the pandemic. A parent had previously complained about that specific book and it had been removed last year. Apparently, when the published updated the app over winter break, it reappeared. It has now been removed.

Parents who find questionable material on apps provided by OUSD are encouraged to let the district know immediately.

Pina's training as a chef took place in the kitchens of Benevento, Italy by her mother's side. She is a maestro of the art of regional Italian cooking. Pina insists upon creating every dish from scratch, without the use of flavor enhancers, including her hand-crafted sausage, manicotti, cannelloni and desserts.

The meeting, followed by the food handling/cooking demonstration of Italian cuisine, will begin at 5:30 p.m. in the community room at Our Saviour's Lutheran Church. If you are interested in becoming a VPWL member or learning more about membership, please contact membership chair Carla Gilkerson (714) 872-3805 or see [vpwl.org](http://vpwl.org).



## VPWL to meet and eat

The General Meeting for the Villa Park Women's League will be held Thursday, Feb. 16. "Cooking with Pina" will feature a food handling/cooking demonstration of Italian cuisine by chef-owner Pina of Pina's Bistro.

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### TAWC salutes Young Women



Leyona Hoang

The Tustin Area Woman's Club (TAWC) named Leyona Hoang and Fiona Fang as its Young Women of the Month for January.

Leyona Hoang attends Tustin High, and was born and raised in Tustin. She has received the Superintendent's Honor Roll award each semester, and has participated in the Model United Nations program. She served on the High Secretariat team as the Director of General Logistics for the program's 29th and 30th annual conferences. Outside of school, she is involved in her community as a member of the Teen Advisory Board and a volunteer at the Tustin Library. Hoang plans to attend UC, Los Angeles or UC, San Diego studying psychology.



Fiona Fang

Fiona Fang from Beckman High is a four-year member of the school's Wind Ensemble and Marching Band. She has explored multiple instruments and plays seven of them. Fang speaks English, Mandarin and Spanish. She has worked extensively in the restaurant industry, focusing her efforts on her family business, Go Yummy. Her accomplishments include launching online take-out and delivery orders, rebranding the restaurant by redesigning the logo, menu and interior of the restaurant. She analyzed and created marketing plans and worked with legal contracts. She looks forward to pursuing a career in business while also making the most of her creative abilities.

### Orange CoC serves up mayor

Orange Chamber of Commerce hosts a monthly "Eggs & Issues." Over breakfast, business leaders and elected officials provide updates and information on topics relevant to the community.

About 70 people packed O SEA, Jan. 24, to hear Mayor Dan Slater. In the hour allotted, Mayor Slater spoke to a variety of topics.

City staff: former Police Chief Tom Kisela is doing a great job as interim city manager, the council is happy with him and may extend a two-year contract; Interim City Attorney Mary Binning may retire in June or July; replacement options are being discussed.

The Hub: the replacement for Mary's Kitchen is doing a good job at giving a "hand up" rather than a "hand out," but the city needs to give taxpayers a break from the \$1 million per year tab.

Village at Orange: Costco has been looking for a site in Orange, and the Sears building would be a perfect location, were it not for the current lease obligations.

A 55 Freeway off-ramp at Meats would be beneficial for a Costco, and would also alleviate traffic at Orange Lutheran High. Years ago, the Meats bridge

was widened for that purpose.

Paseo: Looking at compromises so as not to have buses rerouted on residential streets.

Street Fair: Suggest moving to October or May, away from the hottest weekend of the year.

To hear the complete interview, get membership or event information, see OrangeChamber.com.

### It's the Year of the Rabbit!

Celebrate the Lunar New Year outside Villa Park City Hall on Sat., Feb. 11 from 1 to 3 p.m. There will be red envelopes, a photo booth, student performances, and the dragon dance. The free event is sponsored by the VP Community Services Foundation, the North Orange County Chinese School and SoCal Edison.

### Local Democrats create new community organization

The Tustin and Orange Democratic clubs have combined to create the Central Orange County Democratic Club (COCDC).

Members of those clubs have been working together for a long time. The communities of Tustin, Tustin Hills, Orange and Villa Park border each other and share congressional districts and community issues. The natural outgrowth of this has been a desire from members of both clubs to work together even more, and blend their two clubs into one expanded club.

COCDC will hold general meetings 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.

The Wednesday, Feb. 22 general meeting will begin at 6 p.m. with a pizza party so members of the combined clubs and new members can socialize. That will be followed at 7 p.m. with an election of officers, and then an in-depth program focusing on recent anti-democratic attempts to take over public education in Orange County.

Anyone wanting to get involved is welcome to join the Central Orange County Democratic Club. Inquiries can be sent to CentralOCDems@gmail.com.

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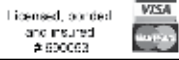
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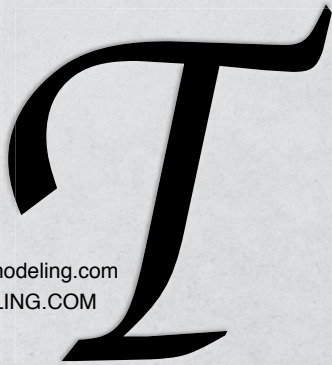
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*Tell them you saw them in the Foothills Sentry!*

### "Letters" continued from page 5

page as their own personal blog, much of which is outright lies and fabrications. These writers and their comrades continue to bully parents online and at board meetings, and are just all around nasty.

I am so sick of seeing these people representing parents of OUSD, as if they are the spokesholes for all parents. Let me assure you, they are not. Many of us stand by the board and its decision to fire the superintendent and her assistant. I hope you give other viewpoints a print in the *Sentry*, and not just those whose values align with woke ideology. I commend the board majority for putting education first, addressing failing student scores and getting kids back on the path to success.

Megan Ybarra-Casas  
Orange

### Dear Editor:

In a moment of life when I should be cherishing time spent with my newborn, having tea parties with my three-year-old, and playing catch with my five-year-old, I am instead defending their futures from the reckless actions of a short-sighted majority on the Orange Unified Board of Education.

Just a few months ago, my wife and I dropped our oldest child

off for his first day of transitional kindergarten at Jordan Academy, one of OUSD's dual language immersion schools.

We didn't know how he would take to learning a new language, interacting with new children, adapting to new adults, figuring out how to order cafeteria lunch. In only a few days, it was obvious - he had found a new home, new friends and a safe environment.

As the spring semester begins, I should be coordinating tee-ball with the other parents. Instead, I am coordinating recall efforts with the other parents. I should be helping my son pick his after-school activities. Instead, I am hoping the funding remains for after-school activities. I should be asking him at the dinner table, "Como estuvo tu dia?" Instead, I am rushing away from dinner to attend marathon board meetings.

Firing two well-regarded administrators over winter break with as little notice as legally allowed and costing the district \$1 million is not sound governance; it is the systematic destabilization of OUSD that Rick Ledesma, John Ortega, Angie Rumsey and Madison Miner have been waiting for years to begin.

Scott Resnick  
Orange

### Dear Editor:

Last night we witnessed an-

other attack on our children and community by Rick Ledesma, John Ortega, Angie Rumsey and Madison Miner.

Despite overwhelming comments against their plan, they would rather light millions of dollars of our tax money on fire instead of investing that in our schools.

Then they decided to spend at least \$60k more of our tax dollars to hire John Ortega's business partner, Edward Velasquez, as the Interim Superintendent. \$60k for a man who lives in Idaho -- and for seven weeks of work. This is financial malfeasance.

Why are they doing this? It's an agenda fueled by lies and championed by grifters. This same agenda is playing out in Placentia/Yorba Linda, the Orange County Board of Education and across the nation.

Their half-baked lies about CRT, sex-ed and LGBTQ Americans are complete fabrications, but to an uninformed person they sound scary. These lies only work when enough parents aren't involved and aren't paying attention.

We must counter these lies and attacks and save our school district.

Please, please join the OUSD Recall.

Soren Williams  
Anaheim

### Dear Editor:

I am alarmed and angry that someone who believes that the 2020 presidential election was stolen is sitting on our school board, making decisions as to what our children will be taught in public school. It is well documented that the election was legitimate and that those who are convinced otherwise are deluded by lies and propaganda. We cannot allow someone who is so dangerously misguided anywhere near the decision-making levers of our school board. In a campaign interview with "Voice of OC," Madison Miner answered the question: "Do you believe the last presidential election was stolen?" with "Not applicable." Only a fool would be blind to what that answer says. Dangerous conspiracy theories have no place on our school board.

Mitch Faris  
Orange

### Dear Editor:

The Apostle Paul wrote that "Everything is permissible for me, but not everything is beneficial..."

In the same sense, the new majority on the Orange Unified School District Board of Trustees has the power to make whatever decisions they choose. The question should be: Are your decisions beneficial?

As the parent of a child attending an OUSD school, I question the board's decision to dismiss a respected Superintendent (and her immediate subordinate) without cause. That decision, which could cost OUSD up to \$1 million, came across as neither thoughtful nor considerate.

A parent in support of the new board majority spoke about how she had concerns about the quality of OUSD schools, so she enrolled her child in a charter school. I applaud that parent - and others - for being proactive in their children's education. That is their choice.

Conversely, parents who choose to send their child to public school have the same rights when it comes to choice. And the OUSD Board of Trustees are elected to be shepherds of the public school district. As the Apostle Peter wrote, "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them - not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve."

I ask this new board majority to respect the wishes of the majority of parents and students in the flock they have been entrusted to care for. Otherwise, I suggest they choose a different flock.

Eugene Fields  
Orange

## McPherson Science Fair is back!

*Every problem needs a solution.*  
~ Daniel Dillon, 8th grade

*Science is fun!*  
~ Trey Esperanza, 8th grade

There IS hope for the future. It was evident at the science fair.

The in-person science fair returned to McPherson Magnet School, Jan. 18-19, after the COVID hiatus. Scientists from grades six, seven and eight in lab coats or professional attire (one tuxedo), stood before their project boards, prepared to be interviewed by volunteer judges, many professional scientists and former McPherson students (two state science project winners) and parents.

The 208 projects spanned topics from testing the five-second rule to energy, sugar, worms, soccer, boba, toxicity, energy drinks, music and doodling. Science teachers Danielle Garcia, sixth and eighth grade, Elizabeth Conrad, seventh grade, started the projects last September, adding a new facet each week. Students worked through the proper scientific method – hypothesis, prediction, data gathering, analysis, conclusion – documenting and learning along the way.

Eighth graders Daniel Dillon and Malia Tek, with Canyon High ninth grader Vincent Chen, have already snagged an award for their Ammo-Alert coding app, taking second place in the Congressional App Challenge, with special recognition by 45th District Rep. Katie Porter. Their app, designed for a school, runs in the background of a laptop and uses AI to analyze noise, detecting the sound of a gunshot. It immediately texts a warning to teachers and students, contacts law enforcement and OUSD officials. They will go on to OCSEF, competing in the high school level. Daniel Dillon also found time to complete a second OCSEF-quality science project with partner Taede Mai.

The scientists who received top marks from a minimum of three judges will go on to compete at the county level at Orange County Science and Engineering Fair, Mar. 8, and possibly continue to the state level.

The sixth graders continuing to OCSEF are: Nathan Lew, Alyssa Mastroianni and Andrea Bonilla, Colin Crespi, Tyson Gilliam, Ellie Sloan; Alternates Henry Glenn, Sanaiya Hall.

Seventh graders going to OC-

SEF include: Allison Aguirre and Ari Ok, Alejandro Bonilla and Lily Mastroianni, Ollie Brunner, Hailey Libunao, Emily Nguyen, Tristan Spanner, Aaron Thangaiyan; Alternates Filumena Martin and Jazz Silva, Vanessa Silva.

Eight grade students who will be competing at OCSEF: Whit-

ney Cohen and Scarlett Poitra, Maya Parada, Malia Tek and Daniel Dillon (high school level with Vincent Chen), Aarna Batra, Ethan Halter, Daniel Dillon and Taede Mai, Nyla Goodjoin, Shalani Perera, Sophia Wein; Alternates Conner Davis and Brayden Walton, Makayla Frith.



Ethan Halter and fair judge Arnold Shugarman



Sophia Wein



Scarlett Poitra and Whitney Cohen



Nyla Goodjoin

## Orange Rotary to host 27th car show

The 27th Annual Orange Plaza Car Show, sponsored by Orange Plaza Rotary, will be held on Sunday, April 16. Nearly 400 pre-1976 street rods, custom and classic vehicles will be on display around the Orange Plaza, available for viewing between 8 a.m. and 3 p.m. There is no admission charge for spectators; however, pets, glass containers, recreational scooters, roller skates and bicycles are prohibited. Funds from the event will help Rotary community outreach, youth education and literacy programs.

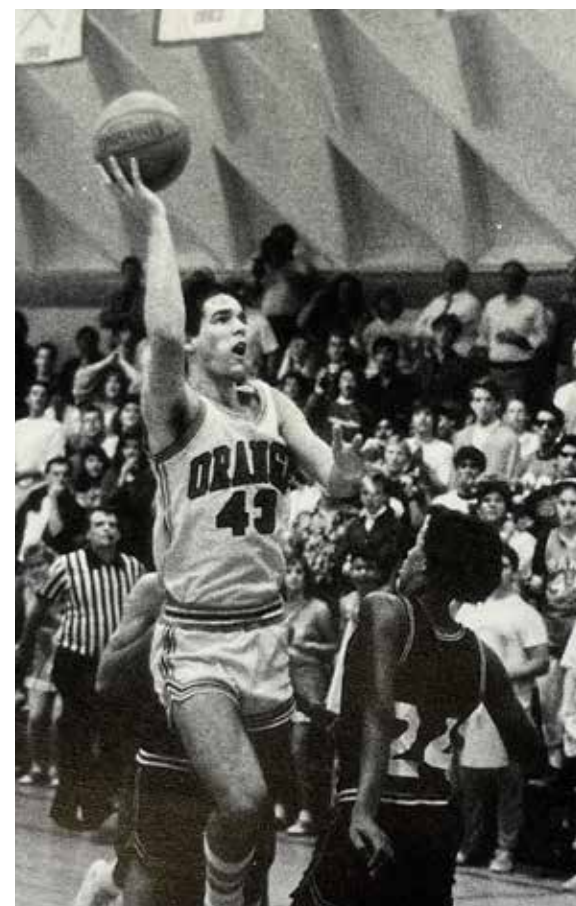
**COMMUNITY SPORTS**  
BY CLIFF ROBBINS AND CHAD CLINE

## Chris Abraham sets new scoring record in basketball



Chris Abraham, Orange High School, brings the ball up court. Abraham's 75% three-point shooting led the way to a new all-time scoring record.

Chris Abraham, a senior at Orange High School became the schools all-time leading scorer tallying 35 points against Firebaugh High School. Abraham totaled 1,289 career points surpassing the old record set by Dave Roth of 1,288 points. Abraham is averaging 27.3 points per game and has a season high game of 38 points against Katella.



Dave Roth, former Orange High School athlete, was a driving force during his three years, scoring 1,288 points on the basketball court.

The old record held by David Roth (1984-1986) of 1,288 points was obtained over three years, ninth grade wasn't part of the high school then. Roth didn't have the luxury of the three-point line either because it wasn't introduced until a year later. Roth was a heavily recruited athlete out of high school and played for Chapman University.



Javier Escobedo (left) from Orange High School stops the Cerritos shooter in his tracks.



Mark Hernandez-Chino stretches out for a rebound in the Orange Holiday Classic Tournament against Cerritos.

# COMMUNITY SPORTS

BY CLIFF ROBBINS AND CHAD CLINE

## Villa Park wins back-to-back CIF Competitive Cheer

Villa Park High School won back-to-back CIF Competitive Cheer Championships. The Villa Park Competitive Cheer Team won the 2A Championships in 2020; there was no competition in 2021. Stepping up to Division 3A, Villa Park out-performed a field of 17 other schools in the division at Martin Luther King

High School, Jan. 22. The team includes: Abby Dragovich, Aaliyah Scarpine, Angelina Zavala, Cali Niles, Catie Orr, Desiree Camarillo, Emily Estrada, Hailley Holmes, Isabella Carrazco, Kaitlan Holmes, Nicole Granados, Riyan Murray, Rory Gesler, Stacy Ramos and Suriya Banda. The team was coached by Isabel

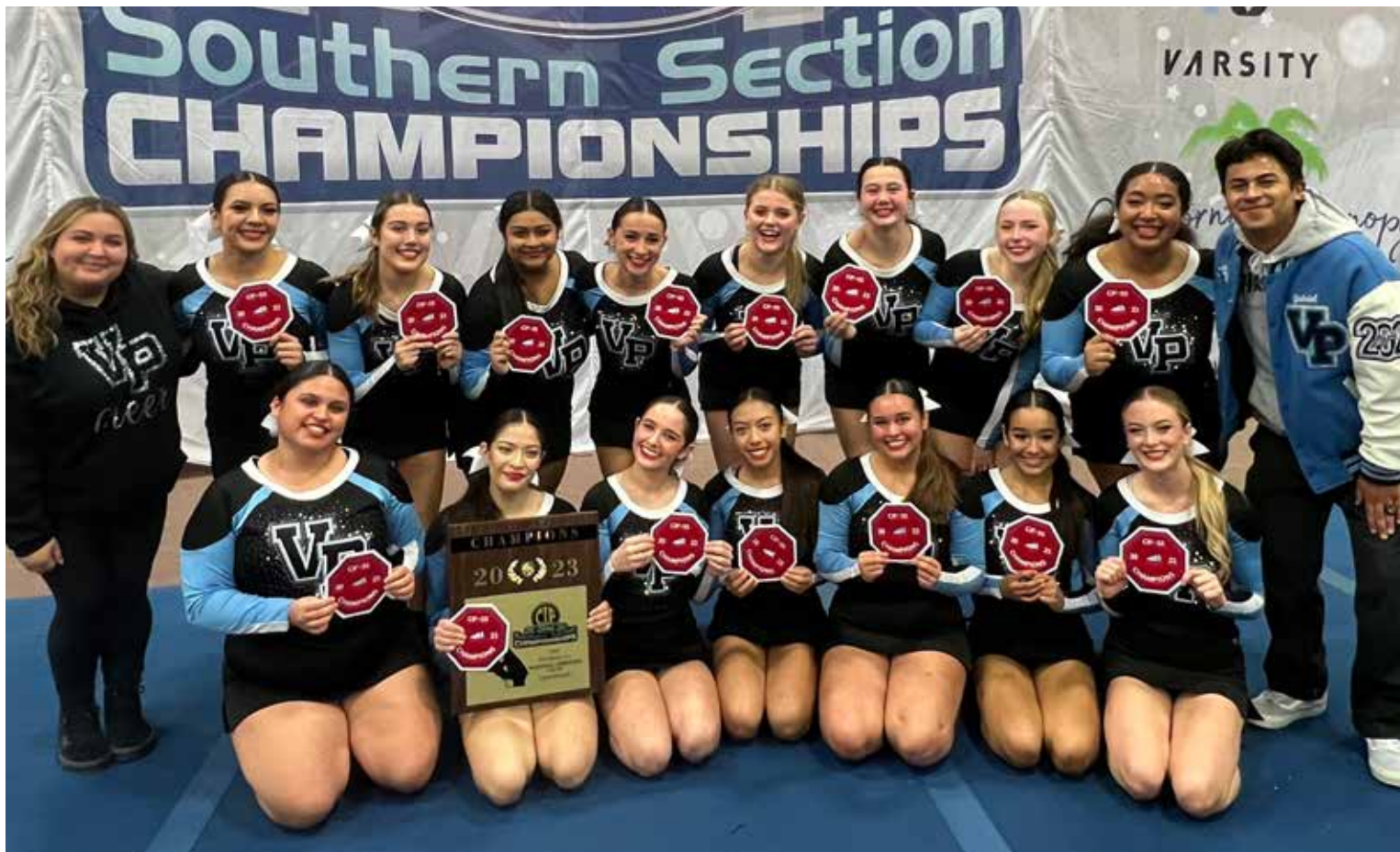
Knowles-Cruz and Lisa Hedspeth.

Foothill and Canyon High School were neck-and-neck coming into Division 2A. Foothill took third place, and Canyon fourth.

Performing for Foothill were: Savannah Wokurka, Jillian Zeber, Olivia Blackburn, Lauren Grant,

Kisa Murai, Julia Wyatt, Donya Kasravi, Brenna Palomares, Chatham Nugent, Kylie Nguyen, Ceci Warren, Madeline Feher, Gigi Williams, Emma Silva, Zoe Lee, Marin Lee, Maddie Tran, Emma Modrell, Alexa Diaz, Kaitlyn Gaglia and Emma McHale.

El Modena High School placed 12th in Division 3A.



The Villa Park High School Competitive Cheer CIF Champions.

## National Girls & Women in Sports Day

Feb. 1, 2023, marks the 37th annual National Girls & Women in Sports Day.

This celebration, sponsored by the Womens Sports Foundation, inspires girls and women to play in sports to realize their full power. The confidence, strength and character gained through sports participation are the tools girls and women need to become strong leaders. After recently celebrating the 50th anniversary of Title IX, the focus is on the next 50 years to build on the landmark law so future generations understand their rights to equal access and opportunity.

To get involved, see [www.WomensSportsFoundation.org](http://www.WomensSportsFoundation.org).

## OHS tops Orange Coast All-League

Orange High School captured the Orange Coast League title in football, going undefeated, 6-0 in league and 11-3 overall.

Orange went into the playoffs with a 34-28 overtime win against Huntington Beach and a 34-18 win over San Juan Hills. A tough 39-35 win over Loyola of Los Angeles advanced Orange into the CIF-SS Div. 4 finals against San Jacinto, where the season ended with a 42-15 loss.

Kobe Boykin rushed for 90 yards average per game, and was on the receiving end for 335 yards, for a total of 1,505 yards for the season. He was named the Most Valuable Player for 2022.

Offensive Player of the Year was quarterback Hype Grand. Grand threw for 1,377 yards and 20 touchdowns, with only six interceptions. Grand rushed for another 463 yards, for a season total of 1,840 yards.

Special Teams Player of the Year was Jakob Coleman. Coleman had seven tackles against Loyola, and added 10 against San Juan Hills.

Lineman of the Year award went to Khalil Lawrence.

Named to the First Team All-League was Arron White, Jaden Moore, Jaelen Lightfoot, John Smith Jr., Troy Jennings and Ardwon Morris. Named to the Second Team was Jaxson Tanielu, Angelo Adetoye, Deon Jackson and Centrell Wise.

## Student initiates wrestling program

Is it possible for one student to make a difference in just the two years spent at Santiago Charter Middle School?

Yes. Ace Esparza is proof of that.

In the spring of 2022, seventh grader Esparza approached Santiago administration and asked about starting a student wrestling program. Wrestling is a passion of his, and starting new programs is something frequently done at Santiago.

After a meeting with Athletic Director Pat Connolly, the program gained momentum. Over the next six months, a program was created that represented Es-

parza's vision and served the students of Santiago.

In January 2023, roughly one year after the initial inquiry, and twice weekly practices, Santiago's first wrestling team competed in its first tournament. Over a dozen Santiago Santanas, two wrestling coaches, and family and friends journeyed to the Junior Five Counties Invitational Wrestling Tournament at Fountain Valley High School.

The student wrestlers brought home eight medals, including three gold, three silver and two bronze. The school is proud of its Santanas, and looks forward to growing this program.



The Santiago Charter Middle School wrestling team, left to right: Adrian Martinez, 7th grade; Samuel Saavedra, 8th grade; Marley Mistry Nelson, 8th; Jenna Ceballos, Kalea Fink, 7th; Coach Brady Fink; Booker Gamboa, 7th; George Martian, Gabe Huerta, 8th; Coach Steve Stewart; Ace Esparza, 8th grader who initiated the program; Zach Daniel, Lincoln Casas, 8th grade.

## 64th Orange County All-Star Classic set for Feb. 4

The 64th Orange County All-Star Classic football game will be held on Saturday night, Feb. 4 at Newport Harbor High School. Kick-off is set for 7 p.m.

Coaching the North All-Stars is Rick Feldman from Cypress High School; the South All-Stars are coached by Peter Lofthouse from Newport Harbor High School.

The Orange County North vs. South All-Star Classic, formally known as the Brea Lions Club North vs. South All-Star Game, is a long-standing tradition, dating back to 1959. It pits some of the best graduating senior players from North County against those from South County.

The players and coaches are selected by the Orange County Sportswriters Association, while the game itself is planned and run by Costa Mesa United, with support from the Los Angeles Chargers.

Leading the North into battle is quarterback Christian Lundsberg from Canyon High. The South will be tested as Lundsberg threw for 54 touchdowns this season. In the backfield is Owen Smith from El Modena.

Owen will be a rushing threat, posting 1,208 yards for the season and 15 touchdowns. Rex Barrera from Orange Lutheran rounds out the backfield.

Lundsberg will have four receivers to throw to. At wide receiver are Kaleb Marshall and Conrad Hernandez from Orange Lutheran, Kayvon Monfared

from Canyon, and Jonathan Smith from Orange High.

Anchoring the offensive line are Anthony Lopez from El Modena, Khalil Lawrence from Orange, and Ben Faletoi from Tustin High.

On defense at tackle is Canyon Dietrich from Villa Park High School. Linebackers are Mayson Hitchens from El Modena High School, from Foothill High and Troy Mills from Canyon.

At the corners are Eddie Rodriguez from Villa Park, Quincy Hankins from Tustin and Jaelen Lightfoot from Orange.

The South All-Star squad holds a 32-26-3 series, led with the South winning the last six games.

The first All-Star game was played in 1959, with no game held in 1960 or 2021.



Daisy Garcia (42) and Kimberly Limon (40) from Orange High School take the lane away from Annika Tufo of St. Margaret High School.



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