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The Bond Fire started in a residence in the Cabinlands area of Silverado Canyon, Dec. 2. Accelerated by strong winds, it burned 6,686 acres, destroyed 31 structures and damaged 21 others. Photos by Paul Dixon

NEWS INSIDE

RIGHT AND WRONG

Respected nonprofit scuttled by Old Towne design standards.
See Ronald McDonald, page 2

FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN

As flames threaten a neighborhood, residents pull together with hoses and heart.

See Canyon Beat, page 6

A CLEAN SEEP

Local water district is one of the first to filter chemicals detected in ground water.

See Serrano, Page 7

PINES AND NEEDLES

Festooned trees turn Villa Park town center into a festive forest.

See Holiday, page 9

WALK ON THE WILD SIDE

A curious canyonite captures the after-hours activity along Silverado Creek.

See Nightlife, page 14

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Letters To The Editor	Page 4
Canyon Beat	Page 6
Service Directory	Pages 11-13
Prof. Directory	Page 13
Classifieds	Page 13
Real Estate	Page 15
Obituaries	Page 15

New Orange City Council members speak up

By Tina Richards

The newly elected-by-district Orange City Council members hit the ground running during their first appearance on the COVID-dictated virtual dias.

Arianna Barrios (District 1), Ana Gutierrez (District 5) and Jon Dumitru (District 2) all took the opportunity to raise community and governing-related issues during the “reports from council members” meeting segment.

Barrios raised the topic of term limits, fresh in Orange residents’ minds after Councilman Mike Alvarez ran for a third term, despite a 1996 vote by citizens that capped consecutive terms to two. Her attention to the issue was reaffirmed by a public comment asking the city to “set the record straight on why term limits were discarded.”

Coming to terms

Barrios asked that the subject be agendized for a future council discussion. “Things may or may not be murky,” she said. “I’d like an analysis of the current ordinance. Can we administratively fix it, or must we go back to voters?” Aside from agreeing to bring it up at a later date, Mayor Mark Murphy and City Attorney Gary Sheatz remained silent on the issue, as did the other council veterans.

Barrios also asked if her colleagues would be interested in pursuing Certified Local Government (CLG) status. The CLG program was established as part of the National Historic Preservation Act to empower municipalities in their preservation planning activities and to assure support

See “New council”
continued on page 5

Canyon residents rally to protect each other against Bond Fire as communication systems fail

By Tina Richards

A loud, insistent pounding on the front door woke her up at 1:30 on the morning of Dec. 3. The knocking was accompanied by shouts of, “There’s a fire, we have to go.”

Monica Edwards, still in a stupor from sleep, packed her car and prepared to leave her home in the eastern portion of Silverado Canyon. “It was dark, but I saw an orange glow on the ridge,” she said. “It looked like it was moving away, instead of coming closer.”

Edwards and a neighbor paused their evacuation plans to get a better look at the fire’s direction. “We decided to stay,” she said. “There were embers raining down. My neighbor grabbed a hose and started putting them out. It’s a good thing we stayed. At that point, there wasn’t a fire truck in sight.”

A shot in the dark

Hours earlier, Paul Dixon awoke from what, he said, sounded like gunshots. “It was a little before 10 p.m. I thought someone was going crazy and went to radio

Canyon Watch to report gunfire,” he says. When he looked out his window, the hillside was lit up. He saw a ball of fire. His neighbor’s house was in flames.

The power had been shut off that evening at 7 p.m. There was no phone service, no internet. “I couldn’t call 911,” he explains, “so I used the radio to report the fire.” The Canyon Watch volunteer manning the radio that night got a message out to someone else to call 911. Fire trucks arrived about 20 minutes later.

Meanwhile, Dixon’s neighbor, block captain Rich Pfeiffer, also awakened by the sound of exploding ammunition, raced to grab a fire hose that he had stashed for such emergencies. He also had a key to the nearby fire hydrant. With the hose hooked up, he became the first responder tackling the flames, wearing only a bathrobe and slippers. “His wife later brought him protective gear and a helmet,” Dixon recalls. “He was the only one standing against the fire for the first 20 minutes until the firefighters arrived.”

At one point, the fire sur-

rounded the small community of houses behind the Silverado Café on three sides. Residents wielded garden hoses. “The fire went up the hill from my house toward Williams Canyon,” Dixon reports. “It finally settled down at 4 a.m. At that point, there was no sense in leaving.”

Ready this time

Phil and Melody McWilliams lost their Modjeska Canyon home in the 2007 fire. “I watched it burn down on the TV news,” he recalls. “We both cried for 10 minutes, looked at each other, and said ‘let’s rebuild.’”

Rebuild they did. Their new dwelling is a molded fireproof dome. “We didn’t know about the fire until Thursday morning. We felt safe staying,” McWilliams says. “We watched the flames come over the hill toward us. My neighbor’s guest house caught fire. It sounded like a 747. It was completely gone in 20 minutes.

See “Canyon fire”
continued on page 3

Court challenge to Alvarez’s third term filed

A challenge to the re-election of Mike Alvarez to the Orange City Council was filed in Superior Court by John Russo, one of two candidates who ran against him in the November race.

The challenge claims that Alvarez is ineligible to hold office because of term limits enacted by Orange voters in 1996. The city’s Municipal Code states that, “no person shall serve more than two consecutive four-year terms as a member of the city council.”

The document also notes that when the city converted to by-district elections as part of a legal settlement, the council did not

revoke, modify or make reference to the existing term limits in the stipulated judgment given to the court. Further, the city has not brought any measure to the voters revoking, modifying or otherwise altering the Municipal Code.

Alvarez had just completed two consecutive four-year terms as a councilman. The challenge asserts that his new term violates the plain language of the code.

According to Alvarez’s attorney, with the concurrence of City Attorney Gary Sheatz, the newly instated District 3 seat (that he now fills) is different than the at-large seat he held before. In es-

sence, Alvarez ran for a new seat and is, therefore, starting over.

The challenge was filed, according to Russo, to settle the matter for now and into the future. There are still two council seats held by at-large incumbents. If a new district seat offers a clean slate for term limits, those at-large incumbents will also be allowed to exceed their term limits if they choose to run as by-district candidates.

“Voters need to know, one way or the other,” Russo said. “I don’t expect to get anything out of this other than a clear answer. Is Alvarez’s third term legal or not?”

Ronald McDonald House expansion plan meets resistance at DRC

By Tina Richards

Expansion plans for Ronald McDonald House (RMH) were rejected by Orange’s Design Review Committee (DRC) because they failed to meet standards and design criteria established to guide development in Old Towne.

Ronald McDonald House, located at 383 S. Batavia on the western border of the Old Towne Historic District, wants to expand from 21 rooms to 44 to meet a growing demand for its services. The nonprofit houses families who come to the area because they have sick children in local hospitals.

The expansion includes a 17,325-sq.-ft., 2.5-story addition, built over a ground-level parking lot. A historic house at the rear of the property, now empty, would be converted into administrative space.

History repeats?

The existing 12,580-sq.-ft. Ronald McDonald House was built in 1989, before Old Towne had been listed on the National Historic Register and design standards were codified. It sits across the street from the Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange complex, in a neighborhood of residences, offices and institutional buildings. A Conditional Use Permit allowed it to be three stories.

The DRC’s mandate is to ensure new construction follows city guidelines and standards, and that it is compatible with the neighborhood. The question in this case is, compatible with what? The area is a mix of protected historic properties and “non-contributing” structures that predate the Old Towne designation and design standards. City planning staff determined that the expansion was compatible with the institutional buildings across the street and the overall neighborhood, and that the 1989 CUP allowed it to exceed the 30-ft. height dictated by historic district standards.

The Dec. 16 review meeting was RMH’s third pass at the DRC. The committee found the original plans to be too large in terms of scale, height and mass, infringed on the privacy of neighbors and was insufficiently landscaped. The RMH architectural team addressed those issues with revised plans modified from three full stories to two and a half, windows placed to restrict views into neighboring properties and additional landscaping for more privacy, screening and aesthetics.

The wrong place

The RMH team was applauded by committee members for their willingness to work with the DRC to meet Old Towne design standards. “They’ve done everything to make this approvable,” member Tim McCormack acknowl-

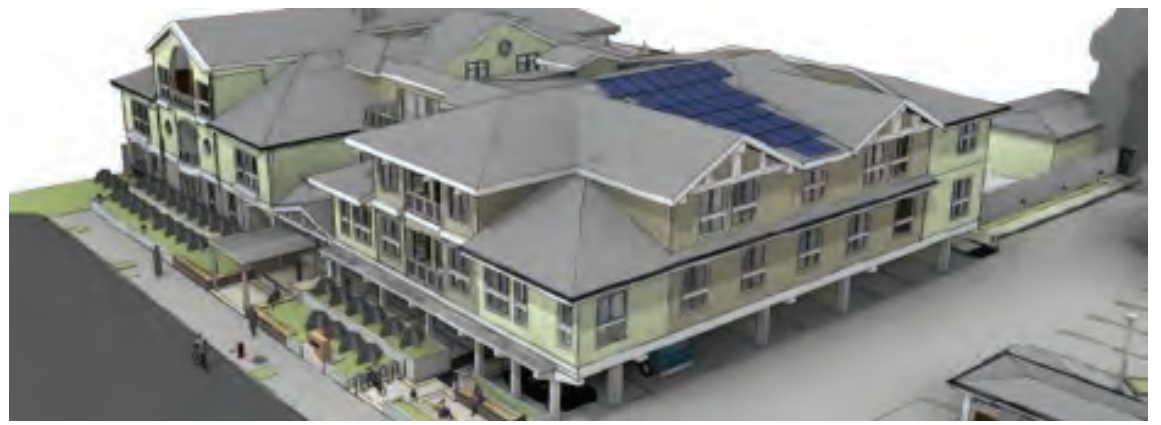
edged, “but context is important.”

Committee member Anne McDermott noted that two historic houses were demolished to make room for the original Ronald McDonald House and wondered if, given the design standards in place now, is it likely the house would have been built. The answer from city staff was a reluctant “no.”

DRC member Robert Imboden expressed his continuing concerns with the setback, height and scale of the expanded RMH, and its visible tuck-under parking, which, he noted, is not an early 20th century design element. He said he was basing his judgment on historic properties, not the neighboring properties that were built prior to adopted standards.

The wrong time

“The house would not have a chance of being approved today,” he said. “But because it was approved 35 years ago, we’re supposed to continue on with that. How could a CUP foresee changes and be grandfathered on to the next project? That’s the very reason we have design standards. What is the purpose of standards if we approve a project



Ronald McDonald House wants to add a 17,325-sq.-ft. expansion to its existing 12,580-sq.-ft. footprint. The addition would be built above a ground-level parking lot.

that doesn’t meet them? It seems contrary to the job we’re required to do.”

Tim McCormack agreed. “If this were in another area, with more space, it wouldn’t be on stilts, hovering above ground, with cars underneath it.” Acknowledging the “remarkable and astonishing” work of Ronald McDonald House, he cautioned that the expanded RMH program is too big for this particular site. “It needs to fit into the neighborhood,” he said. “We have to respect Old Towne. Five years from now, we’d look back and say, my gosh why did we do this.”

Mission vs. mass

“I think the world of Ronald McDonald House and its mission,” DRC Chair Mary Anne Skorpanich stressed. “I’m proud to have it in our community. It pains me to concur with the other comments about compatibility. But the existing building is the problem. It’s too big. The neighbors already have a huge building looming over their property. Adding an expansion to that? I don’t know anyone who would want that for their property.”

Committee Vice Chair Carol Fox was the lone dissenter. She said that she found the plans com-

patible, based on the RMH’s relationship with the structures across the street and that many of the neighboring properties were not considered historic resources.

The vote was 4-1 to recommend denial of the project. The DRC is advisory only; it has no authority over the outcome of a project. It has also been under fire from some city officials who believe its review is largely overkill, duplicative, and that the process could be handled by the city’s director of community development.

The next step for the Ronald McDonald House is the planning commission.

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OPA general meeting postponed

The Orange Park Association annual general membership meeting has been rescheduled to Saturday, Feb. 20 due to Coronavirus. The meeting will be held at Salem Lutheran Church, 6500 E. Santiago Canyon Road, beginning with coffee and donuts at 8 a.m. The meeting will commence at 9 a.m. There are three director seats to be filled by membership vote.

"Canyon fire"
continued from page 1

Melody and I started hosing down our bushes. Then a fire crew arrived with a water tender. They got the fire out fast."

"This fire wasn't as hot as 2007," he says, "and the fire department was really good this round. They were all over the place. There was air cover. Firefighters came back a few times to check on us."

Canyon residents are used to natural emergencies and have set up a comprehensive Canyon Watch radio system to allow them to communicate with each other when the power goes down. This time, however, the fire burned down a critical radio repeater and the airwaves went dead. Cell phone service was out; land lines worked at first, then they didn't.

The fire started sometime after 9 p.m., Dec. 2, in a house on Bond Way. The residence was gone in less than an hour. Neighboring residents praise firefighters for keeping flames away from their homes. The house at ground zero was the only one of two in the community of hillside homes that was lost.

Williams Canyon was not so fortunate. Winds accelerated the flames in that direction. Most of the 21 structures damaged and 31 destroyed (homes and outbuildings) were in Williams Canyon, accessible only by a one-lane road. The fire came so fast, many did not have time to evacuate their animals; some chickens, ducks and goats perished.

The fire consumed 6,686 acres. In many cases, firefighters stopped the flames just shy of buildings and backyard fences. "The fire crews were great," Monica Edwards says. "Edison, not so much. With the power out, we had no way to communicate. People were running around in the dark, pounding on doors and shouting. We didn't know who had been warned and who hadn't."

The Sheriff's Department made an effort to drive through the narrow canyon streets and alert residents. But they missed some homes. "No one let us know anything," says one canyon resident. "There were no sirens, no loudspeakers. It was completely dark. The sheriffs didn't know our house was up there. My son woke up and smelled smoke. That was our only warning."



Photo by Tony Richards

The fire licked at the edges of the Silverado Children's Center, but did no structural damage. "We want to find out where the crew that saved the center was from," says Children's Center Director Laurie Briggs. "We want to thank them."



Photo by Lisa Alvarez



Photo by Paul Dixon

The house on Bond Way where the fire started was completely destroyed.



Photo by Paul Dixon

Winds drove the flames away from Silverado towards Williams Canyon.



Photo by Tony Richards

Fire fighters kept the inferno from as many homes as possible, but couldn't saved the hillsides.



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LETTERS to the EDITOR



Good government

Dear Editor:

I wanted to send my congratulations to the new city council members, Arianna Barrios and Ana Gutierrez. It's exciting to have two Latinas representing Orange; it's a first, and long overdue. Their voices are key to balanced representation and provide a critical perspective that has been lacking on our council.

Kudos to both for addressing, at their first meeting, important issues head-on: term limits, potential annexation of county islands, a format to highlight our local businesses, and needed changes to the public comment procedure at council meetings so that residents can be properly heard.

It's refreshing to have independent thinkers that ask smart questions. I'm still perplexed as to why our city attorney ignored the 1996 term limit ordinance. I'm hoping Barrios and Gutierrez can get the answer as to why Mike Alvarez was allowed to run again. Let's hope they can also get answers to the many questions residents have asked over the years that city hall has simply ignored.

Michelle Gregory
Orange

Dear Editor:

What a memorable year 2020 was ... a COVID-19 pandemic, major economic disturbances, protests against the police, allegations of general election fraud ... AND the election of the Honorable Mike Alvarez to the first-ever City of Orange District 3 council seat.

Alvarez and his City of Orange gang managed to overcome a 1996 initiative restricting council members to two consecutive terms, a California election law requiring a vote of the people to overturn such initiatives, and a campaign during which the Invisible Man was seen more than he was.

Alvarez had served two terms, sitting in his at-large council seat – clearly termed out as defined by the most rigorous interpretation of a 1996 initiative that gathered 80% of the vote.

Yet, Alvarez, with the approval of City Attorney Gary Sheatz and his three city council buddies, was allowed to run for the newly formed District 3 seat. There was no ballot measure to overturn the initiative, the public was given no notification of the decision, and Alvarez never took the time to explain to District 3 voters that he was a candidate running in violation of city, county and state law.

He once belonged to all the city. Now he's yours, District 3. Best of luck.

Peter Jacklin
Orange

Dear Editor:

Grateful for three things: Orange volunteers, Orange voters, and the county LEA.

Two years ago, I wrote a guest commentary, "The elephant in the room," (February 2019). I pointed out the dangers of the former Sully-Miller site and warned that the city would be setting itself up for litigation if it approved devel-

opment on this site.

I cautioned, "In addition to toxins buried in the landfill, hundreds of truckloads of old cement, asphalt and who-knows-what-else has been stockpiled on the Sully-Miller site. Years ago, used motor oils and diesel fuels were excellent for dust control; spray some on the roads used by the mining vehicles, and you have eliminated the dust issue. Imagine how many barrels of oil were dumped and seeped into the ground and into the water table. And how many of the fluids and chemicals used in the maintenance and repair of mining equipment have been dumped on the site."

The Orange City Council ignored evidence presented to them and requests made to use its enforcement authority to stop the illegal dumping -- and instead approved a housing development.

Thankfully, Orange volunteers protested the city council approvals and gathered the needed signatures to qualify the ballot measure that put the issue to the vote of the people. Orange voters overwhelmingly responded, "No on AA" to overturn the city council's misguided decision.

Double thanks go to the county Local Enforcement Agency (LEA) for intervening and finally addressing the unlawful activities the public has witnessed for years. The cease and desist order it issued to halt the stockpiling of construction waste was long overdue.

No one knows what is in those mounds. There has been no oversight since 2013. How could anyone think this is a prudent way to run a city?

Paul Andrews
Orange

House call

Dear Editor:

There is a beautiful historic home on my street in Old Towne Orange. It is on the National Historic Registry, numbered in Washington, D.C. It was built in 1919 by the Frasier family, as in Rod's Liquor, Don Jose, Ricardo's, and Rodrigo's. The house is almost 2,700 sq. ft., with five bedrooms, two baths. It has beautiful double gables in front. It is the only cement-sided craftsman in Orange. The Frasier family owned a cement mine.

This home was bought by a large corporation on March 5, 2019, for \$1,427,500. It was appraised, at the time, in the \$900,000s. It still sits empty. At one time, a group of homeless moved in.

This corporation is attempting to rezone this property to "public institution." The plan is to use it as office space. We have no businesses on our street. We are zoned "low density residential." The parking on our street is already impacted. I feel this change to our neighborhood is inappropriate.

Relating to short-term rentals, which are businesses in residential neighborhoods, Councilman Mike Alvarez said, "We're going to change our city if we don't get business out of our neighborhoods." Councilman Chip Monaco said, "It's a commercial business in a residential neigh-

borhood. We shouldn't just start allowing them."

Once the developers finish their project, they collect their money, walk away and leave a changed neighborhood to deal with the problems.

Is it legal or ethical for a large corporation to abscond with one of our city treasures for its own use, without the consent of the neighborhood?

Shari Carter
Orange

Last to know

Dear Editor:

On Nov. 16, the Orange Planning Commission approved the Orange Plaza Inn project by a 5-0 vote. The Shannon Mortuary building at Maple and Orange St. is to become a 12-unit boutique hotel.

Approximately two weeks before the PC meeting, I received a notice that the project was to be considered. No meetings during this pandemic allow for citizen attendance. Nowhere in the notice was there any mention that if I wanted to comment on the project I had to do so in writing, and it had to be received no later than 11 a.m. on the 16th.

The notice did say, in the fine print at the bottom, that if I challenged any decision on this project in court I may be limited to raising only those issues I raised at the public hearing, or in written correspondence I delivered prior to the meeting.

But how could I? I had no idea what I might care to comment on since I had received no information about the project until the notice arrived in the mail. I anticipated that after listening to the discussions during the PC meeting I could better formulate any comments or challenges I cared to provide. I was wrong in that assumption.

Since the project was approved, my only recourse was to file an appeal. I communicated with Anna Pehousek at the city who informed me any appeal would cost me \$1,000 and must be filed by Dec. 1.

She did not tell me that my other recourse was to convince a council member to carry the appeal forward; if one took that action there would be no need to pay the \$1,000. That option was shared with me by an ex-council member, who suggested I reach out to Mayor Mark Murphy and Councilman Mike Alvarez. I did so. Both declined to carry my appeal forward.

We own three rental properties directly across the street from the project. We were never contacted by anyone at the city, or by the developer, who stated during the PC meeting that he met with the residents, did outreach in the neighborhood, and has supportive statements from the nearest residences.

The boutique hotel itself might be a nice reuse of the building. The project has 16 parking spaces on site. The PC believes that is sufficient. But the PC also approved an "event space" to accommodate up to 225 persons and operate up to midnight daily, with live music, alcoholic beverage sales and food service, with no additional parking.

The PC bought into the premise that all the folks attending events at the Orange Plaza Inn will use the public parking lot in the 100 block of north Orange St. and the new parking garage at Lemon and Maple. I believe the neighbor-

hood will be negatively impacted by unauthorized, unpermitted vehicles parked by visitors who will refuse to park three blocks away in an unpatrolled parking garage. The PC approval did not include a requirement for handicapped parking for the event center.

Additionally, the project approval did not include specific noise levels for the live entertainment aspect. It was mentioned that the city would have someone attend the first event and check on the noise levels. There is also the potential of unruly event attendees wandering the streets, glass in hand, smoking, and, dare I say, relieving themselves when the on-site restroom facilities are incapable of handling the demands of 225 attendees.

Perhaps these concerns would have surfaced had there been a requirement for a CEQA report prior to approval. But the developer was found "categorically exempt" from that requirement. Had I been aware of the project details prior to the PC's vote, I would have certainly made my concerns known and hopefully had them addressed. It does not seem unreasonable that the owner of property less than 70 feet away from a project of this significance should be contacted by someone prior to approving it.

Tom Grochow
Orange

Above board

Dear Editor:

OUSD School Board has begun a new board session. In hope that our upcoming session is more productive than previous ones, I have a message for two board members:

John Ortega – we see you. We all see you. Your clear disdain for strong, intelligent women shows through in the condescending way you treat your female colleagues, and worse, in the absolute disrespect you show for our superintendent, Dr. Gunn Marie Hansen.

You seem to have some sort of bloated sense of self-importance

from holding a position of power. A better man would have stepped down after 19 years to let a new generation with fresh ideas and someone who prioritizes the best interests of students over their own to step up.

I suppose the lure of special interest money was just too much to resist. Mark Bucher and Jeff Barke bought your vote by fully funding your last re-election campaign. Once again in 2020 their donations were the majority of your fundraising. I guess time will tell what that money has bought them this time.

Which brings me to another "bought" trustee, the newly installed Angela Rumsey. Special interest money and a deceitful candidate statement got you into this seat, so excuse me if I'm skeptical about your presence on a public school board. You clearly have a passion for education, but your experience is limited to small, homogeneous groups in private school settings.

I hope you can transition that passion to serve every student equally, no matter their religious preference, and including those with language barriers, disabilities, varying sexual orientations and socioeconomic levels.

Let me point out that this is a public school district funded by very limited public funds. When you make decisions that will affect students, you need to be mindful to keep your religious and personal beliefs out of that process and be able to step back and look at what will benefit all students, no matter who they are.

We will be watching.

Michelle Weisenberg
Orange

Slow roll

Dear Editor:

I would like the *Foothills Sentry* to help start an investigation of what has to be a structural and financial disaster at the Villa Park science center.

"Letters" continued on page 5

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"Letters" continued from page 4

The structure has been standing in nearly the same condition for close to a year. Every time I drive by, more welding is being done on the trusses at the joints.

A comprehensive audit of the building and football field at VPHS needs to be done to see how much of the bond money has been wasted. Is the district, engineers, designers, or contractor responsible for what has to be a financial money pit and, if so, will we taxpayers be made whole?

All four of our children graduated from VPHS. During their tenure, we were involved parents and we contributed to the school.

Tom Malloy
Villa Park

A parent asked about field practice for football vs. other athletics at VPHS:

Villa Park High School Principal Dr. Ken Miller indicated that school sports teams are abiding by the return-to-play protocols authorized by the county, following the district's request to return to the field. Football, track, boys and girls basketball, cheer, softball, baseball, tennis, golf and aquatics student-athletes are participating in conditioning and training, staying distanced, following appropriate sanitation protocols and guidelines. Miller stated, "I am proud of our coaches and teachers for rising to the occasion, and for the great leadership by the district."

"New council" continued from page 1

from the State Office of Historic Preservation. The CLG program is a partnership among local governments, the State of California and the National Park Service.

She asked that a discussion of CLG status be incorporated into the already-scheduled January discussion of the design review and other committees. City Manager Rick Otto assured her that, yes, staff could study the concept and report back in January.

Make it whole

Ana Gutierrez, who lives in the city portion of El Modena, asked that the council consider annexing county islands. "There are two islands in District 5," she reported. "People couldn't participate in this election. They contribute to the local economy. The city already supplies some services to those areas." She asked city staff to look into what it would take to "make El Modena whole."

Murphy suggested that the city solicit community interest first. "It's my experience," he said, "that it usually is not welcomed."

Gutierrez also raised the issue of public comments during the time of COVID and remotely conducted council meetings. Because members of the public cannot appear at council meetings in person, they are required to submit comments in writing by 11 a.m. the day of the meeting. Comments are then read aloud by a city staff member. "How was it decided to conduct comments in this form?" she asked.

Look alive

"I think comments should be given by the public, if that is their choice." She also suggested

that council members remain on screen while comments are being read. "I think we can do this better," she advised.

Murphy told her he'd be happy to discuss it with her offline. "Were surpassing state standards for what is required," he explained. "There are technological limitations."

Alvarez asked that staff look to other cities that allow live comments and find out how that is handled. "I have the list," Murphy said. "It's not that long."

Gutierrez also suggested that the council take time during meetings to recognize a local business that's thinking outside the box in its response to COVID. She wanted to mention two businesses right then, but was instructed to wait until the next meeting.

Pay back

Dumitru, who was on the city council in 2011 when it voted to eliminate compensation for council members, asked that his colleagues consider "health and welfare" reimbursements. "Members should be reimbursed for the costs of city-related travel," he pointed out, "and also have the ability to obtain health insurance."

Chip Monaco added that he'd like to add compensation back into the mix. He and Alvarez had lobbied to reinstate a modest council salary last fall, but were thwarted by the "no" votes of Murphy and Kim Nichols. "Whether it's compensation or health benefits, or both, the council should discuss it," he said. "We have a new council now."

Murphy suggested an a la carte approach, wherein the council could vote for either reimbursement, health insurance, monthly compensation, or all of them.

That discussion will appear on a future council agenda.

VP council preps for new year



Villa Park Mayor Crystal Miles

By Andie Mills

With COVID at center stage, the Villa Park City Council held a CDC-approved private ceremony to install Councilmen Robbie Pitts and Vince Rossini, both of whom were reappointed for a second four-year term. Their seats were not challenged in the November election. The recording of the formal installation was played at the virtual city council meeting, Dec. 15.

Pitts, whose 2020 year as mayor was quickly derailed by the onset of the pandemic, was lauded for his countless hours spent conferring with other mayors and officials, analyzing and strategizing, working for the betterment of the city and updating residents during this unprecedented time.

In his remarks before the council

electing a mayor and mayor pro tem for 2021, Pitts suggested that the council consider "freezing positions" for the new year, allowing the leadership in place to continue to facilitate the recovery of the city.

His petition was ignored. Rossini acknowledged Pitts' leadership, but swiftly nominated Crystal Miles, formerly mayor pro tem, as mayor, "in keeping with tradition." Councilman Robert Collacott seconded the nomination, and proceeded to nominate Chad Zimmerman as mayor pro tem.

Miles, after a TV-style shout-out to her nieces who were watching, assured the council and audience that she is poised and eager to be mayor, and has many ideas for the coming year. Miles was elected as mayor by a 4-1 vote, with Pitts reiterating his request for a freeze. Zimmerman was elected mayor pro tem, 5-0.

City Manager Steve Franks indicated the city has lost approximately \$80,000 in sales tax revenues; however, additional federal business recovery funds via the Orange County Board of Supervisors may flow to the city.

Villa Park, like every other city, has requested COVID vaccines for its residents. The city website, villapark.org, will be updated with information as to availability. Franks also reminded residents that homeless should be reported to the city, so that they may be transported to shelters in Buena Park or Placentia.

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Tustin Area Republican Women Federated installs officers

The Tustin Area Republican Women, Federated held its December General Meeting at the Santa Ana Elks Lodge, Dec. 4, and installed its officers for 2021.

The new officers, installed by Susan Blair, president of the California Federation of Republican Women, include Co-presidents Pat Micone and Sheryl Franke; 1st Vice Presidents, programs, Linda Barcelona and Deborah Kurilchyk; 2nd Vice Presidents, membership, Linette Johnston and Angela Stephens; Membership Secretary Gretchen Whistler; 3rd Vice Presidents, ways and means, Judy Levine; Treasurer

Gail Rego; Recording Secretaries Peggy George and Lois Small.

Guest speaker, Third District Supervisor Don Wagner, shared thoughts about the status of Orange County in light of the recent election and impacts of COVID.

Tustin Republican Women Federated is part of one of the largest volunteer women's organizations, the National Federation of Republican Women.

For more information, please visit the club's website, Tustin-areaRWF.org. New members and membership renewals are now accepted. TustinRepWomen@gmail.com.



Pictured are Co-presidents for 2021, Pat Micone (left) and Sheryl Franke.



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Publisher/Editor

Anita Bennyhoff
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Editor

Tina Richards
editor@foothillsentry.com

Sports Editor

Cliff Robbins
sportseditor@att.net

Graphic Designer

Aimee Armstrong
graphics@foothillsentry.com

Advertising Sales

Andie Mills
advertising@foothillsentry.com
714-926-9299

Office Manager

Kathy Eidson
officemanager@foothillsentry.com

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That was the year that was ground zero

On the night of Dec. 2, flames reportedly from a burning generator spread to vegetation in Silverado's Cabinland neighborhood. Santa Ana winds ultimately spread the fire to over 6,500 acres.

At the top of Kitterman Drive, Natalie Garth smelled smoke around 9:30 p.m. She and Linda May debated how serious that was. Then Sydnee Ragland knocked and announced that they had to leave. May grabbed her computer. Garth grabbed a basket of clothes, adding pills, leashes, dog treats and a stack of "The New Yorker" magazines.

On lower Kitterman, Steve Reighart woke up to give directions to a fire engine. Then he joined some neighbors in fighting flames. Residents credit Steve, Josh Smith, and Jacob Kelsey with saving their houses.

On Anderson Way, Canyon Watch block captain Rich Pfeiffer was supposed to be giving directions to other volunteers, but wound up fighting the fire for 20 minutes, instead. When actual firefighters showed up, he asked, "Do you want me to get out of your way?" "No," they answered. "You look like you know what you're doing. Keep doing it."

At the foot of Whites Canyon Way, Sherry Meddick drove some of her animals to a spot near the Silverado Market. Neighbors evacuated the rest of her cats, except one still hiding in the house.

Meddick walked back to join other residents outside.

Two fire engines were now pumping water from Anderson hydrants to firefighters. A CAL FIRE crew began clearing vegetation around Whites Canyon houses. Several hills were now on fire, but no embers seemed to be falling in the Anderson/Grundy Way area.

Once a fire engine had parked near Fran Williams' house on Shady Drive, she felt safe staying the night. In the morning, though, she had to use her Kia sedan to jump-start the fire engine after its battery ran down.

Cox, AT&T and Verizon phones all quit working, eventually. Ironically, Southern California Edison had shut off the electricity earlier that evening, in order to prevent power lines from starting a fire.

Initially, Canyon Watch volunteers could rely on their GMRS radios. But Williams said that the saddest thing she observed that first night was the Franklin antenna burning up, ending further radio communication between different canyon areas.

Meddick thanked Station 15 and the Forest Service for saving her house. They showed up because one of her neighbors drove to the station and pounded on the windows to report the fire.

In the days that followed, Silverado was generally quieter,

except around houses tethered to generators, which growled in the night like motorcycles going nowhere.

The Red Cross evacuation center at El Modena High School gave Silverado evacuees vouchers for hotel rooms. Santa Ana's Embassy Suites reportedly tolerated not only dogs, but at least one duck and a snake. The Red Cross also delivered meals. Anyone who received help from that organization, or knows someone who did, might consider showing their appreciation by making a donation at redcross.org.

Cactus Way resident Brian Lusier said that a burning log rolled down a hill and started a secondary fire, but he never considered leaving. His main concern was having enough flashlight batteries.

The Silverado Cafe and the Canyon Market stayed open. A handwritten note appeared at the post office saying, "If you are low on chicken feed, we have some we can share (limited supply)," followed by a phone number.

Why did Bond Way resident Tim Adams own a set of fire hoses? "We have to be prepared," he said matter-of-factly, as neighbor Reed Tomlinson helped him disconnect hoses from a hydrant, roll them up, and put them away until next time.

Aftermath

The Sheriff's Virtual Local Assistance Center listed resources available to fire victims: ocsheriff.gov/commands-divisions/field-operations-investigations-command/emergency-management/resources-after.

OC Public Works made sandbags available to canyon residents at (714) 955-0200.

The Inter-Canyon League prepared to make disaster relief funds available, and the Silverado-Modjeska Recreation and

Park District began investigating a possible US Department of Agriculture watershed-related grant opportunity.

Walk or bike

Give OC Public Works pedestrian/bicycle traffic input at Walk-BikeOCPW.com.

Sanctuary city

Marcella Gilchrist, site manager at Modjeska's Tucker Wildlife Sanctuary since 2007, is retiring to Coarsegold and hoping to volunteer in nearby Yosemite National Park, pandemics permitting.

But Marcella also believes that Tucker animal ambassadors like

Henry the Desert Tortoise will be permanently evacuated. She suggests contacting the CSUF Extensions and International Programs: Associate Vice President Chris Swarat, cswarat@fullerton.edu, (657) 278-2498.

Those plants

"Moonscape" after large fires is actually what chaparral plants expect. The problem is that chaparral is adapted for large fires only every 30 to 125 years. Less than 20 years can lead to nothing but weeds.

Wildflowers will bloom again in undisturbed soil. Avoid burned areas. The land will not heal if we keep picking at the scab.



A holiday haunt on Silverado Canyon Road.



The City of Villa Park was the recipient of 15,000 masks donated from Tyco, through the Taiwanese-American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Los Angeles and World Taiwanese Chambers of Commerce (WTCC). Taiwan's program to donate 10 million masks to help other nations fight the pandemic reached Villa Park, thanks to resident John Yeh, president of WTCC. Giving the "thumbs up" sign are, left to right, Johnson Chien; Yi-Peng Chiang, director, TECO-LA Culture Center in Santa Ana; Mark Chan, honorary advisor of legislative yuan; Richard Lin, deputy director general Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in LA; VP Mayor Crystal Miles; VP Community Services Foundation President Ed Carter; John Yeh; Kenneth Chen, president, Taiwanese-American Chamber of Commerce; VP City Manager Steve Franks.

OC distributes COVID vaccines

The County of Orange Health Agency distributed 25,350 doses of Pfizer-manufactured COVID-19 vaccine to area hospitals, Dec. 16. The initial supply was given to high-risk health care workers as part of a multi-phased plan developed through the California Community Vaccine Advisory Committee.

This first shipment was one of several in a planned allotment of Phase 1A doses. As more doses of vaccine become available, a greater portion of the Phase 1A population can anticipate getting them into early 2021. This in-

cludes residents of long-term care facilities, which will coordinate obtaining doses through retail pharmacies supplied by the CDC.

The vaccine is likely to become more accessible to the general public in the spring of 2021.

At-home COVID tests are now available countywide via the OC Health Care Agency. OC residents may visit ohealthinfo.com/covidtest and register to receive a test kit shipped directly to their home at no cost. Ambry Genetics is able to process 4,000 tests each day with results available in 48 hours.

EOCWD names new general manager

The Board of Directors of the East Orange County Water District (EOCWD) has appointed David Youngblood as general manager, replacing longtime district head Lisa Ohlund, who has served since 2009 and retired at the end of 2020.

"On behalf of my fellow board members, I want to thank Lisa Ohlund for capping her 38-year career serving water and wastewater customers with us here at East Orange County Water District," said Board President Doug Davert. "We are proud to appoint David Youngblood as our new

general manager. He brings 25 years of experience in water resource management, with both public sector and private consulting experience."

Most recently, Youngblood led engineering and operations at the Laguna Beach County Water District, and previously led engineering efforts at both the South Coast Water District and Orange County Water District. Prior to those public sector engagements, Youngblood worked for several prominent engineering firms in the county.

Youngblood's priorities include

continuing the district's record of quality water and sewer service delivered in a fiscally responsible manner.

He also plans to focus on protecting the district's groundwater resources as well as the sewer reliability project planned for Tustin neighborhoods along Browning Avenue.

EOCWD serves retail water customers in unincorporated North Tustin and the City of Orange. The district also provides wholesale water to area agencies, in addition to maintaining and operating local sewers.

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OUSD boosting solar footprint

The Orange Unified School District has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Ameresco, Inc., ahead of a proposed power purchase agreement to install solar panels at eight school sites.

The MOU authorizes third-party verification of the district's net savings over the next 25 years if the photovoltaic system is installed. It also releases OUSD to verify the power purchase agreement compliance with government codes and provide contract terms to be considered at a future board meeting.

Under the proposed power purchase agreement, Ameresco will install solar panels on OUSD sites and hook them up to the electric utility. The solar panels generate energy, which offsets the district's power bill. The district pays for the construction costs, an expected \$175,000.

"We would spend \$19.5 million for these sites if we did nothing," Scott Harvey, senior executive director, administrative services, explains. "We've negotiated to pay \$0.149 per kilowatt hour over the next 25 years. That's a savings of \$6,364,000. And it costs us just \$175,000 to earn that savings."

OUSD installed carport arrays at eight other sites in 2018 and has, according to Harvey, saved \$200,000. The annual savings increases over time; the expected savings for those sites is \$7 million over 25 years.

Serrano Water District on forefront of filtration effort

By Andie Mills

Serrano Water District (SWD), an independent special district that provides water primarily to residents in Villa Park and some adjacent portions of Orange, will be one of the first in the county, if not the very first, to filter its water for PFAS substances. Fullerton and other suppliers are also started to build treatment facilities.

What is PFAS? Per Orange County Water District (OCWD), "Perfluorooctanoic acid and perfluorooctane sulfonate are chemicals that are prevalent in the environment and were once commonly used in many consumer products. They are part of a larger group referred to as per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), and have been detected in the OC Groundwater Basin. OCWD's Water Quality Laboratory became the first public agency lab in California to achieve state certification to analyze for PFAS in drinking water."

The State of California has mandated that water districts take steps to remove the PFAS elements from consumable water sources.

Ground breaking

SWD General Manager Jerry Vilander advised that Serrano plans to break ground on its PFAS treatment plant in late January. A concrete pad, conduits and piping for four ion-exchange filtration vessels will be installed behind the office, located on Lincoln Street, between Potter and Fred-

erick in Villa Park.

Trellises, trees and foliage will screen the vessels, each approximately 12 feet in diameter and 16 feet in height. Each filtration pressure vessel, using ion-exchange resin media, is expected to filter an average of 2,200 gallons per minute, with the capability of filtering up to 3,000 gallons per minute (gpm). A constant operation of 3,000 gpm would be enough water for about 36,700 people.

The construction cost estimate is \$4.3 million. Project design adds \$500,000. OCWD is providing the capital and managing the project, with a target completion date of late July or early August. Once completed, Serrano Water District will assume half of the \$400,000 cost of maintenance and operations; no extra staffing is required. OCWD will assume the remaining half of maintenance and operational expenses.

While these measures could impact water rates, the costs are still being determined. OCWD is pursuing cost recovery options, such as loans and grants, as well as litigation along with impacted retail water agencies, to help reduce impacts to local ratepayers.

In other SWD news, at the Dec. 15 meeting of the Board of Directors, Greg Mills was elected president, and Brad Reese was named vice president. Mills and Directors Jerry Haight and Larry Pharris will serve through 2024; Frank Bryant's and Reese's terms will expire in 2022.



Orange Emblem Club 418 recently donated paper goods and COVID-19 supplies (face masks and hand cleaner) to Ronald McDonald House. Seen here, Community Service Chairman Carol Walters (center) with Orange Elks Exalted Ruler Danny and First Lady Linda Salas.



Santa was unable to parade through Villa Park on a fire truck, as is tradition, as firefighters and equipment were deployed to the Bond Fire. But, thanks to quick thinking by former Mayor Robbie Pitts, Santa was chauffeured about town in a shiny red Jeep, keeping his commitment to hear the Christmas wishes of children. Here, Joseph Kraft, 9, let Santa know that he was hoping for an electric scooter in his stocking. The pandemic also cancelled the city's annual Dry Land Boat Parade.



The Tustin Public Schools Foundation (TPSF) was recently presented a "big check" from the dealers of the Tustin Auto Center. Tustin Unified schools benefited from the Auto Center's annual Schools Drive that generated \$50 for every new car sold or leased in October, a total of \$62,700. The Foundation supports all 30 Tustin Unified schools, and the funds will assist with new technology needs, wellness, school-wide grants and remote learning. From left, Vinnie Torrente, Tustin Acura; Peter Ngo, Tustin Cadillac; Al Dimont, Tuttle-Click; Kristin Simpkins, TPSF president; Letitia Clark, Tustin mayor; Carol Burby Garrett, TPSF executive director; Andrea Dabrow, TPSF director of development; John Patterson, OC Auto Team; and Farough Dibiri, Tustin Mazda.

TAWC scholarships now available

The Tustin Area Woman's Club (TAWC), an all-volunteer philanthropic social group dedicated to the improvement of the community, announced that its college scholarship application forms are now available at tustinareawomansclub.com, or in counselors' offices at each of the Tustin Unified High Schools.

For over 60 years, TAWC has given college scholarships to deserving TUSD students. This year, TAWC will offer a \$1,000 collegiate scholarship to one graduating senior from each of the four TUSD high schools: Beckman, Foothill, Tustin and Hillview. The TAWC college application deadline is March 1.

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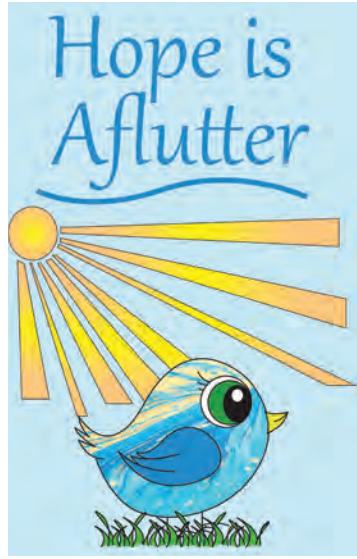
Milan Capital has filed an appeal with the state, asking it to reverse the cease and desist order issued last August by the Local Enforcement Agency (LEA) and upheld by a hearing officer in November.

The cease and desist order, issued last August, prohibited Milan's contractor Chandler/Rio Santiago from collecting and stockpiling construction waste on the property adjacent to Santiago Canyon Road in East Orange. LEA was alerted to the activity by a resident's complaint.

The appeal is likely to be heard in January.

Within two weeks of the ruling that upheld the cease and desist order, a Milan contractor moved a conveyor belt and rock crushing equipment onto the site. It operated for one day before being voluntarily shut down. The apparatus was removed a few days later, and the site has since been inactive.

Bird on a fence inspires pandemic poem



Preston, above, and her book, left.

Working at home in quiet isolation last March, indie author Wendy Preston was inspired to write a poem based simply on the tweet of a neighborhood bird sitting on a fence.

Her poem evolved into a five-month project to self-publish a children's book called "Hope is Aflutter," released exclusively on Amazon. Illustrated by her niece Shannon Preston, the book

provides an escape from the pandemic by focusing on nature and its instinctive strength. "By turning off the noise of technology, we can soar above the clouds even when our wings feel weak," Preston says. "The sun, stars, moon, rain and wind appear without panic or anticipation. Flowers blossom, children play, birds chirp and hope abounds."

Preston has spent many years managing technology teams and projects for a large insurance company. She is still employed in that endeavor, yet finds ways to balance her work with creative writing. Her goal is to elaborate on the theme with a book series. She has four books already in her thoughts.

You can reach Wendy Preston at poetrywindow.wp@gmail.com.

Nonprofit destroyed by fire

The Mariposa Women and Family Center is asking the community for help to rebuild and continue to offer support services after the nonprofit's facility was destroyed by fire, Dec. 6.

Located at 200 E. Katella Ave., the interior of the building was completely destroyed and the exterior substantially damaged.

About 50 Orange firefighters responded to the incident. The fire is currently being investigated.

Mariposa Women and Family Center provides free and low-cost counseling services to individuals and families, and has been a mainstay in Orange County for

more than 40 years. The vast majority of the organization's clients live at, or beneath, the federal poverty line.

"Although the fire has taken our building, it will not deter us from helping those who have come to count on us," said Dr. Krista Driver, president and CEO of the center. "When COVID-19 hit, we experienced an incredible demand for the affordable and accessible mental health care we provide. We will continue to offer our services virtually until we can find a new, permanent home."

Donations can be made online at mariposacenter.org/donate, or by calling (714) 547-6494.

VP greenbelt named for Knowles

Villa Park City Council voted to rename the Wanda greenbelt after one of the city's true gems, Mike Knowles. The entry point to the city at Wanda and Villa Park Road will be known as the "Villa Park Knowles."

Knowles has worked for the city for over 34 years, tirelessly responding to calls from residents at any hour, helping city organizations and nonprofits with every imaginable type of request to make their events run smoothly, in addition to keeping his city clean. He has continuously shunned the spotlight, despite being integral to the city, and receiving acco-

lades from Rotary Club and other groups.

The "Knowles" will be planted with native plants, including fruit trees, harking back to the city's citrus-packing beginnings. The pathway that winds through the area, already a popular walking route for residents, will be repaired. Funding of approximately \$75,000 will be provided by city funds, in conjunction with grant monies, should they become available. Upon completion of the project in late spring, City Manager Steve Franks anticipates a plaque to honor Mike Knowles, "the unofficial mayor of the city."



This year, the Tustin Public Schools Foundation's annual Dino Dash took a detour. A virtual 5K replaced the traditional bike and walk/run courses, but thousands of participants still had a good time on courses of their own making. Hewes Middle School teacher Anna Brandsma and her family put on their Dino Detour shirts and continued their annual tradition by creating their own home course, complete with finish line. Creativity and commitment were key to this recreated event that benefited the Foundation and Tustin Unified schools. In 2021, the Foundation looks forward to a dino-mite 30-year celebration of the Dino Dash on Nov. 7.



Orange Woman's Club members Suzanne Vaugine (left) and Pietra Gaw dropped off a carload of donated toys and gift cards at the Friendly Center.



The final steel beam was lifted into place on Canyon High School's new state-of-the-art science center, Nov. 19. Canyon's 67,098-sq.-ft. building is one of four paid for with funds from Measure S to bring Orange Unified high schools into the 21st century. In addition to modern science labs and classrooms, the building will serve as a "front door" to the campus and house student support services. The final beam was signed by students, staff, administrators, community members and elected officials.

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OUSD Board elects officers for 2021

The Orange Unified School District Board of Trustees elected Kathy Moffatt to serve as president at its Dec. 15 meeting. Andrea Yamasaki was elected vice president, and Kris Erickson will serve as clerk. The election of officers followed the official swearing in of board members John Ortega, Ana Page and Angela Schlueter-Rumsey.

Tustin offers drive-thru testing

Tustin residents may get tested for COVID-19 on a first-come, first-served basis through Jan. 25. The drive-thru center is located at 621 W. 1st St., and is open every Monday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 2 to 4:30 p.m.

Testing is sponsored by the Families Together Community Health Center; no appointment is necessary.



Susie and Dick Goldman



VP couple celebrates 50th anniversary

Dick and Susie Goldman (aka Nan and Poppy), residents of Villa Park since 1976, celebrated their 50th wedding Anniversary in December. Susie is 74 years old, and Dick just celebrated his 93rd birthday. Dick was an OB-GYN who practiced out of St. Joseph Hospital, and has been retired since 1996. Susie was blessed to be able to stay home and raise her children and help with her grandchildren.

More than anything, they love spending time with their family

and friends.

The Goldman's have four children: Randy, Lori, Shannon and Missy; one daughter-in-law, Junga; one son-in-law, Alex; seven grandchildren, Christina, Roxanne, Livia, Joel, Jessica, Annie and Maggie; and one granddaughter-in-law, Rosana.

During their retirement, they have traveled the world, visiting Australia, Ireland, Scotland, England, China and Hawaii. They are celebrating their 50th with a small family dinner this month.



Holiday Forest brightens community

In an effort to brighten holiday spirits, the Villa Park Women's League initiated the first Community Holiday Forest on the green in front of city hall. Masterminded by Chair Kimberlee Martin, faux Christmas trees were decorated and set up by various activity groups of the league, VP High School PFSO, and Girl Scout Troop 5158. League members crafted ornaments for the

activity-themed trees: a purple Bunco tree, with dice lights and ornaments and topper; natural elements made for a gorgeous Petal Pushers tree; ornaments of buttons, hand-stitched snowmen, and colorful balls of yarn and needles were incorporated into the Stitchery tree; pickle ornaments and pickleballs dressed the Pickleball tree; the Couples Gourmet holiday tree featured hand-crafted

wooden utensils, wine glasses, with a chef's toque as the treetopper.

Thanks to generous donors, the Villa Park Women's League's annual Giving Tree philanthropy provided toys to disadvantaged children. Bridgett Baril, chair, expanded the program to include necessities, personal hygiene items and small gift cards for adults.



From left, the Elks Christmas basket committee included, left to right, Don Westerfield, Colin Smith, Adam Thomasson and Mike Cash.

Elks keep Christmas spirit alive

The Orange Elks Lodge 1475 is proud to continue a long-standing tradition of assisting the community by donating Christmas baskets to families in need.

The goal this year was to supply 200 Christmas baskets (boxes). While the focus is on families with young children, boxes were also provided for the elderly and unemployed who do not have the means for a holiday meal.

The Christmas basket committee, Don Westerfield, Colin Smith, Adam Thomasson and Mike Cash was tasked, this year, with the additional burden of COVID. Working with the City of Orange, the families were allowed to pick up their Christmas boxes by driving through the city hall parking lot.

Lodge members came through by donating over \$10,000 to pur-

chase items for the baskets. The Elks returned over \$4,000 to the community by purchasing toys and gifts from local small businesses, Tiddlywinks and Orange Grocery Outlet.

Over 25,000 lbs. of food, including a non-perishable food box, fresh produce, dairy, meat items and four prepared frozen meals were loaded into the waiting vehicles by over 50 Elks members, and their friends and families.

Additionally, a \$20 gift card, a Christmas toy, some bikes, and pet food and supplies were donated to the families, while Elks mascot, Santa Elroy, greeted all of the children.

Community Partners, the OC Food Bank, Waste Not OC and Spoof Dawgs to the Rescue helped supply many items.



Learn more at eocwd.com



Over 75 third-grade students at Helen Estock Elementary School received new bikes on Dec. 11. The Bikes for Kids Foundation gave a bike and helmet to every third grader at the school. This is the fifth consecutive year that Bikes for Kids has selected an elementary school in the Tustin Unified School District. Estock was the only school in Orange County to be chosen for the program. Volunteers from the Aliso Viejo mountain bike club, DirtBags, raised funds for the bikes and assembled them in the school's multipurpose room the previous night. During a socially distanced assembly outside on the campus, five students were randomly selected through a drawing to win bikes. Next, the organization gave away a few more bikes until Bikes for Kids emcee Bill Pollakov did it "Oprah style" and announced every third grader would receive a new bike and helmet, including the students who were livestreaming from home. A "spokes" person for the organization said Estock's students were so excited their heads were spinning! The kids wheelie love their new bikes! – Mark Eliot

Scholarships offered for 2021 high school grads

Assistance League of Orange announced that scholarships will be offered to high school seniors graduating from an OUSD high school, or from another high school while residing in the OUSD attendance area, in 2021. Scholarships have been a part of the Assistance League of Orange philanthropy since 1948.

Scholarships are offered to students pursuing any field of post-high school study at a university, community college, or trade school. General Scholarships are available, as well as four specialized scholarships, which have specific application requirements: the Eugenia Love Arts Scholarship is geared toward a student pursuing an arts major including music, dance, acting, drawing, painting or photography; the Alfreda Niewig Nursing Scholarship is intended for a student pursuing a degree in nursing or a health care profession; the ALO Memorial Scholarship for Special Needs is geared toward a student with a physical or mental handicap; and the Richland High School Scholarship is available to students who are currently attending Richland or have attended Richland during the current school year.

Qualified students may apply online for both a general and a specialized scholarship at alorange.org, [programs], then [scholarships] beginning Jan. 15; applications close at midnight on Sat., March 27. Please contact Karen Goodwin or Tanis Nelson, at scholarships@alorange.org with any questions.



Meet purrfectly petable Valkyrie. Like the Norse Goddess, she is a wish fulfiller, as long as your wish is to pet her. While she tends to be a little shy, and likes to peer out from her lair under the furniture, she will come if you call. And her fur is extra soft, jet black, even between her toes. She was an outdoor kitty for a long time, but now prefers the warmth of my indoor foster home, and – well, your home would be even better. For more information on how to adopt Valkyrie, or any of our adoptable cats, please contact OCSP Cat Rescue at (714) 815-4300 or ocsp.adoptions@gmail.com, putting the cat's name in the subject line. Email is always the fastest way to bring your new family member home! You can access an application at ocspcatrescue.org.



El Modena's Senior Class honored frontline COVID units at St. Joseph's Hospital, Orange County Global Medical Center and Chapman Global Medical Center. Gathering donations from Class of 2021 families, senior class officers packaged gift bags to honor their fellow "Vanguards." Recently, a Vanguard senior lost her father after a battle with COVID. The family learned first hand how hard the doctors, nurses and entire staff are working for our community. ElMo's Class of 2021 says thank you to all our COVID Units!"

ALO to celebrate 80th anniversary

Assistance League of Orange will celebrate 80 years of philanthropic service to the greater Orange Community in February. While the pandemic has made it more difficult to interact with fellow volunteers and the children, women, families and veterans they serve, the members have persevered, adapting existing programs and creating new ones to meet new and growing needs within the community.

"Christmas is for Sharing," and program volunteers shopped and wrapped over 250 gifts to fulfill the wish lists –blankets, sleeping bags, hygiene items -- of veteran students and Guardian Scholars (former foster children) now attending Santiago Community College.

Instead of parties and dinners for the families staying at Miracle Manor while their children are undergoing life-saving treatments, volunteers "adopted" two families, providing gifts for all.

Assistance League volunteers made the holidays a little warmer for the sheltered women of WISEPlace. Hand-made blankets, some crocheted and some fleece, plus new robes and slippers were gifted to the 47 women.

Approximately 200 donated coats and new socks were given to OC Veterans Assistance program. Sixteen live 6-foot Noble fir trees and one faux tree, replete with stands and skirts, were provided



Program Chairs Angela Fasbender and Claire Kocek with "Christmas is for Sharing" gifts.

for the housing units for young adults at Orangewood Children's Home. Volunteers also delivered 150 boxed lunches to hospital staff at St. Joseph, in thanks for their frontline service.

Gift bags containing warm blankets for the men, and shawls for the ladies, new socks and a treat were given to 75 seniors at the Orange Senior Center, as well as much-needed paper supplies.

At the California Raceway annual toy drive, Assistance League, the chosen recipient, collected 96 toys that were dispersed for disadvantaged children of Friendly Center, Youth Center of Orange, Miracle for Kids and Orangewood. The organization's Special Assistance program has handled a record number of struggling families requesting assistance with utilities, rent and food.

Funds for Cannon Street widening sought

The City of Orange submitted widening Cannon Street to the Orange County Transportation Authority, in answer to a call for projects seeking Measure M2 funding.

The Cannon Street widening from Santiago Canyon Road to Serrano Avenue project meets OCTA's criteria for arterial capacity enhancement.

The City is requesting funding for fiscal year 2021-22 for the engineering and planning phase

of the project, which is estimated at \$825,000. The total grant amount would be \$618,750 with a 25% city match requirement of \$206,250.

Measure M2, approved by voters in 2006, is a 30-year multi-billion dollar program extension of the original Measure M (approved in 1990) to fund improvements to the county freeway system, streets and roads, Metrolink and transit services for the senior and disabled community.

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Children and the Orange Elks at Christmas

By Bill Neessen

The Orange Elks December programs for children--Eli Home Christmas Tree and Shop with a Cop--are member favorites.

The Christmas Toy Drive for Eli Home, which houses abused children and their moms, was different this year, as the Elks were unable to place a Christmas tree in the lodge for members to deposit unwrapped gifts.

Instead, the Elks received a list of the boys and girls, and their ages. Lodge Trustees approved \$1,000 to purchase gifts, and members raised another \$1,000 to help fund the project. Gifts were purchased in Orange to support

local merchants.

McPherson Magnet School selected the Elks and the Eli Home as the recipients of its annual toy drive, adding an additional 150 toys. This year, moms were included with a gift box that included lip gloss, lotion and fuzzy socks.

"Shop with a Cop" gives children (ages 5 to 18) the opportunity to purchase clothing and necessities while shopping with a police officer. Elk Augie Rocha chaired the program for the Orange Police Department. The Orange Elks donated \$2,000, and selected participants from Youth Centers of Orange. Some of the

criteria used to select these children included trying harder in school, listening to their parents and teachers and being a good person.

Rocha presented each child a Shop with a Cop T-shirt and a goodie bag provided by the OC Emerald Society. Inside was a teddy bear, an Orange PD coloring book and a \$100 Walmart gift card.

Shop with a Cop was supported by The Village at Orange, Buffalo Wild Wings, Kay Jewelers, Walmart, OC Law Enforcement Emerald Society, the OC Police Officers Association and donations from Orange citizens.

THOUGHTS from a TREE M.D.

by Vince Olivieri, ISA Certified Arborist (WE-12884-A)



As the world heaves a collective sigh of relief that 2020 is over, we can finally look 2021 in the eye with optimistic spirits and unite in the hope that the worst is behind us.

While the normal group gatherings and hangouts have been temporarily put on hold, I have filled the few daily hours I have to myself with early morning hikes and evening walks.

Have you taken a walk through our chaparral landscape as the sun begins to rise? If you have, you can attest to the many scents that fill the early morning air, a natural aromatherapy.

The moonflowers always greet me at the onset, and close down the show when I'm leaving. Most plants and trees are resting now. While they may look dead, they, too, are taking in the view and waiting for those longer, warmer days.

The balance and transfer of energy that trees and plants are so adept at has always amazed me. The natural aromas from plants and flowers attract and repel so effortlessly, we hardly recognize it. The hypnotic moonflowers glowing under the moonlight are actually poisonous, but you wouldn't know it by their vibrant energy. The tall, long-dead, eerie skeleton of a black locust tree may look useless, but it dispenses iron and nutrients back into the soil long after it has passed.

Plants and trees have taught me so much. Their resilience, selflessness for the most part, and how protective they can be have all helped me along my quest to being a better human, a better neighbor, a better friend. My goal for 2021 is to help us all see how we can improve our quality of life if we live like a tree.

Happy New Year!

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OUSD approves safe rooms to promote mental health

The Orange Unified School District has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with CHOC Children's Hospital to collaborate on student mental health services, the most tangible being "safe room" wellness centers on middle and high school campuses.

The safe spaces, allocated by OUSD and outfitted by CHOC, are intended to give students a place to decompress and relieve stress when facing a meltdown. OUSD nursing staff will have access to CHOC case managers and psychiatric consultants.

The OUSD/CHOC collaboration recognizes that many students today are overwhelmed by demands for top tier grades, college entrance requirements, and social/peer insecurity. Student's stress-related mental, physical and academic issues may be exacerbated by COVID.

CHOC has already teamed with other school districts in Orange County to devise programs addressing student mental health; the effort is funded by donations to the hospital.

"This has been a top issue among parents," OUSD Board President Kathy Moffatt reported at the Dec. 15 board meeting. "It's also a priority among school superintendents. We're fortunate to have CHOC right in our neighborhood."

Student board members tuning into the virtual meeting advised trustees that their classmates like the idea of safe spaces and that it is important for them to have more mental health resources during and after COVID.

Trustee Kris Erickson pointed out that students were having mental health crises before COVID, and that suicide is the second leading cause of death among young people.

Trustee John Ortega was skeptical of the partnership's value, asking what CHOC could provide that OUSD couldn't do itself. "I'm all for mental health," he said, "But how is this going to assist us further?"

He was reminded by his colleagues that CHOC would provide resources that the district may not have access to, that CHOC would make someone available to talk to students and "enrich the conversation."

Trustee Rick Ledesma said he appreciated that CHOC wanted to collaborate and he supports mental health for students, but, he concluded, "staff is already doing a great job and I don't think CHOC is the right organization to provide these services."

The board voted 5-2 to sign the MOU, with Ortega and Ledesma opposed.

Students learn life lessons

El Rancho Charter Middle School students are learning to cook thanks to live classes from Home Ec teacher Marcy Hail. She shares a pre-recorded video while zooming with the students. The students are also learning life skills: how to sew a button, hem, fold a fitted sheet, write a resume, do laundry and more.

Nightlife on the Silverado Highway

By Robert Detrano

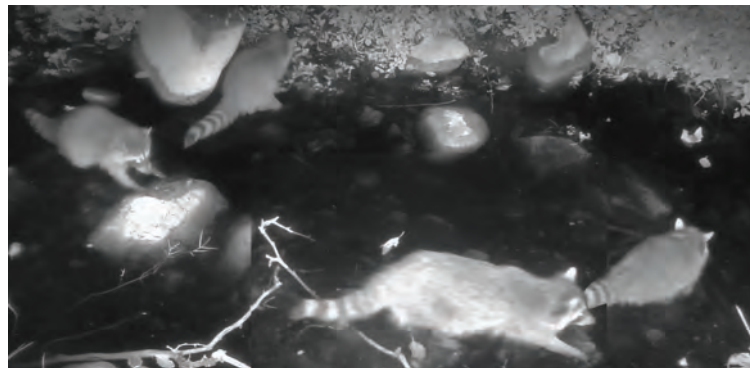
Welcome to the Silverado Highway and its travelers. These voyagers of the night are your neighbors. They are born, raised, and make families just like you do. And, on most evenings, you can find them on the highway.

The highway enters Silverado from the national forest near the Maple Springs gate. It winds its way down the canyon next to Silverado Canyon Road and sneaks under the road, curling from left to right and right to left eight times before it passes behind the stables, then cuts through the underbrush, crosses Black Star Canyon Road and finally joins the Santiago Creek, which gently flows down to Irvine Lake.

The highway is the Silverado Creek, and its travelers are the raccoons, foxes, deer, bobcats, possums, rabbits, pumas and countless other creatures that live and travel in the creek. They are our neighbors and share the canyon with us. They respect you. They want and deserve your respect in return.

For the past three months, I have been placing trail cameras in the streambed and under the bridges. In most locations, wild animals pass and trigger my cameras at least once every night. Most common are raccoons, rabbits and rodents. Upcanyon, I have found more foxes, and downcanyon, more coyotes. Deer like the more remote and quiet areas, such as Big Oak Canyon and the "Riviera." Raccoons do better near human habitations where they can beg and forage in gardens. Others (bobcats, rabbits, squirrels, possums, wood rats, mice, voles) are distributed all along the stream, from the Maple Springs gate to the Black Star Canyon Road underpass. Let me introduce you to a few of your neighbors.

Mrs. Raccoon and her children. Every evening since Sept. 1, this single mother and her brood of four have been traveling the highway between the Hazel Bell Bridge and my home on Shady Brook. She leads her children, searching for frogs, insects, mice and garden produce. She first checks out the menu before allowing her kits to dine. On one



occasion, she passed in front of one of my cameras going downstream with only three out of her four offspring in tow. Two minutes later, the same camera caught her returning upstream to find her wayward child and bring him safely home. What an intelligent and loving mom.

Lord Fox takes his privacy seriously. I learned this when he angrily capsized a trail camera, turning it upside down and urinating on it. Here, in a better mood, he is enjoying a sip of sweet Silverado Creek water near Halfway Canyon. He usually travels the highway solo, but occasionally can be seen with a companion.

Duchess Deer enjoys morning strolls in the streambed near Big Oak Canyon. The grass and tree leaves, that make up most of her diet, are green there. She uses her keen nose and large beautiful eyes to constantly check for her mortal enemies, His and Her Majesty Puma and gun-toting hunters. Here she is in a frantic gallop, after having scented danger in the wind.



King and Queen Puma are rarely seen. Their population in the Santa Ana Mountains is in danger of extinction, largely due to fatal attempts to cross highways and freeways. I was happy to get an image of them at a wet spot in the stream. Fortunately, they have some good friends in the canyons at the Earthroots Field School and the Irvine Ranch Conservancy. Despite what you might think, they rarely attack humans. Learn more about them at the Mountain Lion Foundation website, and there are great photos at orangecountyoutdoors.com. There is lots of information and an opportunity to donate at camountainlions.com.

To browse videos of creek inhabitants, see detranophotos.com, or contact robert@chinacal.org.

Robert Detrano is a retired cardiologist and missionary doctor who has returned from China and Burma to his cottage in Silverado Canyon. Detrano has fallen in love with his wild neighbors and is working to protect them and their habitat. He wrote this story prior to the canyon fire.

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with David Silva

Happy New Year and welcome to real estate, COVID-style

In 2020, home prices gained in our local market -- even during a pandemic. You're probably wondering, how could that be possible?

As COVID hit our shores, we were unsure of the severity and nature of this beast and real estate went into a panic.

Homes for sale remained on the market, escrows were canceled and both sellers and buyers were concerned.

Luckily, realtors were considered essential workers and were quickly given strict guidelines to follow so that we could continue to help sellers and buyers, who had to sell or buy for one reason or another, maneuver through the process. Open houses were precluded, virtual showings increased, but in-person visits are still necessary.

Here are just a few of those guidelines, in no particular order.

Realtors representing buyers must submit a California Association of Realtors form PEAD-V

to the listing agent before entry is allowed. That is, the Property Entry Advisory and Declaration-Visitor form, agreeing to take all reasonable and necessary precautions, such as washing hands, wearing a mask, practicing social distancing, and avoiding touching surfaces or items in the property.

There is also a similar form for sellers that puts the risks of COVID front and center. Sellers must indicate that they are not currently, or within the past 14 days, knowingly afflicted with COVID, and have no symptoms.

Some of the seller's precautions are: a sign, or signs, posted near the home's entry with COVID guidelines; masks at all times during the showing; gloves are also on the list, as well as disposable shoe covers, hand sanitizers, disinfectant wipes and spray disinfectants.

As we fire up 2021, expect to see more of the same: masked shoppers looking at a neighbor's home for sale near you.

MONTH at-a-glance

ORANGE | NOVEMBER 2020

	NOV-20	LAST MO	LAST 3 MOS	NOV-19	YTD
Median Sales Price	\$765,000	-1%	1%	6%	\$740,000
Average Sales Price	\$782,734	-4%	0%	3%	\$768,993
Properties for Sale	139	-4%	--	-13%	--
Properties Sold	121	-15%	--	16%	1,121
Avg Days on Market	30	7%	11%	-36%	33
Avg Price/Sq Ft (Sold)	\$442	0%	2%	12%	\$425
Inventory (Months)	1.1	14%	6%	-25%	1.8

MONTH at-a-glance

TUSTIN | NOVEMBER 2020

	NOV-20	LAST MO	LAST 3 MOS	NOV-19	YTD
Median Sales Price	\$695,000	-11%	-9%	-1%	\$750,000
Average Sales Price	\$757,027	-7%	-3%	6%	\$796,211
Properties for Sale	87	-16%	--	19%	--
Properties Sold	83	11%	--	19%	603
Avg Days on Market	38	41%	19%	-12%	35
Avg Price/Sq Ft (Sold)	\$434	-6%	-2%	6%	\$442
Inventory (Months)	1.0	-24%	-23%	1%	2.0

MONTH at-a-glance

VILLA PARK | NOVEMBER 2020

	NOV-20	LAST MO	LAST 3 MOS	NOV-19	YTD
Median Sales Price	\$1,370,000	6%	2%	-2%	\$1,395,000
Average Sales Price	\$1,333,200	-8%	-7%	2%	\$1,520,118
Properties for Sale	25	0%	--	25%	--
Properties Sold	10	150%	--	67%	67
Avg Days on Market	56	24%	-33%	47%	78
Avg Price/Sq Ft (Sold)	\$442	1%	4%	7%	\$425
Inventory (Months)	2.5	-60%	-33%	-25%	4.2

dent achievement and academic excellence. He always believed in "surrounding yourself with quality people and liking your job." His favorite motto was "be prepared."

Prior to joining TUSD, Ross served as superintendent of the Norwalk-La Mirada Unified School District in Los Angeles County, and principal of Villa Park High and McPherson Junior High in Orange. He was also an assistant principal at El Modena.

Before his administrative experience, he was a teacher of biology, science and physical education, as well as a football coach at Polytechnic High School in Long Beach; and a biology teacher, P.E. instructor and athletic coach at Arlington and Pawnee High Schools in Illinois.

Ross received his commission as an ensign in the U.S. Navy in 1953, and served as an engineering officer on the USS LSM 448 and maintenance officer at the U.S. Naval Magazine in Guam. He returned to inactive duty in 1955 with the rank of Lt. j.g.

A graduate of Western Illinois University, Ross earned his bachelor's degree in biology and physical education and his master's degree in public school administration. He received his doctorate in administration and curriculum from UCLA.

Ross and his wife Gloria lived in North Tustin for 56 years. During the 1980s, he served as president of the Tustin Chamber of Commerce and Tustin-Santa Ana Rotary Club. He was named Tustin Area Man of the Year by the chamber in 1984 for his dedica-

tion and valuable contributions to public education and the Tustin Unified community.

Ross is survived by his wife of 67 years; daughters Suzan Stahr and Jennifer Bain, and son Michael Ross -- all graduates of Foothill High School; his brother Tom Ross; daughter-in-law Raine Ross; sons-in-law Rick Stahr and Tom Bain; five grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

Cards may be sent to TUSD Communications Office, 300 South C Street, Tustin 92780, and will be forwarded to the family.

Dr. Claude Wiseman 1933-2020

Retired Tustin Unified School District administrator and teacher Dr. Claude Wiseman passed away on Dec. 3. He was 87 years old.

Wiseman worked in education for 23 years -- all in Tustin Unified. He joined the district in 1968 as a science teacher at Foothill High. In 1986, he became a teacher on special assignment in science at the district office. He also served as acting assistant principal at Tustin High School.

In 1988, Wiseman was promoted to assistant principal at Tustin High and remained at the school until his retirement in 1991.

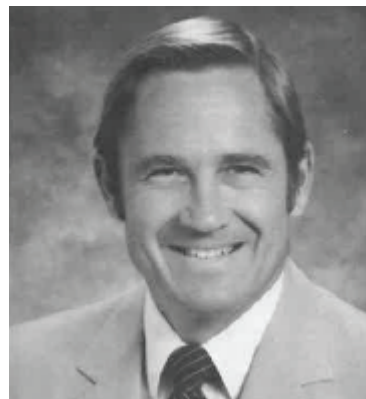
Wiseman earned his bachelor's degree in biology and master's degree in chemistry at Chapman University. He received his doctorate in biochemistry from Western Colorado University.

Upon his retirement, Wiseman enjoyed woodworking (making model cars, planes and windmills), spending time with his family and supporting worthy causes, including the Wounded Warrior Project. When not in his workshop, Dr. Wiseman tended his garden of flowers and fruit trees through hydroponics. He moved to Arizona in 2004.

Wiseman is survived by his wife Suzy, and his four children and their spouses: Sheryl Van Nostran (Dennis), Melanie Evans (El Rico), Stacey Morrow (Denny), and Mark Wiseman (Holly), 12 grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren. His daughter Melanie is a special day class teacher in TUSD and has taught at Foothill and Tustin High -- the same schools as her father.

Cards can be sent to Melanie Evans at THS, 1171 El Camino Real, Tustin, CA 92780.

OBITUARIES



Maurice "Maury" Ross 1932-2020

Retired Tustin Unified School District Superintendent Dr. Maurice "Maury" Ross passed away on Dec. 1. He was 88 years old.

Ross worked in education for nearly 45 years, and served as

TUSD superintendent from 1977-1990. Due to his leadership, test scores went up, facility needs were addressed, a comprehensive curriculum development was in place, and new programs addressed the changing ethnicity in the district. Ross guided the district through some tough times, which included declining student enrollment, nine school closures and budgetary issues. Upon his retirement in 1990, Ross left behind a financially stable school district and a financial agreement with the Irvine Company to fund new schools (Tustin Ranch and parts of Irvine) that was the envy of other school districts.

Ross continued his career at the University of Southern California as an Assistant Dean of Education for eight years, until his final retirement in 1999.

Through all the challenges and successes, Ross remained strong and steady, with a focus on stu-

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Zone 1

- Extends 30 feet (San Diego County requires 50 feet of clearance in Zone 1) from buildings, structures, decks, etc.
- Remove all dead vegetation.
- Remove dead or dry leaves and pine needles from your yard, roof and rain gutters.
- Remove branches that hang over your roof and keep dead branches 10 feet away from your chimney.
- Trim trees when needed to keep branches a minimum of 10 feet from other trees.
- Relocate wood piles at least 100 feet away from your property.
- Remove or prune flammable vegetation near windows.
- Remove vegetation and items that could catch fire from around and under decks.
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