

# FOOTHILLS SENTRY

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A Monthly Community Newspaper

AUGUST 2025

## New OUSD superintendent plans to listen and learn

By Tina Richards

The Orange Unified School District (OUSD) Board of Trustees is optimistic about the future, and considers its choice of Dr. Rachel Monárrez for Superintendent as a positive step in the right direction.

Monárrez, the first “outsider” hired to be superintendent since 2008, has been on board since July 1 and, as described by board members, hit the ground running.

On her first day, the district learned that federal funding for certain education programs, previously approved by Congress, would not be released as scheduled. The \$1.8 million loss is approximately 2% of the district budget and had already been included in the adopted budget for the 2025–26 fiscal year.

Monárrez was quick to assure constituents that the district is prepared for this loss of funding, is in good fiscal condition and will continue all programs and services for the next school year.

### Eye on OUSD

Born and raised in Southern California, Monárrez spent most of her 32-year career in the San Bernardino School District. She spent the last three years as superintendent of a district in Massachusetts. Ironically, she says, she always watched OUSD from afar. “It is the perfect mix of Southern California. It’s a district of excellence, and protecting children is a core value. When I heard that OUSD was looking for a superintendent, I had to put my name in.”

During her first board meeting, July 14, she presented her immediate priorities as superintendent. They are, primarily, “listening and learning.” Monárrez is meeting with anyone and everyone who will share their thoughts about OUSD. That includes staff, teachers, students, constituents, city officials. “I want to learn what people consider OUSD’s



OUSD Superintendent Rachel Monárrez

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continued on page 3



Pastor Roger Frick of Salem Lutheran Church was the Grand Marshal for this year’s Orange Park Acres 4th of July Parade. He is accompanied by wife Patty and driver John Reina. More photos, page 15.

## Fate of Sully-Miller property inches toward resolution

By Tina Richards

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City of Orange and Sully-Miller site property owner Milan REI was approved by the city council at its July 22 meeting.

The MOU, a follow-on to a Letter of Intent signed April 22, signals the beginning of the end of the decades of disagreement over the fate of the Sully-Miller property in East Orange. The embattled property, purchased by Milan in 2008, has been the site of three failed housing proposals, a construction waste dump, and a stockpile for dirt and debris that contains varying degrees of contaminants. A 2020 voter referendum ensured that open space zoning covered the site.

Milan is ready to divest itself of the property, and Orange would like to acquire it for open space,

provided Milan gets clearance from all applicable regulatory agencies. The MOU is a step in that direction.

### Build where you may

Milan owns two other properties adjacent to Sully-Miller that are zoned for development. The acreage north of Santiago Creek and south of Mabury Ranch has already been approved for 22 single family houses. The tract map for that project received the city’s OK in 2020, stalled for a while, and is now back on track with the developer getting “ministerial” permits from the city.

The current horse arena property on the other side of Santiago Canyon Road across from Sully-Miller is zoned for houses on one-acre lots. That would accommodate six units. Milan wanted to build 118 units there and applied for that project un-

der the “Builder’s Remedy,” an untested legal theory that allows developers to bypass local zoning ordinances and general plans. Milan also filed a Builder’s Remedy application for 231 units on the Sully-Miller site.

Because the legality of the Builder’s Remedy has not been tested in court and is not a sure thing, Milan agreed to put its application on hold and negotiate with the city for an outcome that would settle the Sully-Miller issue and allow for an acceptable level of development (more than six, less than 118) on the horse arena property.

### Fair trade

Under the MOU, Milan will submit plans to the city for 30 residential units on that site. The

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continued on page 6

## Orange council mute on ICE raids in the city

By Tina Richards

The City of Orange has not been immune to raids by federal ICE agents forcibly detaining Latino residents who may, or may not, be undocumented. The topic arose at the last two city council meetings with similar results.

Councilwoman Ana Gutierrez acknowledged the fear among Latino immigrants, speaking to that issue at the onset of the June 24 city council meeting (see Guest Commentary, page 4).

Following her remarks, Arianza Barrios offered three suggestions for the council to consider in support of its Latino residents. “This is a federal issue,” she acknowledged, “not the purview of the council. But when it comes before the city, when we see people scared, we have an obligation to speak out.”

Her suggestions included a letter from the council to the city’s congressional representatives (Lou Correa, Young Kim) asking them to ensure laws are enforced respectfully and that they advocate for the city. She also asked that a list of resources (nonprofit

agencies, legal help) be posted on the city’s website to aid both legal and nonlegal immigrants alike. She further suggested a city proclamation reiterating city values, noting that First Amendment rights are cherished and that residents who are valuable members of the community are treated with respect and dignity.

### From silence to free speech

Gutierrez’s comments and Barrios’s suggestions were met with silence. Silence from the audience and the dais. Mayor Dan Slater broke the spell, suggesting that documented residents had nothing to fear, that they are protected by the Constitution, and that the city respects the right to protest. “This is a federal issue,” he said. “We should stay out of it.”

Jon Dumitru, the only other council member to respond, noted that the city website had never posted resources for other groups (vets, the homeless, service projects), suggesting it was inappropriate to do so. He then focused his comments on the free speech aspect of Barrio’s proclamation suggestion. A proclamation sup-

porting free speech would just be another piece of paper, he noted, and that we already have a “giant piece of paper signed by the founders that says we have free speech.” Defending free speech, he said, is standing up to those who want to deny it, not creating another piece of paper.

He also advised that protests are allowed in the city, that “they are doing it right now in the Plaza.” “You do it peacefully,” he said, “that’s fine. But the second you break the law, you want to be 1960s? We’ll return to the 1960s and there should be firehoses. I have no problem with that.” He later apologized for the remark.

### Take two

At the July 22 council meeting, Barrios and Gutierrez introduced a resolution that would require ICE agents operating in the city to not wear masks and identify themselves. The councilwomen’s resolution was bolstered by 26 public speakers who described

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## NEWS INSIDE

### NO HARM, MORE FOWL

Orange revises ordinance allowing residents to keep six chickens and modifying coop setbacks.

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### THE ICEMAN COMETH

Local electeds address the uneasy specter of immigration raids in the community.

See Guest Commentaries, page 4

### FEEL THE BURN

OC Supervisors bypass public scrutiny and approve a housing tract in a high fire zone.

See County, page 7

### OUT IN THE STREET

Residents take to the road with bikes, carts and sturdy shoes for hometown 4th of July parade.

See Villa Park, page 14

### TIME OUT

Community sports, like the high school athletes it covers, is taking the summer off.

Will return in the fall.

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## Orange Elks named an All American Lodge



The Orange Elks All American Lodge Award

By Bill Neessen

For the ninth time in the last 11 years, the Orange Elks Lodge #1475 was honored as an All American Lodge.

The term "All American," in Elksdom, and in our society, means that you are the best that you can be. For the 2024-25 Elk year, the Orange Elks officers, committee chairmen, members, spouses and friends all helped the lodge earn this title.

The Lodge supports the programs of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks. Its key projects are scholarships; youth activity programs; donations to veterans' causes; participation in veterans programs; conducting an

Americanism essay contest; and having a drug awareness education program. The lodge works closely with the Orange Police Department, Fire Department, and GRIP (Gang Reduction Intervention Partnership).

Key 2024-25 activities included teaming with the Santiago Creek Greenway Alliance to clean up the Creek; the Antler Program; coordinating two blood drives with the American Red Cross; Flags Over Orange; assisting members of Pasadena Elks Lodge who lost their homes in the fires; donating to the HUB Resource Center; providing dinners at the Tustin Village Outpost and Youth Appreciation awards

### "ICE" continued from page 1

the fear permeating the city, offered first-hand accounts of unidentified masked men detaining and arresting brown-skinned people without regard for legal or illegal status, and implored the council to approve the resolution.

Barrios, Gutierrez and many public commenters described the resolution as symbolic of the city's support and respect for its residents. It was likely unenforceable, but would send a message that Orange recognized the problem ICE's heavy-handed tactics created for the city, the police department and residents.

During the council discussion, most agreed that masked federal agents nabbing residents from the streets was a problem and that people should know who they are, or at least what agency they represent. They also acknowledged that these unidentifiable "officials" destroyed public confidence in all law enforcement, including the Orange police.

#### No stand taken

The council, however, was not prepared to adopt the resolution. Citing its lack of enforcement teeth, the city's inability to "interfere with federal agents," the likelihood that some activities would require officers to be masked, and that agents had to hide their faces for their own safety, the council quashed the item before taking a vote.

Councilman John Gyllenhammer was willing to approve the resolution with some language changes to provide more discretion for law enforcement, but admitted that such changes would

substantially weaken it.

Barrios motioned for a vote on the subject, but Jon Dumitru made an alternate motion to table it. Mayor Dan Slater, Dumitru, Denis Bilodeau and Kathy Tavoularis agreed to dismiss it. Barrios,

Gutierrez and Gyllenhammer disagreed.

"I'm disappointed," Barrios said. "All we were asking is for the council to show support for the community. This is despicable."



Protesters march along Chapman Avenue, denouncing federal ICE raids that target Latinos.



# ORANGE UNIFIED CLASSES BEGIN AUGUST 20

US NEWS & WORLD  
REPORT: "BEST" SCHOOLS  
IN THE NATION

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& PROGRAMS DISTRICTWIDE

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Chickens come home to roost



Orange Councilman Denis Bilodeau with backyard chickens Sage, Sorrel, Parsley and Thyme.

By Tina Richards

“You have me to thank or blame for this, Orange Councilman Denis Bilodeau advised the audience at the June 24 city council meeting, “I brought this forward.”

Bilodeau was referring to amendments to a city ordinance regulating chickens and chicken coops owned by Orange residents.

The ordinance previously limited the number of chickens per household to five and required coops to be located at least 20 feet from property lines. Under the revised code, the number of permitted chickens is six and coops positioned at least 20 feet from a neighboring dwelling.

“Chickens are social creatures,” Bilodeau says, “and they tend to pair off.” When you have an uneven number of them, the odd fowl will get picked on, he explains, it’s the pecking order.

Further, he noted, residents with odd sized lots could not have poultry because they couldn’t meet the 20 feet from a property line requirement. Changing the buffer zone to 20 feet from a neighbor’s house allows more leeway in the placement of a coop.

This city’s rationale for the change sounds a little more bureaucratic. “The city’s current chicken keeping regulations were established to balance urban agriculture with residential land use,” the staff report on the amended

ordinance advised. “Based on staff interaction during Code Enforcement investigations and what has become an established popular animal-keeping practice in typical single-family neighborhoods, there is a need to refresh city standards to reflect “real world” conditions that have proven to function in an acceptable manner. This includes increasing the allowable number of chickens and adjusting property line based setbacks. The proposed amendments would align with regional trends and improve practicality for residents.”

City staff reviewed backyard chicken regulations in surrounding jurisdictions and found that six or more chickens is not unreasonable when employing more flexible setback requirements. Additionally, having six chickens provides residents with a more reliable supply of eggs.

The 20-foot buffer between chicken housing and neighboring dwellings, staff noted, provides greater flexibility for residents while maintaining appropriate safeguards to minimize noise, odor and pest concerns.

The revised ordinance also deleted an existing code section that limited the combined number of dogs, cats and small animals per household to five. With that omission, households with dogs and cats may have the same number of chickens as households without dogs and cats.

The city council approved the ordinance by unanimous vote.

“OUSD”  
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strengths and opportunities for improvement,” she says. “I want to give people space to talk about what’s not working and to build confidence in the district.”

She plans to visit every school campus and spend time at each one by the end of the year. “Asking children what they think is fascinating,” she notes. Monárrez also intends to host family forums throughout the district starting in September. Her goal is to get to know OUSD families and find out what works for them.

Connecting with constituents

She is particularly interested in meeting with constituents who disagree with OUSD policies or the way it handles controversy. “I may not be able to change anything,” she suggests “but I will listen to them and make sure they know I am listening.”

“Education is about people,” she stresses, “and the work is always about children. Big people serve the little people. The promise is that every child will get what they need. And that promise is something you are always working toward. I’m going to be everywhere, out where it’s happening. You can’t collaborate

with people behind a computer screen.”

The stakes are high

In a recent conversation with the new superintendent, she shared her thoughts on several issues of import to OUSD in particular and public schools in general.

**On school consolidation:** Declining enrollment has been happening all over the state for the past 10 years. We have to take a proactive approach to what’s in the best interest of students. Small schools can be good; they are family friendly. But they can’t offer the range of programs that schools with larger populations can. We want to offer more programs in middle schools, for example, that capture their interests and better prepare them for careers and higher education. I’ve listened to the study session on school consolidation. We are in the investigative phase right now.

In response to the community and Board’s feedback OUSD will reconvene the consolidation study committee for further discussion, including a revision of the initial timeline. It’s a great opportunity to rethink ultimately what’s best for children.


**Public education:** Public education is the cornerstone of de-

mocracy; public schools are hubs for every child. We love them all. But parents send their children to charter schools for a reason; they want what’s best for them. We need to learn from charter schools, understand what they are doing and then do it better.

**Immigration enforcement:** Our responsibility in public education is to keep children safe, both physically and psychologically. We must follow the law, but we do not ask about status. It does not matter. OUSD must always be a safe place for students. We are looking at ways to support children who may have been separated from their parents, or fear that they will be. We’re looking at more community engagement. Staff knows what to do in the face of heightened enforcement. Above all, we must protect the children.

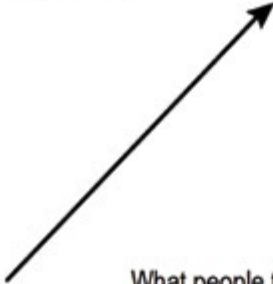
**Artificial intelligence:** Future-ready learning includes AI. It can be used to free up low-level thinking, but AI can’t be a problem solver. We will always need the human element. We have to teach students how to use AI for the right reasons. If we do nothing, it will be used the wrong way.

**In summary:** “The path to success is not a straight line,” Monárrez says. It’s a squiggly line full of false starts, deadends and trial and error.



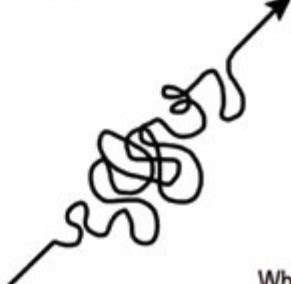
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Guest Commentary

ICE is snatching people off the streets of our city

By Ana Gutierrez

To quote Albert Einstein: “If I were to remain silent, I’d be guilty of complicity.” Therefore, I must speak out against the injustice my Latino brothers and sisters are currently enduring. We are being randomly profiled because of the color of our skin. We have been witnessing, over the past two weeks, the various ICE/HSI sweeps in our neighboring county, cities and within our own city boundaries.

The most recent and inhumane recently occurred to Narcisco Barranco, father of three U.S. Marines, all OUSD graduates. He was brutally beaten and taken away to a detention center as he was working as a landscaper at an IHOP in Tustin. Two weeks ago, in my neighborhood in El Modena, ICE apprehended a Latino man in the parking lot of the old Ace Hardware store. Word got out quickly, rumors were fly-

ing, and fear was struck into the neighborhood. No one felt safe to go outside, regardless of status.

Two days after that, in front of my home, I, along with my daughter and neighbors, witnessed immigration randomly pick up another Latino man who was walking on the sidewalk, place him in a van and swiftly drive away with him -- in less than 30 seconds.

All that we have been witnessing has created fear, anger and distrust among the Latino community, whether they have legal or non-legal status. It’s not only undocumented day laborers that go to Home Depot, 7-11s or car washes. We all do, and it appears that even if you state you are a legal resident, a naturalized citizen, an American citizen, or show your real ID, you are not believed and taken away. No one feels safe. This despicable inhumane manner of enforcing immigration laws is attempting to break us, incite fear, terrorize us, round up

whomever, with or without cause, legal or not legal, and push for self-deportation. This is Operation Wetback from 1954 all over again.

I am a proud American. I love my county. America is my only home, the country I pledge allegiance to, the country that has afforded me my education and opportunities. But I am also proud of my cultural heritage, my Mexican heritage, my family roots. These two elements have shaped who I am today. I have always been proud to be bilingual and bicultural. But right now, I do not recognize my America. I have never experienced nor witnessed such blatant racial profiling; I have never felt fear for being Latina and brown-skinned. I am saddened that we are having to bear witness to these types of events. My family immigrated to the U.S. through the Bracero Program in the early 1960s, and although my family’s pathway was differ-

ent than those who are currently here illegally, what unites us is the hope of the American dream. Yet there hasn’t been a pathway afforded to them in 39 years. It is time that our congressional leaders begin to work on this much needed immigration reform.

I want my community to know that I stand with them, as do other elected leaders who are fulfilling their oversight duties by visiting ICE detention centers (despite the roadblocks), offering resources in knowing your rights and services for those experiencing difficulties, and speaking up for their communities.

Thank you, Congressman Lou Correa, Supervisor Vicente Sarmiento and Assemblyman Avaleno Valencia. It is unfortunate that our Congresswoman Young Kim who represents Orange, has yet to speak out against the inhumane way in which her Latino constituents are being treated. I encourage her to join

Congressman Correa in visiting the ICE detention center to check on her constituents.

Lastly, I want to encourage all of those who are standing for those who cannot stand and fighting for those without your privilege, to continue to do so in a peaceful and safe manner. It is your constitutional right.

I want to thank the Orange Police Department for putting out a statement that they have worked tirelessly to keep Orange safe and build community among the residents. Let’s hope both the OPD and residents are mindful of that and nurture that relationship. Orange PD is there to enforce infractions or any criminal activity, not immigration laws. Stay safe, be peaceful, know your rights and God bless.

Ana Gutierrez represents District 5 on the Orange City Council. She made these remarks at the June 24 meeting.

Orange Unified vows to protect student rights

By Kris Erickson

I want to take a moment to address an issue that is weighing heavily on the hearts and minds of many in our community. That is the current surge in Immigration Enforcement activity, and the manner in which that enforcement is happening. We have, for the past month, witnessed something most of us have not seen in our lifetimes.

In addition to serving on this OUSD board, I am an attorney

and I sit on the board of a local family resource center. In all contexts, we have seen firsthand how these policies are playing out on our streets, right here on Chapman Avenue, and we see a real fear that is disrupting and tearing apart the lives of our OUSD families. To be clear, the fear is not just felt by undocumented persons. The fear is felt throughout many immigrant communities and in this area, by Latino citizens, green card holders, those with pending cases in immigration court and the undocumented.

American children are living in fear their parents will not come home. Some of the families we serve are so scared they are skipping food distributions and essential services—choosing hunger over being seen. I have had the honor of attending an immigration hearing for one of our local El Modena families, and I cannot tell you how heartbreaking it

is to see a grown man - a proud hardworking man - brought to tears and enduring conditions no American should stand for.

That’s not the kind of community we should aspire to be. It’s not sustainable for a society that relies on the strength of every one of its members. We know our immigrant families are essential to our economy and culture. Their presence enriches our neighborhoods, classrooms, churches and community spaces. They work with us; they own businesses; their children attend school with ours; we sit on sports fields together. What is hopeful and inspiring is the range of people coming together on this issue.

People of faith, humanists, civil libertarians, those of differing political persuasions are coming together. I am grateful for the many community nonprofits that are stepping up. I am grateful to those who are rising up to support

and speak out. And I am grateful to the many people donating food and offering to bring food to people who need it.

As your public school district, we want to reassure our community that we are committed to protecting our students’ rights. We do not collect data or distribute data regarding immigration status. That is not our business. Our business is providing education, safety, and well-being to all of our students to ensure they are able to learn and thrive.

All students enrolled in summer school are provided meals, and all children under 18 can receive free meals Monday through Friday. Additionally, our Student and Community Services Office (714-628-5424) is open and can personally tailor services to meet the needs of students, including counseling, academic support and others. We have a lot of students attending summer schools, and it

is heartening to see the joy shining in them. We’re seeing children thrive in environments that are safe, fun and nurturing. Kids are allowed to be kids. The images of joy, curiosity and friendship remind us of what’s possible when we create spaces that uplift and protect.

We are working hard to keep that trust in our district. Not only are we doing all we can to maintain safe, welcoming environments for every child right now—we’re already planning for the fall to give families the very best options. Our commitment is clear: to ensure every student is placed in an environment where they are safe, can learn, grow and be served in the most meaningful way possible.

Kris Erickson is president of the Orange Unified School Board of Trustees. She delivered these remarks at the July 14 meeting.

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FHS grad receives P.E.O. STAR Scholarship

Aaliyah Fortes, a senior at Foothill High School, was selected to receive a \$2,500 STAR Scholarship from the P.E.O. Sisterhood. She was recommended by P.E.O. Chapter IE of Orange.

The P.E.O. STAR Scholarship was established in 2009 to provide funding for exceptional women in their final year of high school who plan to attend an accredited postsecondary educational institution in the U.S. or Canada in the next academic year.

The competitive STAR Scholarship is for women who exhibit excellence in leadership, academics, extracurricular activities, community service and potential for future success.

At Foothill High School, Fortes was on the varsity golf

and flag football teams. She was the founder and president of the Miracles for Kids Club, president of her National Charity League Chapter, MVP and lead attorney of the Foothill Mock Trial Team, and a Baccalaureate candidate.

She will attend Notre Dame in the fall to pursue a degree in global affairs and political science. She plans to travel abroad in connection with her studies.

P.E.O. (Philanthropic Educational Organization) has been celebrating women helping women for more than 155 years, providing more than \$432 million in grants, scholarships, awards and loans.

Chapter IE has been a part of the Orange, Tustin and Santa Ana communities since 1935.



From left, Pat Robles-Friedman, president P.E.O. - IE Chapter; Sher-yl Franke, projects committee member; Aaliyah Fortes - STAR winner; Marcia Reynolds, projects committee chair.

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LETTERS to the EDITOR

Turning point

**Dear Editor:**

I believe July 3 was one of the saddest days in modern American history.

It marks the largest healthcare withdrawal in American history. Seventeen million Americans in our country will lose their Medicaid and ACA insurance.

Small business owners will face skyrocketing healthcare costs, while people will have their SNAP and WIC benefits cut back, leading to food insecurity and increased health risks.

All of this is being done solely to finance tax cuts for billionaires and the wealthiest corporations that don't even need them.

I have never witnessed or prepared for the catastrophic consequences this will have for many people.

It is devastating.

Mark Moore  
Orange

Zooming in

**Dear Editor:**

Re: open town hall meetings hosted by Young Kim

Whereas I don't like the idea of the Senate slipping in a surprise projected sale of the Cleveland National Forest as part of the Big Beautiful Bill, I can see why Young Kim and Supervisor Don Wagner might be advised by the local police to switch from an in-person meeting to a Zoom meeting.

This last year, I went to a town hall in the Tustin Community Center, right next door to the police station. Young Kim had arranged for 10 vendors who offer services to seniors and homeless vets to be there. The 10 representatives went to the front of the room and described their services.

What I didn't notice was the number of people coming into the room as they were speaking and quietly taking a seat.

When it came to the question-and-answer part, one lady stood up and screamed, "What are you going to do about the bombing in Gaza? You have blood on your hands." Then, one by one, approximately 25% of the audience stood up and screamed some more. They took over the meeting.

Luckily, the police were next

door and they came into the room. I quietly slipped out the back as I didn't want to have any part of the new protest.

The point is, as carefully as you may plan a peaceful protest to speak to elected officials, there are "bad actors" who follow these politicians who feel free to change the subject and voice their opinion in a disrespectful manner.

I did find it interesting that the public is trying to hold the local Republican representatives accountable for the actions of the Democratic senators that did not prevent insertion of the Cleveland National Forest wording into the senate bill.

Gwen Masters  
North Tustin

*Ed. Note: The sale of public lands was removed from the budget bill by the Senate parliamentarian because it is a policy issue, and policy changes cannot be included in a reconciliation bill.*

It's the economy

**Dear Editor:**

The story our city council should be telling is of economic development, renewed growth and a city in financial recovery. That narrative is getting lost.

Economic development is:

- Getting current businesses to stay healthy and grow
- Attracting new businesses to our city and supporting them to keep them in our city
- Getting current residents to spend money in our city
- Increasing sales tax collections and maintaining the increase.

People go where they feel welcome and safe, which means their money and businesses go with them. Sales tax follows where people spend their money.

City councilmembers and community members asked the city for help because businesses and residents are being harmed. People stopped shopping and eating out, which caused businesses to not make money and the city to collect less sales tax revenue, a major source of revenue. The answer was that no help was coming and blaming those asking for help.

The city sent the message that losing out on sales tax revenue because people stopped patronizing local businesses and restaurants is acceptable.

This is not supporting economic development. Telling people you do not care about them says "Go away and spend your money somewhere else!" We need to say

"Welcome to our city. We hope you make a lot of money for us!" Disdain turns people, businesses and money away. We don't want that to happen anymore.

How does the new city manager fit into the economic development narrative?

Part of the pitch for the search for a new city manager was bringing in someone with economic development experience.

- What economic development has taken place in Villa Park, Stanton, La Habra Heights and Laguna Hills (cities he previously managed) that are economic game changers for the respective cities?
- How much of this economic development work was done after the end of redevelopment and after COVID?
- What role did our new city manager play in the economic development of those cities?
- What is expected of the new city manager with respect to economic development?

Our city deserves that council focus on economic development, including supporting areas with decreased sales tax revenue.

Reggie Mundekis  
Orange

# From a converted Buick to state-of-the-art fire engines: the history of Tustin's Fire Department

By Guy Ball

Some of Tustin's first firefighting equipment consisted of a two-wheel horse cart pulled by volunteers to a fire hydrant. That was back before 1924, when Sam Tustin, the son of the city's founder, donated his 1912 Buick touring car to the city to be converted to a real firetruck.

How did Tustin's early volunteer firefighting force develop from a converted Buick firetruck to a full-time department that eventually became part of the Orange County Fire Authority?

OCFA Fire Battalion Chief Marc Hawkins (retired) and Tustin City Fireman Mike Fertig (retired) will share the history of the department, from when it was part of the California Division of Forestry to its growth into a volunteer fire department, to the Tustin City Fire Department, and now to the OCFA.



Tustin's first motorized fire truck was converted from a 1912 Buick.

This Night at the Museum meeting will be held on Friday, Aug. 29 from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at the Tustin Area Museum, 345 El Camino Real in downtown Tustin. Tickets are \$20 per person, \$15 each for members. Due to the limited seating area, tickets are expected to sell out quickly.

For tickets or more information visit [TustinHistory.com](http://TustinHistory.com) or call the museum, (714) 731-5701.

# Orange Elks provide funds for OHS girls basketball



The Orange Elks supported the Orange High School girls basketball team with a donation of \$1,475 for equipment and uniforms. The student-athletes will volunteer at the lodge's Reading Promise program in October.

# Girl Scouts seek donations for hygiene kits

The Orange Elks Girl Scout Troop #1475 is collecting personal hygiene items to make into kits for the Orange County United Way.

The completed kits will be passed along to an emergency shelter, and mental health and veterans agencies.

Each one-gallon bag will in-

clude a comb, dental floss, deodorant, hand sanitizer, lotion, nail clippers, razor and shaving cream, shampoo, soap, socks, toothbrush, toothpaste, Vaseline and a card of encouragement.

Donations are being collected in the Elks lobby, 211 E. Chapman Ave., or view the Amazon wish list at [ocuw.to/hygiene](http://ocuw.to/hygiene).

# Orange limits sale of NOS

By Carrie Graham

Following suit with the county Board of Supervisors, the City of Orange has adopted an ordinance substantially limiting the sale of nitrous oxide.

Nitrous oxide, commonly known as laughing gas, whippets or NOS, is a colorless, non-flammable gas widely used by healthcare professionals for medical and dental anesthesia.

It takes effect rapidly and dissipates from the human body, making it a primary choice for effective pain relief and minor medical procedures. When administered under the supervision of a licensed healthcare provider, nitrous oxide is considered safe and effective.

Beyond medical applications, nitrous oxide has various industrial and commercial uses. It can be utilized to enhance engine performance in the automotive industry, as seen in popular movies like "The Fast and the Furious," and serve as a food preservative or propellant for dispensing and preserving whipped cream and soda.

But used as a recreational drug, it has been linked to nerve damage and psychosis, among other health issues.

Another key concern is driver impairment. Recreational misuse of the gas in the City of Orange has been linked to multiple accidents over the past few years.

One incident involved a 21-year-old driver crashing into an occupied residential apartment building. Another fatal accident saw a 42-year-old driver collide with a tree in Old Towne Orange's Plaza Park. In a separate case, an 18-year-old driver found

in possession of nitrous oxide was arrested after crashing into the historic fountain just months after its restoration from a previous accident.

Additionally, another lost his life after crashing into an electrical pole. Most tragically, a fiery high-speed rollover crash claimed three lives, including the driver, and left four others hospitalized. Police discovered a nitrous oxide tank and balloons at the scene, suspecting driver impairment.

Overall, the police have made over 120 arrests related to nitrous oxide since January of 2023.

One of the primary concerns is its appeal to youth. Of the above incidents, only one driver was above the age of 22. The gas can currently be easily found for sale in a wide range of flavors, making it appealing to younger crowds.

During the county meeting in February, Supervisor Katrina Foley, who requested the ban at the end of last year, said there's a loophole in state law that allows smoke shops and liquor store employees to sell it, as long as they don't ask the buyer if they plan on using it to get high.

When passing the ban for unincorporated areas of the county, supervisors urged cities to take similar action within their own jurisdictions.

Now, Orange regulations will prohibit the sale and distribution of nitrous oxide, with the exception of uses explicitly approved by state law, including food preservation, medical and dental applications, pharmacies, and vehicle supply stores licensed by the state to sell it.

Those who violate the ordinance can face fines that escalate daily or even jail time.





Forest for the trees

**Hoist on her own petard**  
Engaged (or enraged) citizens will by now have read the tragicomic story of Representative Young Kim’s apparent public relations miscalculation.  
Inviting Inter-Canyon League (ICL) President Geoff Sarkissian to host her real-life June 20 visit to Silverado’s Community Center perhaps seemed an opportunity to address criticisms of her failure to host town halls and also sincerely answer residents’ concerns about Trumpian defunding of national parks, GSOB mitigation, and wildfire defense.  
A jolly crew of mostly gray-haired and tie-dyed constituents attempted to greet her with homemade signs supporting Medicare and wilderness, of all things, with Kim cancelling.  
Rescheduling the meeting to Zoom, Sarkissian welcomed Kim and staffer John Ding and two leaders each from canyon organizations: Silverado-Modjeska Parks and Recreation District

(SMRPD), Fire Safe Council (FSC), both Volunteer Fire Stations, and ICL. Other attendees included Foothills Sentry editor Tina Richards, canyon activist Joanne Hubble, and Supervisor Wagner’s Field Deputy Al Tello.  
Minutes, or even acknowledgement, of the 70-minute meeting in the lately noticeably more frequent and ironically named “Catch Up with Young Kim” newsletter have not been shared. This reporter could not receive confirmation of Kim’s pledge to “show photos of the canyon protest to House leadership.”  
**For lack of what is found there**  
Even the terrific online Voice of OC went out of its way to present so-called objective reporting on the Supervisors’ approval of the long-resisted Saddleback Meadows (ignoring the ICL’s written concerns) “development,” finding one token canyon pro-construction contrarian whose bottom line is the sacred right of

private property ownership over ecosystem destruction, wildfire risk and traffic congestion.  
Fun to reread an archived 2002 LA Times piece reporting on conservation activists’ then already long-running struggle over the same area and issues. Or not.  
Mike Boeck, GSOB correspondent, reports his participation in the recent OC portion of a GSOB infestation survey. The Irvine Ranch Conservancy organized trained volunteers to canvas the canyon oaks, with no bugs detected in Limestone.  
Silverado residents were disappointed in their meeting with multiple agencies and offices (Sheriff, Public Works, National Forest, CHP, Supervisor’s office, and Rep. Kim’s office).  
Organized by resident Brian Blair, the packed June 25 Public Safety and Traffic meeting (with more Zooming in) had hoped for action responding to (quoting one local) “loud, speeding, drunk and generally obnoxious off-roaders who caravan to the forest, lower their tire-pressure at the Maple Springs gate, and blast on up. Late at night, this is repeated as they stop at Maple Springs and reinflate their tires and speed on down the road.”  
**Meet Mr. Gilly!**  
“Dump it in, smash it down, drive around the Trashy Town!” Parents and children who grew

up with “Trashy Town,” the classic 1999 kids’ book, might want to join a new generation at the Saturday, Aug. 2, 11 a.m. visit of a real trash truck to Library of the Canyons.  
A Waste Management (WM) rep will explain recycling and disposal. All ages welcome. Naturally, our local branch library has copies of the enduring favorite (and American Library Association notable book) chronicling the adventures of trash truck driver Mr. Gilly, written by Andrea Zimmerman and David Clemesha, with iconic illustrations by Dan Yaccarino.  
Clever parents will have noted WM’s recent invitation to complete a customer service survey. Ironic, considering the provider is our region’s exclusive contractor (read: monopoly), but fun to answer questions about the merits of recycling and guess at what other canyonites think of its effectiveness or impact.  
The Wednesday, Aug. 6, 5 p.m. library book group selection is the autobiography “Code Talker” by Chester Nez, subtitled “The first and only memoir by one of the original Navajo code talkers of WWII,” on his experiences of racial discrimination, answered by patriotic service to his country.  
Among many activities listed on its website (ocpl.org/libraries/lotc), the library announces a new monthly program starting

Tuesday, Aug. 26 at 11 a.m. The Mocktail Hour Cookbook Group will (soberly) review cookbooks while enjoying non-alcoholic potables made from juices, syrups and botanicals. The debut meeting considers fruit cookbooks.  
**More beauty, please!**  
In other literary (and civic literacy) news, local readers celebrate the arrival of longtime Modjeska resident Lisa Alvarez’s debut short story collection. “Some Final Beauty and Other Stories” (University of Nevada Press) features 11 stories by the Irvine Valley College writing professor, editor, and arts administrator, two set in the canyons and featuring familiar landscape and fictionalized versions of colorful local characters.  
Of the collection, LA Times columnist (and former OC Weekly editor) Gustavo Arellano writes: “Lisa Alvarez’s Southern California is one of melancholy and beauty, cities and canyons, insurrections and mariachis and secrets kept and spoken. Gorgeous pacing, storytelling prose — gorgeous.”  
**Country wit**  
This month’s Saturday, Aug. 18 Silverado Summer Concert Series welcomes Wreck-N-Sow, covering bluegrass, roots country and old-timey classics, and Hill-billy Crutch.

"Sully-Miller" continued from page 1

city has until July 1, 2026 to approve them. In exchange, Milan will take necessary action to clean up the Sully-Miller dumpsite and contract with a third party to turn the land into usable public open space. Once completed, ownership of the property will be transferred to the city for a nominal sum.  
Right now, that third party is Landify, a European-based company that reclaims distressed properties and converts them into usable open space for the public benefit. Under the MOU, Landify is given the go ahead to study the site and determine its potential role in reclaiming it. It hopes to develop a feasible open space “vision” and clarify what it would take to achieve that goal. The city has agreed to cooperate fully with Landify’s planning and implementation process.  
**Unfinished business**  
A major stumbling block continues to be the level of contaminants in the mounds of dirt on the site. Pressured by the Local Enforcement Agency (LEA), Milan hired Leighton Engineering to take boring samples from

the mounds in 2023. LEA released the test results from one stockpile last year, reporting that some samples did not meet regulatory standards, and that some contained levels of arsenic exceeding acceptable background concentrations. LEA has not released the findings for the rest of the mounds, but turned jurisdiction over to the Regional Water Quality Control Board. The Water Board is considered a better overseer because it has more resources than LEA, the dumpsite borders Santiago Creek and sits atop the ancient creek bed, which contains ground water.  
The Water Board has not yet reported on the extent, location or composition of contaminants on the Sully-Miller site.  
During the city council hearing, several residents spoke in opposition to the MOU, noting the site’s contamination and city liability, lack of specific detail in the document, the number of houses slated for the horse arena property, and the lack of consideration for equestrians.  
“The MOU is not legally binding,” Mayor Dan Slater said. “It can change. It’s simply a roadmap for going forward.” The council approved it with a 6-1 vote. Arianna Barrios dissented.

Tustin names Man and Woman of the Year



Ed Reynolds and Tammis Berkheimer display their Tustin Area Man and Woman of the Year awards.

**By Mark Eliot**  
Longtime Tustin community volunteers Ed Reynolds and Tammis Berkheimer have been selected as Tustin Area Man and Woman of the Year for 2024.  
The announcement was made at the annual Tustin Area Man and Woman of the Year (TAMWY) awards dinner and celebration, June 6. The event, held at the Santa Ana Elks Lodge, was attended by over 120, including city and county officials, previous TAMWY award winners and community members.  
The TAMWY program has been held for more than 60 years. Tustin individuals are recognized for their dedicated work, leadership and outstanding volunteerism in the community. Nominations for the award come from previous winners or local nonprofit organizations. This year, three men and three women were nominated for the award.  
“I am stunned and humbled to be part of the legacy of individuals in Tustin who quietly go about their business improving lives and enhancing our community,” Ed Reynolds said.  
Reynolds has called Tustin home since 1971. A graduate of Foothill High School, Reynolds received his degree in civil engineering from the University of Southern California, where he now teaches engineering. Reyn-

olds is a passionate advocate for youth sports. He helped lead SoCal water polo to national prominence, coached SoCal’s Tustin girls’ teams to numerous championships and helped players earn over \$20 million in collegiate scholarships. He was also a board member of USA Water Polo, helping it turn a surplus and win Olympic medals. He serves on many boards of directors, including the Construction Advisory Council for the Roman Catholic Bishop of Orange.  
Reynolds has been an active and committed member of the Tustin Community Foundation for many years, guiding the annual grant process.  
“I am so honored to represent Tustin and all the dedicated and hard-working volunteers who make Tustin great,” Tammis Berkheimer said.  
Berkheimer has lived in Tustin for over 40 years and worked for the Tustin Unified School District for more than 30 years. Currently, she is a member of the TUSD Citizens’ Oversight Committee, a group appointed by the school board to oversee the expenditure of bond funds for school improvements.  
Berkheimer is a familiar face at countless Tustin nonprofit events, and is passionate in her unwavering support of local causes. She approaches every task with a “What can I do to help?” at-

titude, rolling up her sleeves and taking on any responsibility. Berkheimer’s willingness to go above and beyond, taking on even the most overlooked and unglamorous tasks, sets her apart as a true community champion. Her selflessness and reliability make her an invaluable asset to Tustin’s nonprofit sector, as well as Tustin Unified schools.  
Since the 1980’s, Berkheimer has volunteered in the schools, church and community events. She coordinated the Tustin Community Foundation’s Project Pajama Drive; supervised TCF’s Sip & Stroll in Old Town Tustin; is a referee at TCF’s Paper Football Challenge; worked as a Tustin-Santa Ana Rotarian at Lobsterfest, Tustin Tiller Days and Tustin Chili Cook-Off. She has served as treasurer for Dollars for Tustin Scholars; treasurer for So-optimist International of Santa Ana-Tustin; is a member of the Tustin Area Council for Fine Arts’ Encore group and a volunteer at many other events.  
Reynolds and Berkheimer will become lifetime members of the TAMWY organization. They will also ride in the Tustin Tiller Days Parade as guests of honor on Saturday, Oct. 4, and have their names permanently etched on a brick walkway in the plaza between the Tustin Library and Clifton C. Miller Community Center at the Tustin Civic Center.

Ghost stories will haunt you



Orange spooks

The Orange Community Historical Society presents the spooky side of Orange with Ernie Alonza, a third-generation Orange resident whose family settled in Old Towne in the 1920s.  
During this free community program, Alonza will share per-

sonal ghost stories from his early years in Orange, tales that sparked his lifelong fascination with the paranormal and ultimately led to the 2009 founding of Haunted OC, Orange County’s original and oldest historical haunted ghost tour company.  
Valerie Brewster will also bring her tales as the longtime docent for the original Old Towne Orange Haunted OC Ghost Walk, operating for over 15 years. Brewster will share chilling legends and local history.  
The haunting will be held Tuesday, Sept. 9, from 5:30 to 7 p.m. at the Orange Public Library Community Room, 407 E Chapman Ave.



County supervisors OK fire-exposed Trabuco housing tract



The proposed Saddleback Meadows development will overrun the rolling hills at the mouth of Trabuco Canyon.

By Ray Chandos

Disregarding public protests, the Orange County Board of Supervisors, June 24, approved the subdivision of 222 scenic acres for 181 houses along El Toro Road near Cook’s Corner, adjoining O’Neill Regional Park.

The “final tract map” for Saddleback Meadows supplants a 2022 “tentative tract map” and allows the lots to be recorded and developed. Supervisors Don Wagner, Janet Nguyen, Katrina Foley and Doug Chaffee voted in favor. Supervisor Vicente Sarmiento abstained.

The vote marked the latest chapter in the notorious 47-year history of a project tainted by lawsuits, bankruptcy, criminal investigations, and a sewer moratorium that saved the original 1980 subdivision map from expiring. The current incarnation originated in 2002, when county supervisors approved 283 units and an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) in response to litigation against the county and the developer California Quartet by environmental groups and the Vedanta Society, owner of the neighboring Ramakrishna Monastery. The parties entered into lengthy, secretive settlement discussions and arbitration, from which the 181-unit proposal emerged in October 2023.

Skip this step

Saddleback Meadows lies within the Foothill-Trabuco Specific Plan (FTSP) area, subject to land use regulations enacted by county supervisors in 1991 to “preserve the rural character of the area and provide a buffer between urban development and the Cleveland National Forest.”

The FTSP Review Board is charged with reviewing all development plans at public meetings before the county acts. But the county skipped this required step. In 2022, Director of Development Services Justin Kirk approved the Saddleback Meadows tentative tract map “administratively,” without any public

notice or hearing. When planner Kevin Canning appeared before the Review Board over one year later, seeking review of a use permit for Saddleback Meadows, he told the packed audience that the map was a “done deal,” that only details like building setbacks and heights remained to be approved. This maneuver effectively locked the public out of the established review process.

Supervisors based their approval on the 2002 EIR and two subsequent “addendums”—one in 2004 and another in 2022. Under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), an addendum may be used if “only minor technical changes” have occurred in the project or its surrounding environment. Unlike an updated EIR, however, an addendum does not require public notice and review, making it a favorite tool of developers and local governments with contentious projects like Saddleback Meadows.

**Public process ignored**

The two EIR addendums also received backroom approvals. In a 2023 letter to Canning requesting the use permit, developer agent Michael Recupero cited the 2022 addendum stating: “The project remains CEQA compliant.” Besides promoting Saddleback Meadows, Recupero also serves, since 2004, on the county’s “Development Processing Review Committee (DPRC),” charged with “review of procedures and codes related to the planning and development process for private development projects.”

Thirteen public speakers and 60 letters urged supervisors not to approve the proposed map, raising a variety of issues. With the public hearing delayed for 90 minutes while supervisors made presentations, Chairman Chaffee abruptly announced that speakers would be limited to one minute, instead of the three minutes usually allotted. After Chaffee rushed all the public speakers through their presentations, he allowed the developer’s attorney to speak without limit.

Trabuco Canyon resident Gloria Sefton of the Saddleback Canyons Conservancy (SCC) told supervisors that the law firm Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger had submitted a letter on SCC’s behalf detailing many deficiencies in the 23-year-old EIR and addendums, including failure to evaluate wildfire evacuation, increased risk of wildfire ignition, impacts to mountain lions and other species, and violation of greenhouse gas emissions standards.

Fire and water

The letter also cited the 11th-hour addition of a water tank at an unknown offsite location, whose impacts were never considered. “The water district doesn’t even know where the [million-gallon] water tank is going to go. They couldn’t put it on the site because the geology is so bad that it wouldn’t hold the water tank,” said Trabuco Canyon resident Bruce Conn.

Saddleback Meadows lies within a Cal Fire-designated “Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone.” Residents of Hidden Ridge, which borders Saddleback Meadows and lies directly downwind of it during Santa Ana windstorms, warned supervisors against building the project.

“There is only one way in and one way out of our community,” said Dan Harris, referring to two-lane Valley Vista Way, which would be shared by Saddleback Meadows evacuees during an

emergency. “These new homes would impact our egress and also the first responders,” Harris said.

No clean exit

“We have had the sheriff’s department knock on our doors three times in three decades asking us to immediately evacuate,” said Cindy Goss. “In that time, we have observed lack of access and tremendous lines of traffic getting out of our community to get away from our homes safely.”

“Fire insurance is a problem for our areas in California,” said Portola Hills resident Karl Mahl. “This project will continue to exacerbate that situation.”

After closing the rushed hearing, supervisors convinced themselves with help from Deputy County Counsel Nicole Walsh, that they were legally bound to

approve the final map as a ministerial act, despite all the concerns raised by the citizens they are supposed to represent. “Where we are is ministerial,” said Supervisor Wagner, whose district includes Saddleback Meadows, adding “where we are is with our hands tied.” Referring to the remaining use permit approval, Wagner said he was “comforted somewhat that there are additional steps in the process,” allowing the public to be heard, yet declined public pleas to defer approval until after the Planning Commission hearing of the use permit.

Supervisor Sarmiento, who abstained, cited the development’s environmental impacts and added, “I don’t believe that I can confirm that there’s been a robust public process.”



The Airport Fire of 2024 burned the area where houses are now slated to be built.

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Best of Orange Awards



The Orange Chamber of Commerce hosted the “Best of Orange” Awards Ceremony, July 17, honoring local businesses and associations, as voted by Chamber members and citizens. The Best of Orange 2025 winners celebrated at the Orange Chamber event at Hotel Fira.

Orange concert series brings community together



Supervisor Vicente Sarmiento congratulates Kiwanis scholarship winners, from left, Isaac Pioquinto, Killian Hamilton, Katie Nguyen and Audrey Sung. Not pictured, Emelie DeSantiago and Bianca Rodriguez.

By Vicente Sarmiento  
Second District Supervisor

It was great to join the community on July 9 for the kickoff of the 2025 Concerts in the Park series.

The concert featured classic soul and Motown sounds, and the community came out in full force to support the event and enjoy a beautiful evening at Hart Park.

I had the pleasure of joining the Kiwanis Club of Orange, the organizers of the concert series, in presenting scholarships to a group of incredibly deserving students and introducing the band to get the show started.

This year, our office joined other sponsors to help save the Concerts in the Park series, which was initially at risk of being cancelled due to budget shortfalls. Thanks to the support of all the sponsors, the concerts

are now scheduled to continue at Hart Park every Wednesday through Aug. 6.

Our cities are grappling with serious challenges that we must address head-on, and many of our families are facing heightened stress and economic hardships. At times like these, we cannot forget the importance of providing free, family-friendly spaces where the community can come together to celebrate and enjoy a sense of togetherness.

I want to recognize and thank the members of the Kiwanis Club of Orange, the sponsors, and the volunteers who are making this year’s concert series a great success.

These concerts are more than just a chance to hear great music. They are an opportunity to strengthen our sense of community and support the well-being of our families.



Concert goers enjoy the music at Hart Park.

Get Miss Tustin tickets

The 2025 Miss Tustin Scholarship Competition will be held Saturday, Aug. 16 from 3-5 p.m. at Arnold O. Beckman High, 3588 Bryan Avenue in Irvine. The competition is the culmination of a personal development program that provides financial assistance

to young women pursuing higher education. Participants attend skill-building workshops before competing for scholarship money and the honor of representing Tustin throughout the year. For tickets and information, see [mistustin.org](http://mistustin.org).

Category	Winner
Best Accountants / Bookkeeping	Buen Dia Services
Best Advertising / Marketing	Restaurant Marketing
Best Associations / Non-Profit Organizations	Orange Elks Lodge 1475
Best Attorneys / Legal Services	Williamson Law Group APC
Best Automotive Services	Wheel Warehouse
Best Bakery	OC Baking Company
Best Banks / Credit Unions	Schools First Federal Credit Union
Best Barber	Orange Barber Company
Best Beauty / Spa Services	Lemon and Honey Day Spa
Best Breakfast	Cafe Zocalo
Best Brewery / Wine Companies	Green Cheek Beer Company, LLC
Best Business Resource	Circle City Consultants
Best Car Dealership	Selman Chevrolet
Best Cocktails	Bosscat Kitchen & Libations
Best Coffee Shop	Long Dog Coffee and Treats
Best Construction / Development Services	AO Architects
Best Date Night Spot	Wine and Wax
Best Dental Group	Eduardo Correa, D.D.S.
Best Education Services	Chapman University
Best Entertainer / Entertainment	Moana Nui School of Polynesian Dance & Ent.
Best Event Services	Chapel of Orange
Best Fast Food / Food Truck	Black Market Meal Prep- Juice Bar & Protein Bites
Best Financial Advisors	Modern Wealth Design
Best Fitness Center / Gym	Hit The Mark Fitness Bootcamp in Orange
Best Florist	The Dizzy Daisy
Best Funeral Homes / Memorial Parks	Shannon Family Mortuary
Best Insurance Services	Old Towne Healthcare Solutions
Best Manufacturing Services	Quoc Viet Foods
Best Medical / Health Services	Children's Hospital of Orange County
Best Mortgage Services	Your Favorite Lenders LLC
Best Pet Care / Store	Sandy's Grooming
Best Photographer / Videographer	Smetona Photo
Best Place of Worship	Friends Church Orange
Best Promotional Products / Awards	Minuteman Press
Best Real Estate Services	Lionheart Pride
Best Realtor	Angelyn Catale - Lionheart Pride
Best Residential Services	Orange County Overhead Door, Inc.
Best Restaurant - Overall	Gonzalez's Restaurant
Best Retail	The Potting Shed by Carlisle
Best Retirement / Assisted Living	Town & Country
Best Specialty Product	Orange Sweet Orange
Best Specialty Services	Seniors Helping Seniors Orange
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Meet Mary and Bert from “Mary Poppins”



Katie DeShan

By Erin Kociela

This summer, Tustin Area Council for Fine Arts (TACFA) invites you to step in time under the stars at Peppertree Park as they present “Mary Poppins,” running August 5–9. Once again, TACFA teams up with Kris Lythgoe and Give Kids Panto to bring Broadway magic to Tustin in a whimsical, high-flying outdoor musical experience for all ages.

With chimney sweeps, magical carpet bags, and a whole lot of heart, “Mary Poppins” promises to enchant the whole family. We caught up with two of the show's stars -- Katie DeShan, who plays the practically perfect Mary herself, and Morgan Reynolds, who brings the joyful and clever Bert to life -- to hear what's in store behind the magic.

**Katie on becoming Mary Poppins: “Big shoes to fill—practically perfect ones”**

“Iconic is right,” Katie says of taking on the role made famous by Julie Andrews. “She has very big—or ‘practically perfect’—shoes to fill.” To prepare for the role, Katie draws from her own experience as a teacher, finding the balance between warmth and structure -- something Mary Poppins herself would most certainly approve. “Mary always wants to make sure there is structure, but not at the expense of warmth. I feel like I’m the same way when it comes to life and lessons.”

When asked about connecting to Mary’s famously mysterious persona, Katie laughed. “I am the least mysterious person you’ll ever meet—I love making friends and telling stories! But like Mary, I love people, and I think that shows.”

Her favorite song in the show? “Feed the Birds.” “It’s uncomplicated, yet beautiful, with a powerful message to simply listen.”

And what does she hope audiences -- especially the youngest ones -- take away? “That anything really is possible, and that growth and change can happen if you let them!”



Morgan Reynolds

**Morgan as Bert: “Tap-Dancing with a Touch of Magic.”**

For Morgan, playing Bert is a dream come true. “Growing up idolizing the classic song-and-dance men of the golden age of musical theater, their essence is in the foundation of me as a performer.”

Morgan’s take on Bert is a delightful mix of Dick Van Dyke with a dash of Jerry Lewis, a pinch of Danny Kaye, and, for fun, a breath of Buster Keaton.

But what is Morgan most excited about? The dancing. “This role allows me to tap dance to new heights—it’s a thrilling challenge for me and a spectacle for the audience. ‘Step in Time’ is a number you do not want to miss!”

Morgan sees Bert as the heart of wonder in the show, “encapsulating that childlike joy we all remember growing up with the story of Mary Poppins.” One of Morgan’s favorite moments is when Bert gets to welcome the audience at the top of the show: “It’s a special connection with the audience, silently saying we’re in this together.”

And if Bert could take us anywhere through one of his chalk drawings? “After playing this character in theatres all across the country and overseas, it would have to be Hyde Park in London,” Morgan says. “It’s the birthplace of Peter Pan, where J.M. Barrie was inspired. There’s a tangible magic there. It’s the closest thing we have to Neverland in real life.”

**Don’t miss the magic!**

Bring the whole family for a magical night of music, laughter, and wonder at “Mary Poppins” in Peppertree Park.

Tickets are on sale now at [tacfa.org](http://tacfa.org) for the 7:45 p.m. shows, Tuesday, Aug. 5 through Saturday, Aug. 9.

Gates open at 5:30 p.m. for food and beverages, opportunity drawings, the free Mary Poppins Fun Zone, face painting, balloon artistry, pottery making and the Chimney Sweep Shoppe.

OPA BBQ tickets on sale

Tickets are now on sale for the Fall Orange Park Acres BBQ, and can be purchased online at [orangeparkacres.org](http://orangeparkacres.org).

This Orange Park Acres signature FUNdraiser will be held at the Sandford home, Saturday, Sept. 27. Gates open at 5:30 p.m.

The event supports the ongoing preservation of OPA’s 25-mile multiuse trail system, connections to regional parks and enhancement of the equestrian op-

portunities in this rural equestrian community established in 1928.

The BBQ dinner will be followed by silent and live auctions and dancing to the Chris Lozano Band, back by popular demand. The BBQ is expected to sell out, so buying tickets early is recommended.

To donate an auction item or volunteer to help, contact OPA President Sherry Panttaja at (714) 343-4965.

Crescendo kicks off fall with Beach Boys tribute

The Celebrity Speakers Series of the Crescendo Guild of Segerstrom Center for the Arts presents the Beach Boys tribute band, Catch A Wave, at its Thursday, Sept. 18 program, the first of the 2025/26 season.

Catch A Wave (formerly The Beach Toys) is the original striped shirt, true-to-form Beach Boys tribute show that many have now copied. Band members are from Southern California, just like the Beach Boys themselves, and recreate the look and sound of a live Beach Boys concert. Hits include “Surfin’ USA,” “Fun, Fun, Fun,” “Good Vibrations,” “California Girls” and “I Get Around.”

The show begins at 10 a.m. at the Bowers Museum, 2002 N. Main Street, Santa Ana. Parking is \$7 cash at the museum.

Tickets are \$45 general admission. Bowers members may buy a ticket for \$35. For information about tickets, contact Barbara Hagan at (714) 272-1134 or e-mail [crescendoticketsbowers@gmail.com](mailto:crescendoticketsbowers@gmail.com). Reserved tickets and additional tickets may be paid for at the door by using check, cash or credit card.

The Guilds of Segerstrom, including the Crescendo Guild, raise funds to support the Center’s community engagement and arts education programs.



Beach Boys tribute band Catch A Wave kicks off the Crescendo 2025/26 Celebrity Speaker series, Sept. 18.

Tuition-free hand embroidery classes offered

Local artist and instructor Marilu Morency will resume her popular embroidery classes, online or in-person, beginning Aug. 19. Classes cover embroidery techniques from around the world and over the centuries. Hands-on projects include the embellishing of apparel, accessories and home furnishings, as well as creating framed pieces.

A Zoom class is offered through Santa Ana College, Tuesdays, Aug. 19 – Dec. 9, from 5

– 7 p.m. ([sac.edu/embroidery](http://sac.edu/embroidery) - Section # 823-69267). In-person classes will be held at the college on Wednesdays, Aug. 20 – Dec. 10, 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. ([sac.edu/embroidery](http://sac.edu/embroidery) - Section # 823-69273).

Santiago Canyon College will host in person classes on Thursdays, Aug. 21- Dec. 11, from 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Register at [scforme.edu/activeadults](http://scforme.edu/activeadults) - Section # 829-68437.

Morency reports that these free continuing education courses

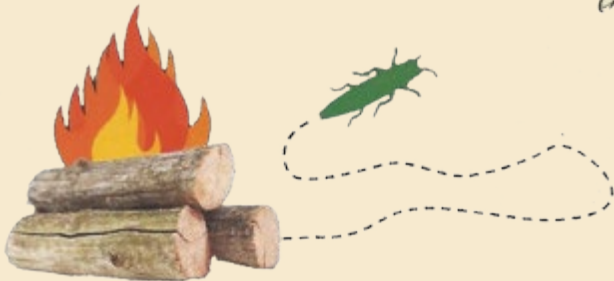
will enable students to explore contemporary twists on timeless techniques.



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Information at [ucanr.edu/sites/gsobinfo](http://ucanr.edu/sites/gsobinfo)





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ORANGE, CA

JUNE 2025

Single Family

\$1.33M

Avg. Sales Price

↓ 3%

\$1.68M

Avg. List Price

↑ 6%

65

No. of Prop. Sold

↑ 30%

32

Avg. Days on Market

↓ 15%

\$670

Avg. Sales Price per Sqft.

↓ 2%

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MARKET SNAPSHOT

TUSTIN, CA

JUNE 2025

Single Family

\$1.47M

Avg. Sales Price

↓ 4%

\$2.01M

Avg. List Price

↑ 13%

23

No. of Prop. Sold

↑ 28%

47

Avg. Days on Market

↑ 47%

\$747

Avg. Sales Price per Sqft.

↑ 2%

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MARKET SNAPSHOT

VILLA PARK, CA

JUNE 2025

Single Family

\$2.15M

Avg. Sales Price

↓ 29%

\$2.94M

Avg. List Price

↓ 3%

4

No. of Prop. Sold

↓ 20%

54

Avg. Days on Market

↓ 19%

\$605

Avg. Sales Price per Sqft.

↑ 16%

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Bag of Books sale coming to library

The Friends of the Orange Public Library are hosting a Bag of Books sale, Saturday, Sept. 13 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Doors open for members at 9 a.m. Visitors are invited to fill a bag with books for just \$5. If you bring your own Friends of the Library tote bag to fill, the cost is \$4. The sale will be held in the community room at the Main library and History Center, 407 E. Chapman Ave.

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Peppertree Park



VPWL announces first meeting

Villa Park Women's League will hold its first general meeting of the program year on Thursday, Sept. 18, with two meeting times – 11 a.m. or 6 p.m. - at Trinity Episcopal Church Community Room, located at 2400 N. Canal St. in Orange.

The league will host two dynamic speakers - Susan Svoboda, women's health advocate, breast cancer survivor, and author of “I Hate the Color Pink.” The evening program will include Svoboda again, and William Matthies, author of the fictional tale, “The Unlived Lives of Raymond Quinn” and business book, “The 7 Keys to Change.” For more information, visit vpwl.org.



Author Susan Svoboda



Author William Matthies

Chapman donates 3D printers to OUSD



3D printers were delivered to OUSD by Kendall Harris, interim dean of Chapman's Fowler School of Engineering and Chapman students,



OUSD Superintendent Rachel Monárrez and Grace Stuart open the first 3D printer box.

Chapman University donated 20 advanced 3D printers to the Orange Unified School District (OUSD), in an exchange July 23. Students from Chapman’s Fowler School of Engineering loaded the printers at the Keck Center for Science and Engineering and delivered them to the OUSD warehouse. District Superintendent Rachel Monárrez was on hand to receive the printers and thank the Chapman team.

OUSD plans to distribute the 3D printers across 10 locations aligned with its Career Technical Education (CTE) program. Students from kindergarten through high school will benefit from the donation.

“Chapman University is committed to investing in the latest technology for our students,” said Dr. Kendall Harris, Interim Dean of the Fowler School of Engineering. “With this donation, we are extending that commitment to our broader community -- giving local students access to the same tools that are shaping the future of engineering, technology and innovation.”

“We are deeply grateful to our community partners at Chapman University for their generous donation of 3D printers,” Monárrez said. “This investment in our scholars will help spark creativity, support real-world problem-solving, and bring innovative learning to life in our classrooms. Together, we are opening doors to future-ready opportunities and showing what’s possible through the power of partnership.”

College students earn accolades

Marquette University announced that Ryan Olsker of Orange has attained his doctorate degree in physical therapy. Hazel Lenoir of North Tustin graduated magna cum laude from Dickinson College with a BA in Spanish and Portuguese studies and international business and management. Saraya Hamidi, also from Orange, earned a bachelor’s degree in Tribal Stewardship from the University of Minnesota, Duluth.

Dean’s list honors were awarded to Mikayla Yang, Tustin, from Marquette University. She is studying advertising. Neil Kataria, Orange, was named to the Mercy College of Health Sciences (Des Moines) Dean’s List. Emma Beelner, also from Orange, was honored by the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia.



Villa Park Rotary presents scholarships



From left, Rotarians Dan Gray and Paul Van, recipient Jimmy Hernandez, Rotarian Pam Dunn, recipient Christian Frutos and his father.



From left, Rotarian Stephen Ashley, awardee Celeste Mota, and Rotarian Marjan Roshangar.



From left, awardee Victoria Perez with Rotarian Marc Hurd.

Rotary Club of Villa Park presented scholarships to senior students from Villa Park High School at its June 5 morning meeting.

The Rotary Endowment Board, comprised of Dan Gray, Bill Underwood, Kevin Padilla, Marc Hurd, Pam Dunn, Chad Zimmerman and Dave Holler, selected recipients of the Rich Freschi Endowment, which awards scholarships to VPHS seniors seeking careers in trades.

Awardees were Jimmy Hernandez, who is seeking a career in HVAC, and Christian Frutos, who will be studying film production.

The Scott Family Endowment awards scholarship to individuals seeking careers in the medical field.

Awardees were Celeste Mota, who will be attending school to become a dental hygienist, and Victoria Perez, who will be attending Chapman University as a premed student, with the goal of becoming a pediatrician.

For more information about the organization and its mission, see [rotaryclubofvillapark.org](http://rotaryclubofvillapark.org).



A tomato contest helped raise \$80 for the Elks Fire Dog program. Rose Cunningham, center, was crowned the 2025 winner.

Candidate forum on the docket

The Central Orange County Democratic Club will host a CA40 candidate forum on Wednesday, Aug. 27. Voters will have the opportunity to hear from each of the Democratic Party primary candidates and ask questions, as time permits. Visit the club website calendar, Mobilize.us or the club Facebook link to access the Mobilize link to RSVP. Seating is limited. RSVP is required to attend.

Central OC Dems includes Tustin, Tustin Hills, Orange, Villa Park and surrounding communities. Democrats from throughout OC are welcome. Meetings are held on the fourth Wednesday of each month at Saint Paul's Episcopal Church, 1221 W. St. in Tustin. The group is not affiliated with St. Paul's.

Questions can be sent to [CentralOCDems@gmail.com](mailto:CentralOCDems@gmail.com) or visit [CentralOCDems.com](http://CentralOCDems.com).

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Explore Assistance League membership

Assistance League of Orange, an all-volunteer organization that has been serving the community since 1941, invites prospective members to explore the riches of membership on Thursday, Aug. 7, from 5:30 to 7 p.m. at the Chapter House, 124 S. Orange St.

Learn about the numerous hands-on programs that serve children, seniors, women and veterans, and join the 300-plus members who transform lives and impact the community on a daily basis. To RSVP, or for any questions, email membership@alorange.org.

Flags fly over Orange



Gail Case, a disabled widow of a veteran, sits beneath the flag installed by Elks Lodge #1475 Flags Over Orange Committee. She regularly attends the Flags over the Plaza ceremony.

Flags Over Orange was conceived by the Elks to provide a flag for any military, police, fire, veteran, senior or disabled person who could use a helping hand mounting one.

The Orange Elks will install a flag kit that consists of a flag and pole, with a solar light to keep the flag properly displayed and illuminated overnight.

Elks help clean Santiago Creek



Orange Elks member Mark Kenton oversees the haul of trash picked up from the creek at the Chapman bridge.

The Orange Elks support our community partner by cleaning up our community. On the second Saturday of the month, the Orange Elks Lodge works with our community partner, the Santiago Creek Greenway Alliance (SCGA), to help clean Santiago Creek.

The SCGA was started in 1991 and is a group of volunteers dedicated to improving public use of Santiago Creek. The SCGA provides trash bags, pick-up claws, gloves, water, pretty much everything you need.

The next cleanup is Saturday, August 9.



Elks members join the Santiago Creek Greenway Alliance once a month to clean up the waterway and remove invasive plants. There's always plenty of trash to go around.

Tobacco shops to face more regulation in Orange

By Carrie Graham

Orange will soon begin more heavily regulating businesses that sell tobacco products, eventually reducing the number of retailers by nearly half.

The city council voted unanimously at its June 10 meeting to adopt Ordinance 12-25, new regulations for local tobacco sellers. Despite a strong state-level regulatory framework, local enforcement faces challenges.

Enforcement is resource-intensive, especially in municipalities lacking dedicated funding. The Tobacco Grant Program, administered by the California Department of Justice and funded through Proposition 56, offers limited financial support for enforcement efforts. However, grants are time-limited, highly competitive, and require municipalities to meet strict requirements. Orange has such a grant, good until 2027.

**Separate permit required**

Under the new ordinance, businesses that sell tobacco products would be required to seek a permit specifically for tobacco retailers and would need to renew that permit annually. Money from that would go toward funding enforcement.

The Orange Police Department and Code Enforcement, through individual and joint operations, has identified at least 25 businesses that sold illegal merchandise, often concealed from public view.

Flavored tobacco products, flavor enhancers, cannabis products and related accessories, disguised vapes and e-cigarettes, nitrous oxide, and meth pipes have all been found for sale at Orange stores, with many retailers keeping stock in back rooms, hidden compartments, under counters and behind display shelves to avoid detection, but made available upon customer request.

OPD also reported that in 2025 alone they've made one fentanyl-related arrest, found eight retailers selling cannabis products, and one selling psilocybin, the active ingredient in psychedelic mushrooms.

The ordinance will require existing retailers to apply for a permit within 60 days of its enactment. While there are currently over 100 locations that sell tobacco products in the city, including convenience stores, gas stations, grocery stores and smoke shops, the city intends to lower that number to 55, or one for every 2,500 residents, based on recent census data.

**55's the limit**

Although existing retailers will be eligible, the permits are non-transferable. As businesses close, no new permits will be issued until the number of retailers dips below 55.

Locations would have to be at least 500 feet from "sensitive areas," those where youth frequent, including K-12 schools, parks and public libraries.

Additionally, the ordinance would also ban retailers from having "lounges" or designated smoking areas inside private property. This effectively blocks establishments like hookah lounges, however, it still allows for designated smoking in public and private spaces.

Code Enforcement says the goal is "education and adherence" over penalization, with first time offenders being given a written warning and a 72-hour period to get in compliance. But that doesn't mean they won't see consequences. Those who continue to violate the new ordinance can face anywhere from a \$750 fine to revocation of their permit.

Several cities in Orange County, including Buena Park, Santa Ana, Westminster, Stanton and Anaheim, have adopted similar tobacco retailer licensing, or permitting ordinances to maintain local tobacco control.

The city will be posting additional information about the new ordinance on its website, as well as holding an outreach meeting to inform local business owners of the new requirements



### Villa Park's "Stars on Parade" draws a crowd on the 4th of July



Bicycles, walkers, floats, dogs and vehicles of all sizes assemble at Cerro Villa Middle School for the annual parade.



The Stars on Parade winds through the city.



Members of the Villa Park Women's League cheered with patriotic red and blue pom poms and sashes.



The Villa Park City Council, from left, Councilmembers Kelly McBride and Crystal Miles, Mayor Nicole Jones, Captain Miguel Sotelo from the OC Sheriff's Department, Councilman Robert Frackelton and Mayor Pro Tem Jordan Wu.

### Looking for love



Otto



Jimmy



Carmey



Mikey



Richie



Sugar



Sydney

Otto, about three months old, once resided with his mom in an attic crawlspace, but is now looking for his forever home. He is very quiet and shy, but loves his foster siblings, playing and food. His neuter and first shots will be covered by the rescue.

His seven (!) foster siblings are a tad younger, all from the same litter. They lost their mom to a coyote, and are all about four weeks old. One has been spoken for, but all of the other six siblings will soon be looking for a home. Sydney and Sugar, the tabbies, are females; the others are males. The lighter ones, Mikey, Carmey and Jimmy may look like lynx-point Siamese with blue eyes. All love to be cuddled, and their personalities are developing.

For more information about adopting one or more of these cuties, text to Mama's Crazy Cat Lady Rescue at (949) 887-8709.

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OPA's 4th of July parade brings out the red, white and blue in families and four-footed friends



Chase, Miranda and Dr. John Black were first-time participants.



George shows off his 4th of July coat.



Ann and Jon Kennedy with a classic, parade-worthy Woodie. Photos by Tony Richards



The Villa Park High School cheer squad brings Spartan pride to OPA.



The eagle has landed with Chase Taylor, Lando, Haley and Dylan Durazo and canines George and Sunny.



Mayor Dan Slater is flanked by Suzanne Martin, left, and Sherry Panttaja.



Danielle and Kathy Walker brought chickens Lily and Sunny to the festivities.



Equestrians and their red, white and blue adorned mounts.



The popular new OPA Men's Group, founded by Ron Spence, driving in the front with Michael Schmidt, had Ron Hoffer and Russ Garcia in the back, enthusiastically encouraging men to join in their many activities.



The Salem Lutheran Church band is the tail of the parade route, wrapping it up with classic rock and roll.



Parade participants enjoy the view from the top.



City Councilman Denis Bilodeau and wife Suzanne.





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