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A Monthly Community Newspaper

NOVEMBER 2026

Recognition for Lorenzo Ramirez takes root in El Modena

By Tina Richards

Efforts by El Modena residents to preserve the legacy of Lorenzo Ramirez are finally gaining traction thanks to \$300,000 in funding secured for a permanent memorial by State Senator Tom Umberg.

Ramirez is an unsung hero of the landmark Mendez, et al v Westminster court case that ended school segregation in California in 1947.

The formal acknowledgement of Ramirez's contributions will be installed at the El Modena Library. The \$300,000 check was presented at an event held Oct. 12 at the library and attended by state, federal, city of Orange and Orange Unified School District officials as well as members of the Ramirez family and representatives from the Palomino family, also part of the Mendez lawsuit.

Ramirez, a resident of El Modena, sued the school district (Now Orange Unified) to enable his children to attend the academically superior "white" school and not be relegated to the "Mexican" school that was next door. His legal challenge became part of the Mendez v Westminster case, as did lawsuits filed by three other local families. The Guzman's sued the Santa Ana School District; the Palominos, Garden Grove and the Estradas supported the Westminster suit.

After decades of obscurity, the et als have slowly been recognized for their contributions to their communities and school

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Photo by Tony Richards

The Ramirez family, from left, Jennifer, Laura, Teresa, Antonio, Sandra, Michael, Lorenzo Jr., and Sandra Ortega.

City releases draft Preferred Plan for the Village at Orange

The City of Orange unveiled a draft land use plan for the Village at Orange property during a community meeting, Oct. 15, at St. Paul's Lutheran Church.

The presentation was shared in three segments: a formal overview offered by Orange City Manager Jarad Hildebrand and representatives from PlaceWorks, the consultants who developed the plan; an "open house," wherein attendees were invited to review project displays situated on easels around the room; and a "town hall" session for attendee questions and comments. Seats were available for the 200 or so attendees.

The mall is currently designated for commercial activities. The proposed new land use designation and zoning falls within the Meats to Heim Specific Plan. The proposed specific plan for the 60-acre mall property features 12 individual Planning Areas or PAs. These smaller land areas include residential,

neighborhood hub (mixed use with 279 residential units and 163,000 square feet of new commercial), and commercial only. Additionally, there are four smaller open space areas when combined total 2.44 acres. The plan allows, "by right," the construction of up to 834 residential units.

Wait for it

Phase 1, which includes 333 units and 72,000 square feet of commercial is anticipated to be implemented by 2030. Phase 2, which encompasses the Sears parcel is designated for up to 444 units and 163,000 square feet of new commercial (mixed use) implemented after 2054. The Phase 2 delay is tied to the existing TransformCo (Sears) property lease that runs through 2054.

Another element of the plan is

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NEWS INSIDE

MAKING AND STAKING HISTORY

Villa Park plants a time capsule containing current relics for future residents to find.

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GOIN' UP THE COUNTRY

Annual Silverado fair celebrates olden days and rural ways.

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HONORS ON A ROLL

Orange Unified reports on a season of academic milestones.

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THE MARINES ARE LANDING

Residents invited to share their Thanksgiving day with far from home military personnel, an annual Villa Park tradition.

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GOOD PENMAN (AND WOMAN) SHIP

Local authors discuss their work on a range of OC-themed topics.

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Past and present members of the Villa Park City Council got together for a commemorative photo that was placed in a time capsule slated to be opened 50 years hence. From left, back row: Chad Zimmerman, 2018-22 and 2026-30, mayor 2022; Rich Ulmer, 2004-12, mayor 2007, 2011; Greg Mills, 2012-16, mayor 2016; Brad Reese, 2006-14, mayor 2008, 2012, 2013; Robbie Pitts, 2016-24, mayor 2020, 2023; Barry Denes, 1990-98, mayor 1994, 1997; Kelly McBride, 2024-present; middle row, from left: Jordan Wu, 2022-30, mayor 2026; Rick Barnett, 2012-16, mayor 2014; Wayne Silzel, 1980-90, mayor 1985; front row, from left: John Frackelton, 1988-96, mayor 1990, 1991; Diana Fascenelli, 2012-18, mayor 2015; Crystal Miles, 2018-26, mayor 2021; Jim Reichert, 1972-76, mayor pro tem 1975; Bob Collacott, 2014-22, mayor 2018; Vince Rossini, 2016-24, mayor 2019, 2024; Jim Fasbender, 1982-90, mayor 1988, 1989; Nicol Jones, 2022-30; mayor 2025; Robert Frackelton, 2024-present, mayor pro tem 2026. See page 6

**"Ramirez"
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desegregation.

"I grew up in El Modena," says Orange Councilmember Ana Gutierrez, "I played with Ramirez's his nieces and nephews, but I had no idea who he was or what he did for us." That started to change in 2012 when a community group encouraged El Modena High School to name its library after Ramirez and set up displays that would introduce him to students.

In 2014, Santiago Canyon College installed a bust of him outside its library, which is also The Ramirez family, from left, Jennifer, Laura, Teresa, Antonio, Sandra, Michael, Lorenzo Jr., and cousin Sandra Ortega from the El Modena Historical Society named to honor his contribution to equal education.

"A good start," Gutierrez says, but we needed to do more in El Modena. He lived here, he played a major role in local history and children growing up here need to know that."

After being elected to the city council in 2018, Gutierrez began lobbying the city and whoever else would listen for a Ramirez memorial in El Modena. She recalls approaching State Senator Tom Umberg several years ago and asking him to help with funding for a proposed Ramirez monument in the

community. Nothing happened.

Until this year. The Orange Public Works Director suggested that a local architect be recruited to create a preliminary design for a Lorenzo Ramirez monument that could be established at the El Modena Library. Michael Knight, an Orange resident and member of the city's Santiago Creek Commission agreed to do it.

"His design was a huge step forward," Gutierrez says, "because now we had something to show people. It was more than talk, it looked real."

And Umberg had not forgotten her request. Several years after her initial outreach, the senator called her to report he had \$300,000 for the project.

"It's important to elevate this struggle," Umberg explained. "It was a courageous act that took passion and tenacity. People know about Brown v Board of Education, but they don't know about this case. It's critical that this lesson be taught."

We're going to need more than \$300,000 to finish this project, City Manager Jarad Hildebrand reports, "but we can certainly get started. It's going to take time to put the various elements of the project (architectural drawings, construction, landscaping) out to bid, but we can likely start work by summer 2027."



Tom Umberg presents the check surrounded by Ramirez family members, and elected officials.



Michael Knight's conceptual drawing for the Ramirez monument got the effort "over the hump."

**Elks keep flags flying
over Orange**

The Orange Elks Flags Over Orange committee installed three flags in October for two veterans and one for The Hub Resource Center.



Vincent "Vinny" Nardolillo, a Navy veteran who served during the Korean war and reenlisted during the Vietnam War, and his wife Brenda received a flag.



Richard Ruedas, a United States Marine Corps veteran, who also served 22 years in the USMC Reserves and volunteered for Tustin Police Department, received a flag.

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**"Village at Orange"
continued from page 1**

a reconfiguration of Canal Street at Meats, wherein Canal would be realigned to connect with Lincoln Street instead of dead-ending at Meats. This street adjustment and intersection improvements would not occur until Phase 2 (after 2054). The four open space planning Areas are placed close by or inside the residential or neighborhood hub PAs and are identified as either a one-half-acre public park, a central park, paseo, public plaza with amenities, or a private park for exclusive use by residents. Connecting paths and trails are also proposed.

The design features and architecture of the new residential units and any new commercial buildings will be addressed through the specific plan text, along with off-street parking requirements for each use. The first row of residential units along Canal will be limited to two stories, which can step up higher to three stories for the interior areas. The neighborhood Hub areas have a height limit of four stories.

Much housing, no Costco

The permitted uses for the residential and neighborhood hub PAs include a mix of housing types, including single-family, townhomes, duplexes, multi-family, senior housing, residential units adjacent to commercial uses, and

residential above commercial (live work – work unit on the ground level with residential above. All proposed residential units can only occur along Canal (western edge) and Meats (southern edge) sides of the mall property. The draft plan shows no option for a Costco on the Sears area property. Costco requires at least 18 acres to accommodate its warehouse needs and a fueling station. The plan does allow for a substantial square foot addition to Walmart which will likely require demolition of the existing store to update it as a super store. If Walmart doesn't expand, that area behind it can be developed with 90 units.

The plan is a draft concept which can still see further refinements going forward. Folks can submit their feedback to the city in writing and/or online through the Meats to Heim Specific Plan website. All comments are due by Nov. 13. Once the final preferred plan is determined a Draft Environmental Report (EIR) will be prepared. The next phase of the project will be a public scoping meeting focused on what specific environmental impacts the Draft EIR should study. Timing on that meeting was not announced. As to the review and a final decision of the proposed Specific Plan, that is anticipated to be reviewed by the Orange Planning Commission first and then the Orange City Council in summer or fall 2027.



The 200 attendees at the meeting were respectful but generally not in support of what they heard. Roughly half left the meeting after the plan's 834 residential number was disclosed. Comments at the Q&A session centered on traffic impacts on Canal and Meats, parking for the new residential units, potential impacts of state housing laws on unit limitations, economic viability and sustainability, infrastructure improvements, and Phase 2 implementation after 2054.



The draft preferred plan is divided into residential, commercial, neighborhood hub and open space.



Mall at Orange neighbors study plan displays.

Reading resources assist Tustin families



Vicente Sarmiento visits an elementary school classroom.

**By Vicente Sarmiento
2nd District Supervisor**

A love of reading is essential to children's learning and development, especially when kids and parents read together. Many of us were blessed to have books available to help develop that love of learning before we even knew that we were learning. As an elected official, one of the most gratifying things that our office does is visiting students and encouraging them in their education. But we know that their education began much earlier, in the home, and too many families face financial challenges in providing books for them. Tustin families now have a new resource that I hope parents will use as they encourage their kids to read, even as technology competes for their attention. In honor of the passing of Dolly Parton (who was known not only

for her singing and songwriting, but also for her deep commitment to early childhood literacy) I want to recognize the impact of an initiative she launched 31 years ago to help children gain access to books and plant the seeds for a lifelong love of reading. This initiative has since spread to Orange County. Dolly Parton's Imagination Library has launched here in Tustin. At a recent Tustin City Council meeting, the community celebrated the official launch of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library as it expands statewide in California. I am proud that our office was able to help fund and support this important initiative to ensure children have access to books and the opportunities that come with them. To learn more about the program and the books available for kids, in both English and Spanish, visit their website at imaginationlibrary.com.



LETTERS
to the EDITOR

Above board

Dear Editor:

I'm writing about the upcoming OUSD board election as both a lifelong member of this community and an OUSD parent. I grew up in the district, attended Panorama, and now have one child in an OUSD elementary school and another in OUSD's special education preschool.

Over our four years in the district, I have experienced two very different boards. During our first two years, there was considerable uncertainty and conflict. Too much attention seemed focused on political and cultural issues, rather than the needs of students, families and schools. We saw unnecessary legal expenses, divisive policies and the loss of educators.

Over the past two years, I've seen meaningful change. Superintendent Rachel Monárrez has made a genuine effort to engage families through committees, Q&As and direct communication. When I have reached out, she has responded personally and connected me with the appropriate staff to resolve issues. The current board selected her to lead the district and I believe that decision has made a meaningful difference.

I've also had personal experiences with the four trustees that have shaped my view of their service.

When my son's IEP implementation ran into a problem with an outside vendor, I contacted the board. Sara Pelly responded personally, made sure the appropriate people understood the situation, and helped ensure we received the support we needed.

Andrea Yamasaki and Kris Erickson are consistently present at school events, supporting students, teachers and families. When I attended a board meeting concerning my son's school, Stephen Glass asked thoughtful questions and addressed concerns raised by families.

These experiences matter because school board service is ultimately about showing up for students and families. After having been in the district the past four years, Kris Erickson and Andrea Yamasaki have been available for OUSD families, the addition of Stephen Glass and Sarah Pelly has rounded out the board with experience and knowledge, as well as accessibility families in this district need.

OUSD is not perfect, and there is certainly room for improvement. But there is also much worth

recognizing: expanded dual-language and STEM programs, virtual learning opportunities, dual enrollment, unique programs such as the El Modena environmental learning center and Orange High School farm, and continued investment in school facilities and infrastructure.

As voters consider this election, I hope they look beyond campaign rhetoric and consider what kind of leadership they want for our schools. From my experience as both a former student and current parent, I want to see OUSD continue focusing on students, educators, families, academic growth and responsible investment.

OUSD has made meaningful progress. I hope we continue moving forward.

Andi Canseco-De Leon
Orange

Safe schools

Dear Editor:

Orange Unified maintains school safety plans. That is a requirement of responsible administration, not evidence that current trustees have solved campus safety needs.

The public deserves to know whether aging security systems have been identified, which campuses need upgrades, and how the OUSD Board of Trustees ranks those investments against competing spending priorities. Without public targets and progress reports, families have no reliable way to judge whether the board is acting on the risks its own plans describe.

Trustees should publish an annual school safety investment report identifying projects, costs, deadlines and completed improvements, while withholding sensitive security details. Accountability means showing what has changed, not simply pointing to a plan and expecting parents to be reassured.

Xander Sazama
Anaheim Hills

Off the chart(er)

Dear Editor:

I'm a resident of District 1 in Orange, and I posted the following comment for the city council meeting on Oct. 13.

We don't have to guess what happens when a city shifts from a general law system to a charter city since we can look right next door at Huntington Beach. Huntington Beach promised its residents "local control." Instead, charter city status was used as a blank check to wage multimillion-dollar legal battles with the state over housing, library books, and election laws. As a result, millions of taxpayer dollars have been drained in legal fees, repeated losses in court, and zero added benefit to everyday residents.

A city charter hands concentrated authority to council majorities, risking costly ideological fights, political lawsuits and fiscal instability. And Huntington Beach

isn't an isolated case. History shows how charter status opens the door to systemic risks. Consider the City of Bell, which is an extreme example where charter city status stripped away state oversight, allowing local officials to inflate their own salaries and operate with zero accountability until millions were lost to corruption.

Or look at San Jose, where a charter rewrite led to years of contentious ballot battles over public pensions and worker protections that destabilized city services and cost taxpayers millions in litigation. Measure K is simply a pathway to greater corruption.

When you bypass state general law, you strip away critical checks and balances. General law isn't a burden; it's a safeguard that prevents local council majorities from changing governance rules without thoughtful deliberation as we've seen with the Flock/ALPR automated mass surveillance. Without sound evidence of its efficacy, nor catastrophic circumstances that would warrant a trampling of our privacy rights, the majority of the city council has voted to oppose the will of the people and side with the marketing of unproven tech corporations. Shame on them.

Ryan Johnson
Orange

Best laid plans

Dear Editor:

I attended the Meats to Heim Specific Plan meeting on Oct. 15, and liked what I saw. The plan is designed to keep the existing stores and restaurants we like, build new store and restaurant space, and provide new housing. The plan included townhouses and flats above the shops built in a walkable space, which includes open space for gathering. Realigning the driveway to the former Best Buy site, which will have new residents living there, will allow them to easily get to the shops and restaurants across the street. Walkable shops and restaurants next to residential has worked for years on the East Coast and works in the OC.

Go to the Stater Bros. plaza on Tustin Ranch Road across from the new homes and you will see people walking to shop and grab something to eat. Go down to where Target is located and you see people walking and biking to the Target, Whole Foods, and other shops and restaurants. We already have this model in Old Towne with apartments above the street-level shops.

I like the concept and would like to see a police substation added along with native plants for landscaping. This is what we have been waiting for, a new walkable downtown area we can all enjoy with open space for events and hanging out with friends. I am looking forward to meeting the new residents and enjoying the new shops and restaurants.

Reggie Mundekis
Orange



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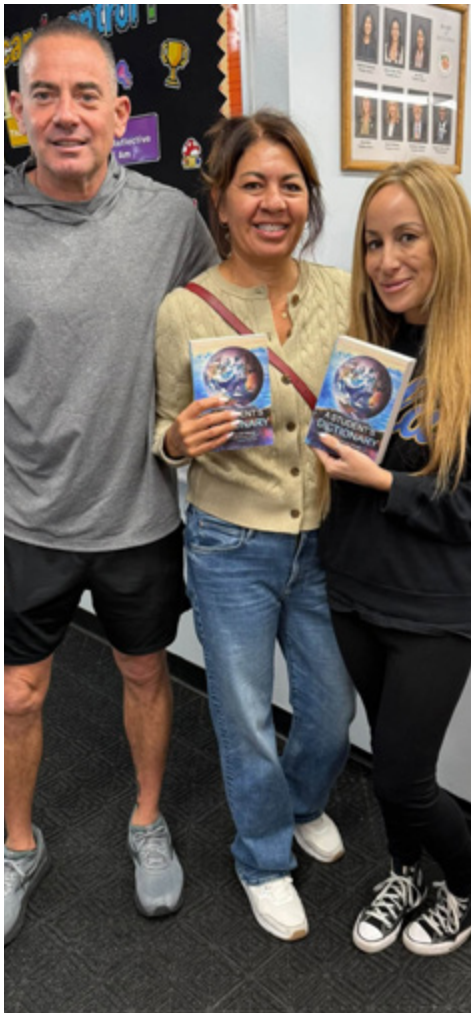
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Orange Elks provide dictionaries



From left, Elk Travis Morrow, Marisol Morrow and Linda Vista third grade teacher Dianna Sims.

The Orange Elks visited 27 local schools to deliver 1,608 dictionaries to third grade students. During the past 18 years, the Orange Elks have gifted over 39,000 dictionaries.

OCWD earns sustainability award

The Orange County Water District (OCWD) has been named Sustainable Government of the Year by Sustain SoCal, recognizing the district's leadership in environmental stewardship, sustainable water management and effective use of local resources. OCWD manages the Orange County Groundwater Basin, which provides approximately 85% of the water used by 2.5 million people in north and central Orange County. The district captures stormwater and Santa Ana River flows for groundwater recharge, protects groundwater quality, manages habitat alongside active water operations, and operates the Groundwater Replenishment System (GWRS) in partnership with the Orange County Sanitation District. The GWRS transforms highly treated wastewater into up to 130 million gallons of purified water each day to replenish the groundwater basin. Instead of wasting that resource, OCWD uses it to increase Orange County's local drinking water supply. The district has dedicated more than 1,100 acres to environmental preservation and manages approximately 465 acres of constructed wetlands in the Prado Basin that naturally improve water quality. Decades of habitat restoration and monitoring have also helped support recovery of

the endangered least Bell's vireo, increasing from 19 documented territories in 1986 to more than 760 today. "OCWD stands out for turning sustainability into measurable results," said Scott Kitcher, president and CEO of Sustain SoCal. "Its work demonstrates how a public agency can strengthen water reliability, use resources wisely and deliver meaningful environmental benefits, while also building strong public-private partnerships that help advance innovative solutions."

Christmas coming to the Canyons

The holiday spirit is coming to Silverado Canyon as Christmas in the Canyons welcomes the community on Sunday, Nov. 22, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. This festive, family-friendly celebration will feature live music, Santa photos by donation, artisans and vendors, and a beautiful setting—with free admission. The event will be held at Giracci Vineyards, 16162 Jackson Ranch Road, with parking available at Circle S Ranch and Giracci. For more information, visit Giracci.com.

Recumbent cyclist Phil Knoll wins gold



Crossing the finish line.

Recumbent cyclist Phil Knoll won a gold medal for cycling in the California Senior Games held in Long Beach. Knoll, who turned 90 in July, won in the age 90-95 category for the 10K. The competitor has won

15 gold medals in the Huntsman senior games, held annually in Utah, and three gold medals in the California Games. "I'm just lucky that I still get to ride my bike," he says.



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Villa Park’s tricentennial time capsule reunites electeds for a photo op



A Villa Park Monopoly game will no doubt be a curiosity to those opening the time capsule in 2076.

Villa Park Mayor Jordan Wu gathered all 19 Villa Park City Councilmembers, past and present, for a photo that will be included in a time capsule that will not be opened until 2076.

The capsule was buried in the Villa Park Knowles on Oct. 20, with strict instructions not to open until America’s tricentennial year in

2076. In addition to the photo, each past and present councilperson signed a 250th patriotic bunting that had flown in town during this past summer that will also be included in the time capsule.

Sixteen of the pictured also served as mayor.

Nicol Jones is the first councilperson and mayor to have grown up in Villa Park, attending Villa Park Elementary, Cerro Villa and VP High.

Eight Villa Park City Councilmembers have been women, with the first, Dorothy Potter, having a street in Villa Park named after her. The second, Carol Kawanami, was the first person of Japanese descent to be elected mayor of a U.S. city post-World War II (a few weeks before Eunice Sato of Long Beach was elected mayor of that city).

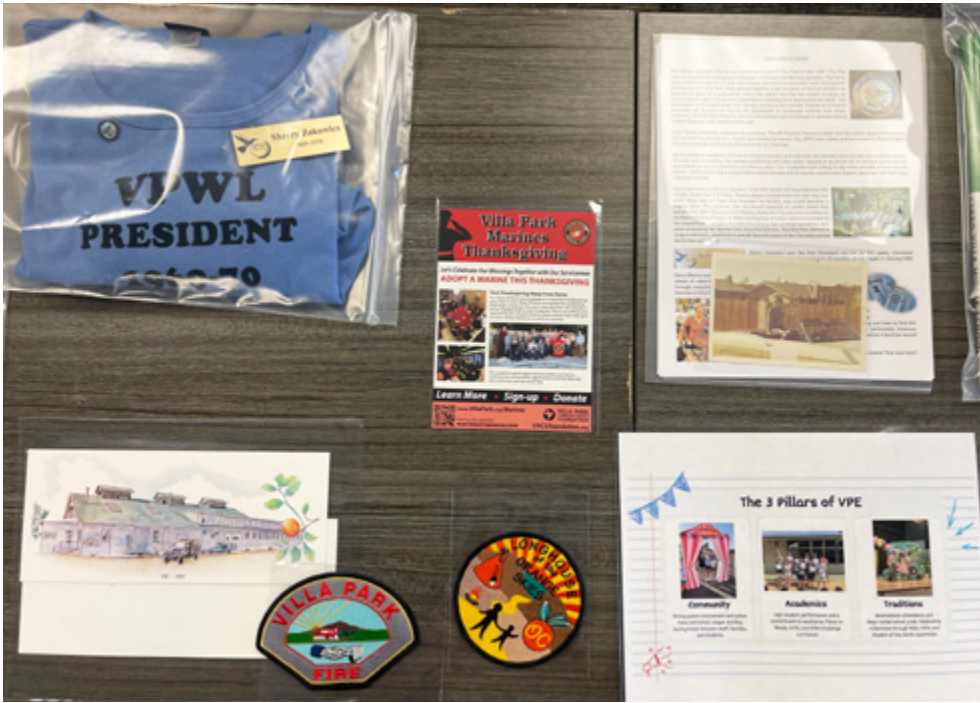
Three streets in Villa Park are named after past councilmembers: Winn Circle, Potter Circle and Workman Circle.

Three former Councilmen currently serve on the elected Serrano Water Board: Brad Reese, Greg Mills and Robbie Pitts.

Villa Park is the only city in Orange County that does not pay its councilmembers. Each one serves, as an unpaid volunteer, giving countless hours to support their community.



Mayor Jordan Wu signals all is ready for the time capsule to be interred for its 50-year slumber.



Items representing the city of today won't be rediscovered for 50 years.



Jim Reichert, 93, served during the bicentennial year in 1976. Current Mayor Jordan Wu, 50, was born that year, and is serving during the U.S. 250th anniversary. They represent the most senior and most junior of the councilmembers.



Robert Frackelton, right, is the only legacy councilmember, following his father, John, who served two terms, from 1988-1996, and was mayor in 1990 and 1991. Robert began serving in 2024, and is currently mayor pro tem.



City of Villa Park

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Dear Residents of Villa Park in 2076,

As our great nation celebrates its 250th anniversary, Villa Park is preparing a time capsule to preserve the memories, treasures, and spirit of our community for the next 50 years. When you open it in 2076, I hope you feel the common community spirit that brought us together in 2026. We placed these treasures here not simply to preserve our past, but to share a piece of our hearts with you.

Today, Villa Park remains our “Hidden Jewel” - a small-town neighborhood whose greatest treasure is not its size, but its people. From the Villa Park Women’s League and Rotary Club to Friends of the Villa Park Library, Villa Park Community Services Foundation, and countless other nonprofit organizations, our residents give generously to make this a place where neighbors care for neighbors. Their service reminds us that a community’s true wealth lies in the hearts of its people.

As the first Taiwanese immigrant to serve on the Villa Park City Council, I have a special appreciation for the opportunities that make our country unique. Having immigrated from Taiwan as a teenager, I have learned that our different backgrounds and experiences are not barriers, but strengths. One of the many things I’ve learned from living in Villa Park is that we do not have to be the same to belong. All we need is the willingness to respect and care for one another. May Villa Park always welcome diverse perspectives while cherishing the shared values that unite us.

One of my favorite moments of this project was bringing together all 19 former and current City Council members still living in Villa Park for a group photograph. Among them was Jim Reichert, who served during America’s Bicentennial in 1976 - the year I was born. At 93 and 50, respectively, Jim and I represented a remarkable generational bridge between our nation’s 200th and 250th anniversaries. Standing together reminded me that while generations change, the love of community and commitment to public service endure. As Robert Frackelton, our 2026 Mayor Pro Tem, shares in his article, this gathering honors the people whose service has shaped Villa Park.

We cannot know what Villa Park will look like in 2076, but we hope its heart remains unchanged. May you continue to cherish our friendships, preserve our small-town character, welcome those who bring new perspectives, and pass this spirit of belonging to the generations that follow. If this capsule reminds you of anything, let it be this: the greatest legacy we leave behind is not what we build, but how we care for one another.

With pride, gratitude, and hope for your future,

Jordan Wu
Mayor of Villa Park, 2026

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Checking in

Speed check ahead

The only drivers on Santiago Canyon Road more surprised by the Wednesday, Oct. 14 appearance of CHP vehicles and motorcycles on our local speedway were those ticketed. The agency’s expanded operation resulted from staffing increases, amping up its regular enforcement and anticipating more consistent surprises.

Rain check

Inter-Canyon League (ICL) President Geoff Sarkissian, working 24-7 on the Silverado Country Fair for months, took exactly one emergency sick day with volunteers stepping in to help. Neither illness nor weather hurt his well-organized efforts or dampened spirits. Rain closed the main stage, so the kids’ tent hosted live music during Saturday’s storm. Attendance was strong despite some cancelled bands, with the faithful arriving Sunday for jam rock favorites Cubensis. Beer sales were only improved (!) by inclement conditions (when it rains, they pour). Scott Breeden’s volunteer Christmas Boutique crew brought in \$2,100 for ICL. Vendors and artists understood that although everybody talks about the weather, nobody does anything about it. Except Joanne Hubble! Her Oct. 22 community El Niño preparedness meeting drew 200 in-person and online, with meteorologists, utility reps and local government agencies.

Walls and bridges

With four long-planned large bridge projects in the (public) works, OCPW begins restoring concrete, and otherwise improving a small one. Work on the “invert” flow-way of the Santiago Canyon Bridge Over Williams Creek Project will take about five weeks. In Modjeska, the Environmental Nature Center Tucker Wildlife Sanctuary is now in conversation with OCPW regarding site

improvements. Executive Director Bo Glover explains: “Our goal is to create a beautiful, tranquil sanctuary where students and visitors enjoy transformative experiences in nature, while also enhancing the natural beauty of the community. The new fence is designed to minimize visual distractions from passing vehicles and nearby parking activity, allowing visitors (especially children) to become more fully immersed in the natural environment. Unfortunately, our beautification efforts have been put on hold by Code Enforcement, but we remain committed to working with the county to resolve any issues and complete improvements that benefit both Tucker and our surrounding community.”

Christmas comes early

Christmas in the Canyons, this year at Giracci Vineyards at 16162 Jackson Ranch Road, arrives on Sunday, Nov. 22, 11 a.m. – 4 p.m. Live music, local artisans and vendors and Santa. Admission is free.

Rube goldbird

Hearing increased percussion on the wood siding of your rustic canyon home? That’s the aviary sound of cause and effect. SCE replaced wooden utility poles with composite ones so acorn woodpeckers lost reliable acorn storage caches and discovered the soft wood of your domicile. Toward discouraging this behavior, locals deploy glitter tape, whirligigs, plastic owls, and bright aluminum used cat food cans strung with fishing wire — repellent folk art.

Vulturevision

Over a hundred joined the recent ICL Friends of the Library fall community program led by History Committee archive preservationists Judy Myer, Scott Breeden and emcee Melody McWilliams. The event featured not

only an audiovisual program, but a display of photos and ephemera spanning decades. Look for another community-themed program in spring. The Wednesday, Nov. 4 (5 p.m.) Book Group of the Canyon discusses “A House of My Own” by Sandra Cisneros. On Thursday, Nov. 19 at 11 a.m., learn about turkey vultures (called TVs by birders) when Irvine Ranch Conservancy hosts a story, nature walk and crafts. BYOC. Bring your own carrion.

Vote

Our local OC Vote Center is again the Community Room at Library of the Canyons, open four days starting on Halloween morning through Election Day. Key canyon races include: Orange Unified School Board, Silverado-Modjeska Recreation and Parks District (one two-year director position), Assembly, our recently redrawn 40th Congressional District, and our own 3rd District Supervisor running for Secretary of State.

Assemblymember Kate Sanchez (R-71) recently shared a state Zero Zone press release, but her staff couldn’t identify the actual number of properties in the district or constituents subject to implementation of two discreet impacted areas — State Responsibility Areas (SRA) and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones in Local Responsibility Areas (LRA). Meanwhile, Kim Brown, Assistant Fire Marshall, OC Fire Authority (OCFA) is not responsible for the 71st, which includes portions of both eastern OC and western Riverside County, but within hours of my query, she delivered approximate numbers for the respective OC zones.

‘Helpful to this columnist, homeowner and worried insurance payer, there are an estimated 8,500 “parcels with structures” in OC’s SRA and 125,000 “parcels with structures” in LRA. Sanchez, currently challenged by Silverado’s SMRPD director JJ Galvez, doesn’t seem to know, but be confident

that your insurer, whether private or Fair Plan, will know and reflect it in your premium.

Hate mail

Hard to choose the most provocatively comical of dozens of rival Republican political mailers targeting canyon voters. I nominate two. One offers an obese Ken Calvert stuffing himself at a grotesque banquet (“He eats while you pay”) and the other, a smiling Young Kim pledging allegiance to Trump. The latter, “The 2026 MAGA Election Report” was paid for, and mailed, by a pro-Calvert PAC called Americans 4 Security, and the former by the California First Fund, which hired Alamo Intelligence LLA to send you “Corrupt Ken Calvert” flyers with spaghetti, fried chicken, ribs and bundles of cash on the menu. Locals might not have anticipated correspondence from, respectively, Plover, Wisconsin and Mountain Brook, Alabama, but no doubt appreciate the gesture. Not.

No-show show

In related election news, incumbent Sanchez declined to debate challenger Galvez, so he recently went solo to a live in-person and streaming audience via Instagram from the Temecula City Hall conference center.

Back outside!

Nearly six years after the Bond Fire destroyed Rancho Soñado, the OC Department of Education announces its return to the longtime Santa Ana Mountains home of Inside the Outdoors. Construction of a new environmental education center has begun, to include outdoor learning areas, an amphitheater, updated indoor classrooms, administrative spaces and improved access for students, buses and emergency vehicles. Completion of the facility, designed with environmentally sensitive construction and wildfire safety features, is anticipated in December 2027.



The Assistance League of Orange, in conjunction with the Orange Elks, celebrated the 250th birthday of the U.S. Navy, Oct. 15 at the weekly flag lowering ceremony at the Plaza. From left, Assistance League members Angela Fasbender, Cathy Hall and Barbara Walsh.



Orange High School JROTC cadets wrapped up their spring/summer activities logging over 3,500 hours of community service, providing 66 Color Guards, participating in 14 academic and athletic competitions, and taking part in over 20 field trips and camps centered on STEM, history, civics, leadership and team development. Their progress was also reflected in the classroom. JROTC cadets maintained higher GPAs than the student body overall and were more likely to pursue higher education, while juniors and seniors ranked within the school's top 20% for GPA and athletic participation. Taken together, these results tell the story of a year in which cadets continued to build on each experience, growing as students, teammates, leaders and engaged citizens

Tustin hosts the return of the OC Book Fair



The OC Book Fair brings authors, readers and sellers together.

By Guy Ball

The OC Book Fair returns to Old Town Tustin on Saturday, Nov. 14, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. for its third year. The event will close down El Camino Real between Main and Second Street for the activities.

This year's event was planned entirely by volunteers, with programming contributed by Southern California independent bookstores, and directly by authors, poets and community builders.

Numerous Southern California independent bookstores and publishers have shaped discussion panels and will bring their authors to the fair. Various vendors and community groups will have tables with products and information.

The result is a diverse lineup: Native scholars on the roots of American governance, Hawaiian authors on storytelling beyond the postcard, AAPI picture book creators, LGBTQ+ story times with the OC Equality Coalition and Pride at the Pier, California journalists on identity and belonging, a poet laureate panel, workshops lead by Breath of Fire Latina Theater Ensemble, and a full day of Super

Star Story Time for kids.

"Nobody is getting paid to do put this together. People do it because they love it," said Sam Robertson, founder and chair of the OC Book Fair. "Booksellers, authors, poets and neighbors all show up and build this together, and every year the circle gets bigger. That's what makes it feel like it belongs to everyone."

"At the OC Book Fair, we believe that everyone deserves to belong and thrive," Robertson noted. "We strive to ensure that all voices are valued and heard."

The community literary festival was founded in 2024 and chaired by Robertson, founder of Arvida Book Company, an independent book store on Main St. Arvida is also a member of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library Project.

The fair offers wheelchair-accessible spaces, live captions, reserved front row seating, large print and plain text programs, sensory-friendly story time, quiet spaces for kids and an Accessibility Information Booth with volunteers to help anyone who needs it.

For more information, visit theocbookfair.org.

TUSD Seniors honored as Young Women of the Month



Tatiana Pena

The Tustin Area Woman's Club recognized seniors from Tustin Unified High Schools, naming them Young Women of the Month at its October general meeting.

Tatiana Pena from Foothill High School is involved in Associated Student Body as treasurer, was junior class president, and Pep and Spirit commissioner. She is currently on the Foothill Dance Team competing at the national level, placing 2nd in Pom and Team Performance last February in Orlando, Florida. She is the president of the Spanish Honor Society Chapter and has volunteered over 300 hours in the community. Pena plans to dance competitively at the collegiate level while majoring in management and entrepreneurship.



Emily Vandal

Emily Vandal is an Advanced Placement and Honors student at Tustin High School, as well as a student at Irvine Valley College. She participates in the T-Tech program, is one of only four female students in the class, and has earned a certification in 3D printing and modeling. Vandal is an avid soccer player competing on two club teams, and is the captain of the Tustin High School team for the second year. She plans to major in communication or kinesiology, and is applying to the University of California and California State University campuses.

Giselle Loony from Beckman High School and Hannah Nguyen from Legacy Magnet Academy were also honored.

VPWL to feature firefighter

Villa Park Women's League will host its second General Meeting of 2026 on Thursday, Nov. 19 from 6 to 7:30 p.m. at Villa Park City Hall Community Room. The meeting features Firefighter Catie Casciari.

Catie Casciari is a veteran firefighter who has served with the San Diego Fire-Rescue Department since 2007. Raised in Villa Park, she attended Mater Dei High School and later studied at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo.

Before joining San Diego Fire-Rescue, she worked for the Pismo Beach Fire Department and served three Wildland Seasons with CAL

FIRE.

She is also involved with Women in Fire, where she has served as a functional trustee and supported training, professional development, and greater representation for women in fire and emergency services.

She helped represent San Diego Fire-Rescue during the Women in Fire 2024 International Conference in San Diego.

VPWL invites Villa Park female residents to join our Circle of Friendship with low annual dues. VPWL.org/membership for more information.

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All’s fair in Silverado Canyon

The annual Silverado Country Fair and Folk Festival, held Oct. 10 and 11 at the Silverado Community Center, played on despite off and on rainy weather, with a hardy crew of artisans, musicians, cooks, volunteers, costumed constituents and adventurous visitors.



Mary Schreiber holds down the fire safe booth, offering tips to tame wildfire threats.



Passing Fancies bluegrass band enlivens the fairgrounds atmosphere.



Gerin Klein and Mindy Nokes greet visitors with old time flair.



Madi and Guy Atwood keep the peace.



Young miners pan for precious stones.

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Kelsey Ulmer, parent and Silverado Children’s Center volunteer, explains the center’s nature programs.

Villa Park fire station to receive new engine

Villa Park Fire Station 23 will receive a brand new KME fire engine on Tuesday, Dec. 8, introduced via a ritual dating back to the 1880s. In those days teams of horses pulling the fire wagon were unable to back up into the station. Firefighters, therefore, had to push the apparatus into the station. Since then, this push-in ceremony is revived every time a new fire apparatus is welcomed to a station. The ritual is sometimes paired with a “wet down” (a baptism of sorts) by the outgoing rig prior to

the push-in. This December, the old engine 23, bought 20 years ago, will be removed from the station and the new Engine 23 “pushed in” by the Villa Park City Council and Orange County Fire Authority (OCFA) personnel. The public is invited to the ceremony. There will be food and drink provided by private donations, and gifts for Station 23 personnel donated by locals. There will also be photo opportunities during and after the push-in.

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OUSD reports strong academic year

By Diana Meza

Orange Unified School District is celebrating a season of academic milestones that include its strongest California School Dashboard results to date, a second consecutive year as a California Honor Roll Star District, and national research showing OUSD students are learning faster than students in most districts across the country.

According to the 2026 California School Dashboard, released by the California Department of Education on Oct. 15, seven of OUSD's eight state indicators are now at green or blue, the two highest performance levels. This is the district's strongest Dashboard since it launched in 2017. For the first time, every academic indicator is green, including English language arts, math, science, English Learner Progress, and College/Career Readiness. Math and English Learner Progress each rose from yellow to green, and graduation and suspension rates remain blue, the highest level.

While chronic absenteeism remains at yellow, OUSD's rate has dropped from 22.5% in 2021–22 to 11.3%. This year, the district was also named a California Model School District by the State School Attendance Review Board, one of only 13 districts recognized statewide.

"These results reflect what's possible when an entire community comes together for our children," said Superintendent Rachel H. Monárrez. "Our educators, classified staff, leaders and families have shown remarkable dedication, and our scholars continue to shine. We're proud of this progress, and we remain committed to helping every child learn and grow."

OUSD has also been named a 2026 California Honor Roll Star District by Educational Results Partnership for the second consecutive year. The Honor Roll recognizes districts that consistently outperform their

peers in English language arts and math across every student group and grade level, based on three years of state assessment results. In addition, 14 OUSD schools were named 2026 California Honor Roll Schools. Star Schools include Cerro Villa Middle, Chapman Hills Elementary, Fletcher Mandarin Language & GATE Academy, Jordan Academy of Language and Computer Science, Linda Vista Elementary, McPherson Magnet, Palmyra GATE Magnet, Santiago Middle, Serrano Elementary, and West Orange Elementary. Scholar Schools include Anaheim Hills Elementary, Crescent Elementary, Nohl Canyon Elementary, and Panorama Elementary.

National research reflects this momentum. According to a report from the Educational Opportunity Project at Stanford University and the Education Scorecard at Harvard University, OUSD students in grades 3–8 learned an average of 1.15 grade levels per year from 2022 to 2025, a faster rate than 86% of school districts nationwide. During the same period, OUSD students scored nearly half a grade level above the 2019 national average in math and reading combined, and their scores improved faster than the California average.

"Our students earned these results through their hard work, curiosity, and determination, and on behalf of the Board of Education, I want to congratulate them and thank every member of Team OUSD who supports them," said Board President Dr. Stephen Glass. "Our strongest Dashboard to date, statewide recognition, and national data all show that our focus on achievement, attendance, and the whole child is making an impact. We also know there is more work ahead, especially continuing to reduce chronic absenteeism and making sure our multilingual learners and students with disabilities share fully in this progress."

Dia de los Muertos celebrated at OC FamilySearch Center



The fifth annual Dia de los Muertos Celebration of the Family will be held on Saturday, Nov. 7 at the Orange County FamilySearch Center at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 675 S. Yorba.

The celebration takes place between 4 and 8 p.m., and will honor the dead with cultural

activities including music, folkloric dancing, and calaveras skeleton face painting. The event is free; authentic Mexican food will be available for purchase.

Visitors who would like to create chalk paintings or learn more about the event, may contact nielsenkathie@gmail.com.

VP celebrates National Night Out



The OC Sheriff Department K-9s were popular with all ages at the National Night Out celebration.

Villa Park's National Night Out 2026 attracted a large, enthusiastic audience of residents and families.

The K-9s were a favorite, as were the fire trucks and Sheriff's emergency vehicles.

Young people in attendance signed a big "thank you" board to show their appreciation for the services of the Orange County Sheriff's Department to keep the city safe and secure.

In other activities, new participants were added to the Villa Park Neighborhood Watch email network. The network is a private communication system that alerts residents of issues and events that may affect them. It also enables citizens to report safety concerns and connects them with their neighbors.

Neighbors looking out for neighbors helps keep Villa Park's crime rate low.

All residents are encouraged to enroll in the program on the city website, villapark.org, or by sending their email address to: villaparknw@gmail.com.

City residents were also reminded of the "Do Not Solicit" list, and many signed into the program. It, too, can be accessed via villapark.org.

Solicitors who wish to contact residents of Villa Park must first register and obtain a license at City Hall. At that time, they are given a list of addresses that they may not contact.

Solicitors who violate that provision will, if reported, be removed. This is a city-wide provision that preserves the privacy of residents who are on the list. It is also a safety feature to prevent contact and targeting by potential burglars or thieves masquerading as sales, campaign or philanthropic representatives.

Crescendo presents Hollywood's Golden Age



The Crescendo Guild of Segerstrom Center for the Arts features pianist Greg Schreiner's "Hollywood Revisited," a toast to film history as represented by 33 glamorous costumes, at its Nov. 19 Celebrity Speaker series.

The show highlights the glamour and glitz of the industry's Golden Age and features, among others, the Cleopatra costume worn by Elizabeth Taylor.

The artistry begins at 10 a.m. at the Bowers Museum Norma Kershaw Auditorium, 2002 N. Main Street. Tickets are \$45. Bowers members may buy a ticket for \$35. For ticket information contact Barbara Hagan at (714) 272-1134, or crescendoticketsbowers@gmail.com. Reserved tickets and additional tickets may be purchased at the door. Parking is \$7.

Orange Elks give back to the community



The Orange Elks visited the Tustin Veterans Outpost to prepare homemade tomato bisque and homemade bell pepper soup with ham and grilled cheese sandwiches for dinner. In addition to the meal, the Elks provided pumpkins and pumpkin decorating items for the kids. The Tustin Veterans Outpost offers transitional housing and veteran-specific services to homeless veterans and their families.



Doug Wells prepares to give blood

The Orange Elks support the American Red Cross by hosting blood drives two times each year. Lodge members, Jason and Diane Wilkerson, coordinate the events. At this most recent blood drive, held at the Old Towne Orange Lodge, 42 people donated 44 units.

Tustin hosts Veterans Day Celebration and Car Show



By Guy Ball

The City of Tustin will be hosting a family-friendly Veterans Day Celebration and Car Show honoring those who served, on Saturday, Nov. 7, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the city's Veterans Sports Park located at 1645 Valencia Blvd. The event is free and will include a flag ceremony, live music, a large car show, and various vendor booths.



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OCWD reports record capture of 18 billion gallons of water

The Orange County Water District (OCWD) and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) captured a historic 18.1 billion gallons of water at Prado Dam between July 2025 and June 2026, marking the highest stormwater capture total since the 1940s. The amount is enough to supply more than 110,000 households for one year and is valued at more than \$55 million.

The record reflects the benefits of Forecast Informed Reservoir Operations (FIRO), which uses advanced weather forecasting to better track atmospheric rivers and allows more water to be stored behind Prado Dam while maintaining flood protection. Close coordination between USACE and OCWD on the timing of releases helped create room for additional incoming storms and maximize every opportunity to capture stormwater for groundwater recharge.

"This all-time high for stormwater capture is a major win for Orange County's water supply and demonstrates what can be achieved through innovation and strong partnerships," said OCWD President Denis R. Bilodeau, "FIRO is helping us store more local stormwater using the infrastructure already in place without having to build new facilities, to strengthen water reliability for the communities we serve."

Water captured at Prado Dam is released downstream to OCWD's recharge facilities in Anaheim and Orange, where it replenishes the Orange County Groundwater Basin. The basin provides approximately 85% of the drinking water supply for 2.5 million people in north and central Orange County. During fiscal year 2025-26, Santa Ana River flows, including captured stormwater, accounted for approximately 60% of OCWD's groundwater recharge.

Orange Elks aid OC Food Bank



James and Vicki Chaisson

Elks James and Vicki Chaisson organized a group of volunteers to pack boxes of food that will be distributed to seniors at the Orange County Food Bank. A total of 25 Orange Elks, Antlers (teen Elks) and friends packed close to 650 boxes.

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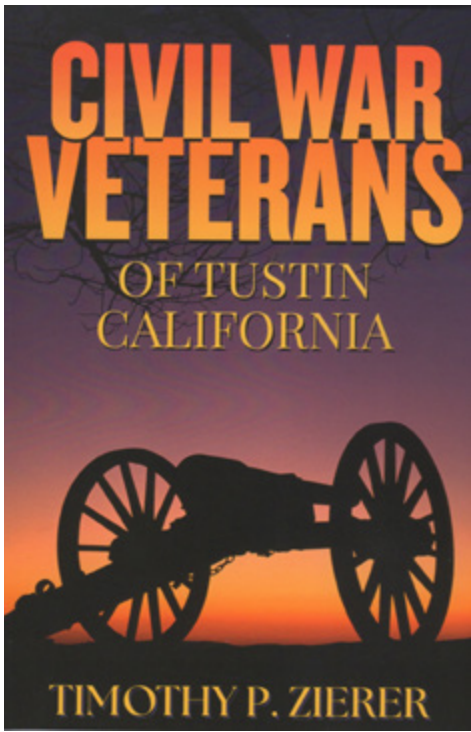
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OC Historical Society hosts local authors



By Guy Ball

Authors Night 2026 will be hosted by the Orange County Historical Society, on Thursday, Nov. 12.

Six OC authors will discuss their books, which span a wide array of local historical topics, from theme parks to the Civil War, from art in the barrios to civic planning in Irvine, and from early pioneers to the pioneers of our current era.

The speakers

Ken Stack, author of Stack’s Liberty Ranch Collection.

Theme-park historian Ken Stack has rescued and restored important artifacts relating to

theme parks for more than sixty years. His current book series shares previously unpublished photographs of many of Southern California’s favorite amusement/ theme parks and attractions, along with the stories behind them. His latest volume features Universal Studios Hollywood during the 1960s and 1970s, with additional chapters on Lion Country Safari, the Newport Harbor Buffalo Ranch, and Jungland.

Rosemary Vasquez Tuthill, author of The Boy Who Painted the Barrio.

This nonfiction illustrated biography of noted local artist and muralist Emigdio Vasquez combines family history, personal

memories, historical research, and his artwork. It follows the young boy who grew up in the Cypress Street Barrio in Orange and traces the experiences that shaped him into an artist.

It also tells a larger story about Orange and OC during a period of considerable social and cultural change.

Timothy Zierer, author of Civil War Veterans of Tustin.

Zierer’s book contains profiles of 33 men, Union and Confederate, who served in the war and later made Tustin their home. These future Tustin residents served in almost every major battle of the war. After arriving in Tustin many of these veterans became prominent citizens of the young town and produced the first treasurer of Orange County, a state assemblyman, a country supervisor, a postmaster, and the first constable of Tustin.

Greer Wylder, author of Born in OC: The Artists, Entrepreneurs & Visionaries of Orange County.

This inspiring collection features interviews with fifty of Orange County’s most remarkable individuals whose influence and dedication have uniquely and meaningfully shaped the community. From philanthropists and entrepreneurs to artists and chefs, “Born in OC” offers an intimate glimpse into the lives of the people who have left an indelible mark on the county.

Michael Stockstill, author of Irvine Ranch Fulfilling the Vision 1977-

2025.

This interesting history tells the story of the Irvine Company’s development under the ownership of Donald Bren.

Significant elements also include: Joan Irvine Smith’s transition to an equestrian owner and plein-air art collector; development of the Newport Coast; and the transformation of El Toro Marine Corps Air Station into the Great Park.

The maturing of UC Irvine and its fight over a new hospital is also featured, along with many details on Irvine’s development into a city of 300,000 people.

Colleen Fliedner, author of Fascinating True Tales from Old California.

For over four centuries, California has been an ever-changing landscape of innovation and revolution, triumph and tragedy. Colleen mines the history of the Golden State to collect more than fifty stories of famous and infamous Californians from 1542 to 1940. For many, California was a place to strike it rich. Others sought freedom and a new beginning, including Chinese immigrants and African Americans like Biddy Mason.

The meeting will be held at Trinity Episcopal Church, 2400 N. Canal St., starting at 7:30 p.m.

Some authors will also bring copies of their previous books to sign and sell. The public is welcome. Attendance is free for OCHS members or a \$5 donation for non-members.

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