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A Monthly Community Newspaper

SEPTEMBER 2025

## Historic Killefer schoolhouse reborn as institute for ground-breaking research

By Tina Richards

The historic Killefer School, one of the first schools in California and the first in Orange County to desegregate, has been reborn as Chapman University's Daniel C. Struppa Research Park, a leading-edge facility focused on advancing quantum science.

The Aug. 5 dedication of the new research center was the culmination of a five-year project to renovate the schoolhouse for office and lecture space, and construct highly specialized research labs to explore superconductor materials and quantum optics. Chapman invested more than \$18 million into the project.

The Killefer School, named for Lydia D. Killefer, a pioneering teacher who became its first principal, was built in 1931. Its Spanish colonial architecture and voluntary desegregation in 1944 earned it a listing on the National Register of Historic Places. It was part of the Orange Unified School District until it was closed in 1980. It was subsequently used by Santiago Canyon College until the early 2000s, and then remained vacant for the next two decades.

Orange Unified declared it surplus property in 2014, and it was sold to a developer who wanted to build multi-story student housing on the site. That project was ultimately abandoned as were several others that couldn't meet the preservation standards for the historic building and still realize a profit.

Chapman University was not the highest bidder, but following

the demise of the proposed housing developments, OUSD accepted its \$3.7 million bid in 2020. Chapman promised to renovate the by-now dilapidated and graffiti-ridden schoolhouse, respect its historic status, provide community park space and complement the site with a state-of-the-art research facility.

During opening remarks at the dedication, Vice President of Campus Planning Collette Creppell noted that "64% of the windows were broken, but the building's bones were good and the vision was solid."

Project architects retained much of the building's original hardware, including the flag pole, weather vane, window latches and the school bell, which can still be rung. The original flooring was renovated; many of the chalkboards were repurposed as walls and some positioned to retain their intent, i.e., to be used as chalkboards. The lobby has been fully restored and houses a dedicated exhibition. Outdoor areas have been enhanced to promote community connection and accessibility. A semi-public community room is available for public use.

The research labs are still being furnished with specialized equipment to aid scientists in nano-scale, non-chemical emitting research. Chapman has attracted top researchers from around the world to lead post-doctoral fellows and doctoral students in the study of quantum theory. Some equipment has been installed, set up and calibrated, and work has begun.



Chapman University President Elect Matt Parlow and President Danielle Struppa, the namesake of the new Institute for Quantum Studies unveil the portrait of Struppa, which now hangs near the entrance of the refurbished Killefer schoolhouse. See photos, page 6

## Orange Council aims to short-circuit perceived DRC roadblock

By Tina Richards

A grim financial report delivered to the Orange City Council in July predicted, as an inevitable scenario, that the city would be bankrupt in three years.

Grant Thornton Advisors, LLC, was hired by the city to produce a budget risk assessment and provide economic advice. Its findings, though harsher than expected, were in keeping with the city's own internal audits and organizational assessments. Orange has more financial obligations than revenue.

The firm noted that, among many factors, Orange was not "business friendly," and had not sufficiently invested in economic development for a decade or more. It specifically called out the city's Design Review Committee (DRC) as an impediment to new business. "The perception," a Grant Thornton representative said, "is that it's difficult to do business here."

### Low-hanging fruit

The agenda for the Aug. 12 Orange City Council meeting included two "discussion" items related to the budget outlook. The first concerned Grant Thornton's recommendations; the second, revisions to the Design Review Committee ordinance.

Narrowing the scope of the latter is, apparently, the city's short-term solution to creating a business-friendly environment. While Orange is aggressively focused on economic development, these efforts won't bear immediate results. The perceived DRC "roadblock" can be eliminated in 60 days.

The independent Design Review Committee was created in the 1970s to ensure that all new development met city standards. With the establishment of Old

Towne as a nationally recognized historic district, it was the DRC that made sure additional, stricter preservation requirements were met.

### Focus on preservation

Over the past 10 years, the DRC has come under fire for "slowing the approval process" for development projects that do not impact historical districts. There have been calls to disband it entirely or at least narrow its scope to historic preservation only.

Last year the Old Towne Preservation Association and Orange Legacy Alliance volunteered to help the city redefine the DRC as a "heritage commission" focused on historic resources, write a preservation ordinance to support that, and "sort out" the oversight of Mills Act contracts.

An agreement was signed in November. The volunteer group submitted a draft preservation ordinance to city staff in March and have been meeting regularly with staff and Mayor Dan Slater since then.

With the finish line in sight, volunteers were shocked when the DRC "discussion item" appeared on the council agenda. Maryanne Skorpanich, chair of the DRC and leading the volunteer preservation effort, asked why the council was not allowing time for the process to continue. "A short-term ordinance will take away from the long term," she said. "Why don't you just put a moratorium on non-historic properties until the preservation ordinance is finalized?"

"You made a promise to the community," OPA President Rob Boice reminded the council. "We produced an ordinance. It was seen by staff. The ordinance had everything you wanted in it."

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## NEWS INSIDE

### A HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Community organizations agree to take on City of Orange's traditional holiday events, cut from the calendar by budget woes.

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### REMEMBER THEIR NAMES

The traveling replica of the Vietnam War Memorial is coming to Grijalva Park next month.

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### RING OF FIRE

New state fire risk map shows the threat to Villa Park has shrunk.

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### PEDAL PUSHER

Octogenarian cyclist continues to ride for fun and compete to meet the challenge.

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### SEVENTH INNING STRETCH

Community Sports took the summer off. With school back in session and high school athletes back in play, the column will return next month.

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## It's déjà vu for North Tustin ZIP Code

Once again, the House of Representatives passed a bipartisan bill to direct the United States Postal Service (USPS) to designate single, unique ZIP codes for certain communities, including North Tustin.

U.S. Representative Young Kim (CA-40) cosponsored HR 3095, passed by the house July 21, joining 33 other representatives seeking ZIP codes for 74 communities across the nation, including five others in California. Kim had cosponsored a similar bill last year, which passed the house but died in the Senate. HR 3095 is now awaiting Senate approval before it can become law. The Senate read the bill, July 22, and referred it to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

"Our North Tustin community has been a pillar of Orange County, but its status as an unincorporated area causes confusion for taxes and USPS," Kim said. "A unique ZIP code would provide certainty for residents who have called North Tustin home for decades. I am hopeful we can get this through the finish line for our

community."

"I am pleased to see this ZIP code change moving ahead and thank Congresswoman Kim for working with my office to prioritize this issue facing our shared constituency," said Third District Orange County Supervisor Don Wagner, "For far too long, our constituents in North Tustin have been subjected to excess local taxes solely because of their ZIP code. They never voted for the taxes, raising a constitutional concern of taxation without representation. I appreciate Congresswoman Kim's persistent work to solve this problem through legislation."

"The residents of North Tustin are grateful to Congresswoman Young Kim for co-sponsoring a bill that will create a unique ZIP code for North Tustin. Until 1996, North Tustin had a unique ZIP code. Expanding the area of the ZIP code into neighboring communities created many problems and confusion. We really applaud our Congresswoman for supporting our community," said Richard Nelson, president, Foothill Communities Association.



## Residential ball court banished

By Carrie Graham

One Villa Park resident's life is about to get a little quieter after the city council denied his permit request for a pickleball court on his property.

Pickleball, a net sport similar to tennis, has seen a marked increase in interest over the past few years. Unlike tennis, pickleball uses a white plastic ball similar to a whiffle ball.

The homeowner, Dominic Milan, was hoping to secure a conditional use permit for the recreational court constructed on his property on Old Lamplighter Lane. However, city council had two complaints: for noise, and an overall disregard for the process. He had built the court without a city permit, and was now asking for one after the fact.

A report prepared by city staff asserts that the average pickleball court has an ambient noise level of around 60 decibels within 100 feet of the court, and up to 70 decibels when a ball makes contact with the paddle. Both exceed the city ordinances that limit residential noise to 55 decibels between the hours of 7 a.m. and 10 p.m., and 50 decibels overnight.

Lance Friedman, a resident living within a 300-foot radius of the court, said that he and other neighbors didn't really mind the noise, it was the lighting that was a problem. The court featured six 20-foot poles topped with LED lights, three along the east side of the court and three on the west.

"I live two houses north of the pickleball court," Friedman said. "We don't have a problem with the court. It's the lights, because the resident plays way past 10

p.m. and those lights are on."

While acknowledging the potential for noise, Milan refuted that the lights were a nuisance.

"The lights were actually removed over a month ago," he said. "All of them. We have no lights on there." He also pointed out that without lights, he can't play after sundown anymore, so late night sound and light are no longer an issue.

Milan's points were moot though. While Mayor Nicol Jones and Councilmember Crystal Miles had to recuse themselves due to the proximity of their own homes to the court, the three remaining members were in agreement: that's just not how things are done in Villa Park.

"There's the Villa Park way of doing things, and then there's the other way of doing things," advised Councilmember Robert Frackelton. "The Villa Park way of doing things is to come to city staff, either yourself or your contractor, and ask, 'can I do this?' Whether it's building an ADU, or a court, or a second story, or whatever."

City staff said they knew nothing about the court until after it was completed, he added, and "we're now trying to work backwards to fix what was already there."

Councilman Kelly McBride shared Frackelton's sentiments. "I think there's been a history of disregarding the neighbors and the city ordinances for how we build in Villa Park, so I'm concerned if we give this approval, we're going to be revisiting complaints."

Frackelton, McBride and Mayor Pro Tem Jordan Wu voted to deny Milan's permit.

## Nonprofits agree to produce and finance city of Orange traditional holiday celebrations

By Tina Richards

With the City of Orange facing a major budget deficit, it was forced to abandon its sponsorship of annual holiday celebrations, that, to some, defined the city's connection with its residents. In making the decision to forego Treats in the Streets, The Tree Lighting Ceremony and Third of July fireworks, the city council expressed the hope that a local foundation or nonprofit would agree to take over those events.

For Treats in the Streets and the Tree Lighting Ceremony, that wish has come true. The Orange International Street Fair, Inc. (OISF), has signed an agreement with the city to take over responsibility for the fall and winter celebrations. OISF, which produces the annual International Street Fair held in Old Towne Orange, reached an agreement with the city to take over Treats in the Streets last April.

In May, it advised the city that it was prepared to take on the Tree Lighting as well. The April agreement was subsequently amended to include the December celebration and that restated agreement was approved by a unanimous vote of the city council, Aug. 12.

Last year, Treats in the Streets was saved from the budget axe by the Old Towne Preservation Association, led by Brandy Romero, who launched a fundraising campaign to pay for it. Those efforts not only allowed the event to continue, but generated a surplus. That \$9,563 was presented to OISF to help with this October's candyfest.

The annual Tree Lighting at the Orange Plaza, held on the first Sunday in December, also continued last year, despite the budget cuts. The event's long-time centerpiece, the Orange Master Chorale, led by Director Michael Short, agreed to take on full responsibility for the 2024 ceremony.

While OISF will produce the fair going forward, the Orange council insisted that the tradition established by the Master Chorale and Michael Short remain intact. Adam Feliz, OISF president, assured the council that he and Short had already had that discussion and agreed that the Chorale would remain a central contributor to the event.

Under the agreement, OISF will reimburse the city for actual costs (police, fire, staff time); the Plaza will close to vehicular traffic at 2 a.m.; the ceremony will commence at 5:15 p.m. and end

at 7 p.m. The Plaza is expected to reopen to traffic at midnight.

The organizers intend to include a Christmas Market at this year's event, with holiday crafts and food vendors onsite beginning at 10 a.m. There was some discussion at the council meeting regarding the sale of alcohol at the Christmas Market, but whether it becomes part of the festivities or not remains up in the air.

Although not on the city's chopping block, the Orange May Parade will be reinstated next year under the auspices of the Orange Chamber of Commerce Foundation. The May Parade was held every year from 1933 to 1991 to mark the beginning of the Valencia orange packing season. It was reestablished in 2019 by the Orange Chamber of Commerce, which organized and financed the parade until this year. The 2025 parade was cancelled because the original production agreement ended Dec. 31, 2024 and it was not immediately renewed.

The new agreement, also approved by the city council Aug. 12, gives the Orange Chamber of Commerce Foundation the exclusive right to produce the parade until Dec. 31, 2030. It will reimburse the city for all associated costs.

## The Wall That Heals coming to Orange

A traveling, three-quarter scale replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, known as The Wall That Heals, is scheduled to be in Orange, from Oct. 2-5. The exhibit will be located at Grijalva Park and is free and open to the public 24 hours a day.

The Wall That Heals honors the more than three million Americans who served in the U.S. Armed Forces during the Vietnam War and bears the names of the 58,281 men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice. Alongside the Wall is a mobile Education Center, which tells the story of the Vietnam War and the original memorial. The center also features several special displays, including Hometown Heroes, which highlights local service members listed on the Wall; the In Memory Honor Roll, which honors Vietnam veterans from California who have since passed away; the Gold Star Bike, a tribute to mothers who lost sons in the war; and a display of items left at the original memorial in Washington, D.C.

Doug Redding, president of The Wall That Heals Orange - 2025, reports that he is honored to bring the exhibit to Orange, a community that "truly understands the meaning of service, sacrifice and remembrance." He thanked the dedicated team of volunteers who worked tirelessly to bring the Wall to the community: Veterans Susan Wood, CFO; Chris Locke, executive director; Michael Carter, secretary; and



The Wall That Heals team members are, from left, John Schutz, escort director; Susan Wood, CFO; Diana Trujillo, events director; Chris Locke, executive director; Dana Redding, executive assistant; Doug Redding, president.

John Schutz, escort director, as well as Orange residents Dana Redding and Diana Trujillo. Redding also noted that the exhibit offers a "powerful opportunity for healing and connection."

The event begins on Tuesday, Sept. 30, with an honorary escort procession hosted by American Legion Posts 328 and 132. Mo-

torcycle riders will travel from Norco to Grijalva Park and will be joined by the City of Orange Fire Department's Hook and Ladder truck, which will be flying a large American flag. The public is encouraged to welcome the riders along the route.

The official opening ceremony will be on Thursday, Oct. 2. The Wall will remain accessible to visitors 24/7 until the closing ceremony on Sunday, Oct. 5, at 1:30 p.m.

The Wall That Heals Orange - 2025 is a 501(c)(3) composed of local veterans and volunteers. The national tour is sponsored by USAA, with additional support from the Truckload Carriers Association and Blue Beacon. For more information, visit TheWallThatHealsOrange-2025.org.



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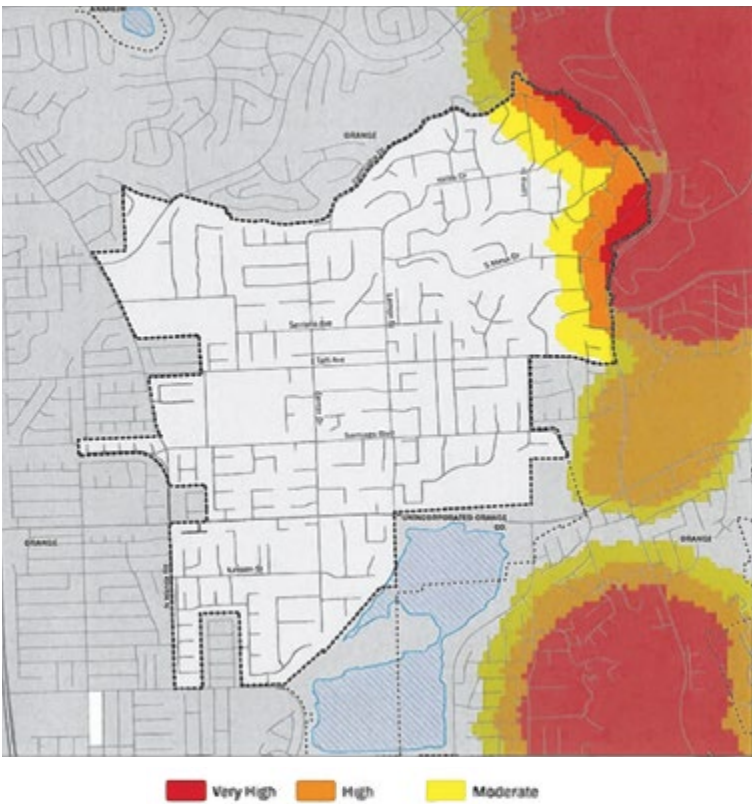
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Villa Park fire risk lessens



By Carrie Graham

Villa Park saw a 51% reduction in areas at heightened risk of wildfires per a recent rework of CalFire maps, the first since 2011. The city was one of few to see an overall reduction instead of an increase, with 165 addresses moving to less severe designations.

The maps, which indicate areas of moderate, high and very high wildfire risk zones, are largely used to dictate fire safety standards for new construction and certain landscaping requirements. Insurance companies use a separate algorithm for determining rates. A property reclassified as being in a higher risk zone, won't necessarily see a rate increase.

The new map was presented at the July Villa Park City Council meeting by City Manager Steve Franks.

"This map doesn't set insurance rates," Franks explained. "The insurance companies have their own algorithms that they use to set rates. This is a completely separate thing pertaining to fire prevention."

Chief Kevin Fetterman with the Orange County Fire Authority was on hand to answer questions. Asked about the impact on residents, he said most of the changes would apply to those seeking permits for new construction.

"There's a number of changes, including required defensible space, home hardening for new construction, but not for existing construction," Fetterman said. "With very high-risk areas, there's a notification requirement when you sell your home. I think it's worth pointing out that Villa Park, unlike many other communities, had a decrease in acreage in every category and structures that were impacted in every category. That is not normal, so that's a good attribute for the city,"

Less risk, no reward

It's worth noting that although areas where fire risk increased will be subject to more stringent construction guidelines, those that moved to a less severe designation are locked in to their existing requirements.

However, residents don't have to navigate the changes alone. OCFA offers free inspections to help homeowners identify fire risks on their property, from brush clearance distances to home ventilation at risk of collecting airborne embers.

But as promising as the reduc-

tion in at-risk acreage is, Councilwoman Crystal Miles cautioned residents that the city, as a whole, is still in a high-risk area.

"While this is great news that a lot of the city has left the high fire severity zones, our electrical circuit still is in that high fire severity zone," she said. "I want residents to realize that if we have to go through public safety power shutoffs because of high fire danger, it's about the circuit."

Residents concerned about risks on their property can visit OCFA's website, where they have a self assessment tool, as well as the option to request an in-person inspection. Those whose addresses have been reclassified to a higher severity zone will be notified by either the city or OCFA once the changes are finalized.

Acrylic artist featured

The Orange Art Association will present Fernando Perez at its Monday, Sept. 8 meeting. Perez will demonstrate the use of acrylics, beginning at 7:30 p.m. The meeting will be held at the Community of Christ Church, 395 S. Tustin St. The public is invited to attend. For information contact Pat at (714) 538-8069.

It's a wrap for Kiwanis!



Key Club members served food at the Kiwanis Club booth during the Summer Concert Series at Hart Park.

By Randy Garrell

The Kiwanis Club of Orange's final concert in the Hart Park summer concert season was held August 6. It was a rousing success, as attendance increased at each of the five shows throughout the summer.

Not only was the concert a rousing success in terms of community support, but it was also a financial success. Putting on a concert in the park is an expensive endeavor, and the Kiwanis was concerned about the financial side of the event. Bands and

sound guys have to be paid; plus, there is considerable expense for food, advertising and other items. We are happy to report that the Kiwanis Club of Orange came out "in the black," thanks to the many sponsors that generously donated: Supervisor Vicente Sarmiento, Edward Jones, Orange International Street Fair, Chapman University, Santiago Canyon College, Raising Cane's, The Kickin' Crab, 1886 Brewing Company, Smoqued California BBQ, Finney's Crafthouse, Woody's Diner, Seven Gables Realty and Streamliner Diner.

In addition, donations from the crowd were also very significant. Members of the Key Club, the high school service organization that is part of the Kiwanis, circulated through the crowd with baskets that came back full of cash. Your generosity was overwhelming – thank you, Orange!

Key Club members from Orange, El Modena, Orange Lutheran and Villa Park High Schools were instrumental in assisting with the food service by setting up, serving and helping clean at the end of the night. They worked hard, and each week more students came to help.

That money raised will be returned to the Orange community, with funds going toward more community events, as well as scholarships for local high school seniors.

As an all-volunteer organization, the dedication of the Kiwanis of Orange members was crucial to the success of the concert series. They are already working with the City of Orange to make the 2026 concert series even better.

Orange Elks voted Best Non-Profit in Orange



Left to right are Elks Gary Doeberiner, Lynn Butler, Julie Sutton, Sean and Renee Chavarria, Salina Miller, Julie Brown, Jennifer and Kelley Martinez, Tracey Nowakowski, Janine Strom and Clark Balvanz

By Bill Neessen

The Orange Elks Lodge #1475 was recognized and honored twice for supporting the community, veterans, youth and its community partners!

The Lodge was recognized by the Orange Chamber of Commerce and received the Best of Orange Award in the Association/Non-Profit Organizations category. This award was voted on by the citizens of Orange.

That honor followed the All-American Lodge award, given to Lodge #1475 at the Elks Grand Lodge Convention.

Congratulations Orange Elks!



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Guest Commentaries

Is it good for all concerned?

By Adrienne Gladson

During its first meeting since the release of the Grant Thornton Report in July, the Orange City Council began addressing our city’s serious economic challenges. Councilmembers emphasized the importance of making decisions based on sound data. Yet, in the same meeting, Aug. 12, a vote was taken to prepare an ordinance stripping the Design Review Committee (DRC) of its citywide oversight for commercial projects.

This decision rests on a repeated narrative—that the DRC is the chief barrier to economic development in Orange. We have been told that “the city is too tough of a place to do business” and that the DRC holds projects hostage “for years.” These claims are not supported by the record. Abandoning that message would be wise.

The DRC, originally created in 1974, has played an important role in ensuring quality design citywide. We wanted a high bar with subject matter experts

looking at it with no ties to the applicant. In the 1980s and 1990s, its role expanded to include historic properties, reflecting the community’s demand for historic preservation and keeping every treasured building. The DRC’s purpose is not to obstruct development, but to ensure that projects enhance the charm, beauty and livability of our city—for residents, business owners, and visitors alike.

Of course, refining the DRC’s work is appropriate. But constructive improvements must involve consultation with past and present DRC members who carry decades of “lessons learned.” Scapegoating the DRC for every delay in the entitlement process is misleading. Many factors outside the committee’s control slow down projects: incomplete submittals, missing basic requirements, General Plan and zoning noncompliance, legal challenges, shifting business plans, applicant delays, market conditions and staff shortages.

Consider the four examples cited during council’s discussion:

- A fast-food restaurant on South Main Street: This application was filed in 2017. The DRC first heard it in 2019, approved it in December, and it cleared the Planning Commission and Council by February 2020. Three years. The real delay stemmed from General Plan and zoning conflicts and applicant modifications—not the DRC.
- A regional shipping terminal on West Struck Avenue submitted in 2020: This project took about three years from start to approval. Nearly a year was spent in Staff Review Committee (SRC) before the DRC ever saw it. The DRC reviewed it once in late 2021, offered a continuance to address a 75% shortfall in landscaping, then approved it in early 2022. Planning Commission and Council approvals came later in 2023. (The Staff Review Committee consists of representatives from various city departments.)
- A dental office on West Chapman Avenue: After five Staff Review Committee submittals/resubmittals in 2016, the DRC

reviewed the project in 2017. It noted a number of parking, circulation and viability deficiencies. The project came back to the DRC in 2018, with the deficiencies unaddressed. The applicant, at that time, requested a denial so the decision could be appealed to the Planning Commission. The denial was given. The Planning Commission subsequently approved it in 2018, but that project never proceeded.

• Several Tustin Street restaurants: A councilmember claimed these were unfairly held to historic preservation standards. Yet no such applications exist in city records.

These cases show that the DRC’s review time is measured in months, not years, and usually in response to valid zoning or code concerns. To suggest otherwise misrepresents the facts.

As our city faces difficult fiscal realities, residents deserve decision-making rooted in truth and facts. If the DRC is to be reformed, let it be through honest evaluation—not by repeating

myths that undermine credibility.

The question council should ask is simple: Is it good for all concerned? Weakening design oversight may create short-term conveniences for a few applicants, but it risks long-term costs to the character, economy, sustainability and livability of our city. Plus, will it position us to successfully revitalize our commercially zoned sites for “radical economic development,” as recommended by the Grant Thornton study? Remarkably, the same role and high bar established for the DRC in 1974.

Now is the time for careful aiming before firing—making decisions guided by facts, not blaming those only doing what we thought you wanted us to do. That is the responsible course for a city that values both its economic health and future.

*Adrienne Gladson, AICP, is a member of the Design Review Committee, previously serving on the Planning Commission 2011-18 and DRC 2007-11.*

RSCCD’s board president fails to discuss vendor conflicts ahead of \$22M decision

By Barry Resnick

If your financial institution withheld money that rightfully belonged to you, would you continue doing business with them?

For most people, the answer is a resounding no. And yet, in a bewildering act of capitulation, the Rancho Santiago Community College District (RSCCD) ap-

pears, once again, to continue its multimillion-dollar relationship with the Alliance for Cooperative Insurance Programs (ASCIP)—an organization that quietly withheld millions in public funds from the district.

Not only was this information hidden from the elected trustees, but it was also concealed from RSCCD’s independent auditors who admitted they only found out about the funds by reading it in the newspaper!

The consistent non-disclosure of the account forced the auditors to declare that past audits could no longer be deemed accurate.

RSCCD began using ASCIP in 2016 to broker its employee health insurance program, steering nearly a quarter of a billion in taxpayer dollars to them over the years in the form of premiums. But a March 2025 forensic audit conducted by Texas-based Weaver uncovered a deeply troubling

fact: ASCIP had been retaining excess premiums across multiple insurance policies unbeknownst to the district’s governing board.

This way of doing business appears to have taken root during the tenure of former Vice Chancellor John Didion, who, shockingly, held dual roles—both in college district leadership and with ASCIP and one of its subsidiaries, a private insurance company. The audit suggests that Didion and then-Vice Chancellor Peter Hardash may have been the only RSCCD officials fully aware of the withheld funds during that period.

But the concealment didn’t stop there.

Current Chancellor Marvin Martinez became aware of the funds shortly after he was hired in 2019. Yet, the elected board members remained unaware until June 2024 when Trustee Phil Yarbrough learned about the seques-

tered funds, demanded answers and brought the issue into public view. At that point, the hidden account held a staggering \$8 million.

Yarbrough rightly called for the immediate return of the funds and the forensic audit, which Weaver presented to the trustees on March 10, 2025.

Board President Daisy Tong was quick to state after the Weaver report was presented, “I’m sure we’re going to have discussions on this item again — this is not a one time, and we’re done.”

But Tong’s actions since then contradict that statement. With just a few months before the college district is set to pay ASCIP another \$22 million in health insurance premiums for 2026, all Tong has done is requested proposals to pay another firm to audit the Weaver audit.

Tong’s failure to agendize the district’s review of alternatives to

ASCIP is indefensible.

Taxpayers have every right to expect transparency and responsible stewardship of public funds. As an elected official, Tong should be acting in the best interests of taxpayers—not complicit with a vendor that withheld millions from a public institution she was elected to serve. Her actions send a chilling message that financial mismanagement and ethical lapses carry no consequences in the RSCCD.

Finding another option to ASCIP, including a plan that would keep employees with the same coverage, but simply eliminating ASCIP as a broker, isn’t just good governance, it’s a test of integrity. Regrettably, Tong appears to have failed the test.

*Dr. Barry Resnick retired as a professor of counseling from the RSCCD in 2022, having served for 42 years.*

**"DRC"**  
*continued from page 1*

**Call to action**

“Reining in the scope of the DRC was one of Grant Thornton’s recommendations,” Slater explained. “It takes too long to process development applications. We are in the process of creating a heritage commission and a new preservation ordinance, but in the meantime, we need to make bold steps.”

Community Development Director Russell Bunim proposed a new ordinance that would reduce the DRC’s purview to historic preservation. He suggested that all new development be handled

administratively, with the exception of historic districts, properties listed on the historic inventory and any that are 50 years old. New signage proposed for areas beyond those exceptions would be handled by staff; structures in historic districts that are non-contributors could be demolished or renovated with staff approval.

While councilmembers Jon Dumitru and Kathy Tavoularis applauded the short-circuit approach, Arianna Barrios did not. “I’m confused,” she said. “We entered into an agreement with an organization willing to do this work. They’ve been at it for six months. It’s bizarre that we would go around that process. Why, all

of a sudden, are we rushing?”

“We have no intention to subvert the work of the committee,” Slater advised. “This is an interim solution to help our financial situation.”

**Fast-tracked “fix”**

Barrios pointed out that council “had nothing in writing” to properly access the interim ordinance. “I thought we were having a discussion, but you have a plan. You want to make a decision on the fly.”

Ana Gutierrez questioned the role of the DRC in perceived delays. “How fast are we getting projects to the DRC or Planning Commission?” she asked. “The

DRC review has to find that projects meet city standards. We can’t say it’s because of the DRC that we are not business friendly. Why does it take six months to get to the DRC? We need to look at that, too.”

Barrios motioned to set a moratorium on DRC review of non-historic projects instead of writing an ordinance that may well be overridden. “It’s easier to reverse a moratorium than an ordinance,” she explained.

Her colleagues disagreed, and voted 5-2 to direct staff to proceed with Bunim’s suggested ordinance and bring that back to council as soon as possible. Barrios and Gutierrez dissented.

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LETTERS to the EDITOR

ICE cold comfort

Dear Editor:  
These comments were made at the Aug. 12 Orange City Council meeting:

I am here tonight as a proud product of immigrants, a lifelong resident of Orange and an American citizen. Your silence in the face of the recent ICE raids is not neutrality, it is complicity. You use the excuse of “that’s a federal issue,” but this isn’t about your jurisdiction. This is about your humanity. This is about your refusal to condemn the acts of racial profiling and masked kidnappings that are taking place in our neighborhoods. You can comply with federal law while still saying out loud that racism, racial profiling and fear-based targeting have absolutely no place in the City of Orange.

These raids aren’t just “targeting criminals,” they are tearing apart families. They are leaving children without parents, workplaces without employees and communities in fear. Whether you like it or not, the products of immigrants, people like me, are your constituents. We are voters. We are taxpayers. And you work for us. Protect us. Speak up for us. Condemn what is wrong. That’s not politics, that’s leadership.

Keep dodging the uncomfortable conversations, but deep down, you know you’ve been comfortable while others have been living in fear. Go ahead, hide behind your talking points, but the people you’re too afraid to defend will remember that you stood by and watched.

The question is: will you keep choosing your own comfort, or will you finally choose courage?

To every family and individual who’s been told they don’t belong, yet refuses to disappear, refuses to be erased, you are the inspiration. Every ounce of courage it takes to stand here, to face this council, comes from you. From growing up surrounded by hard-working immigrants who taught us what resilience, sacrifice and dignity look like.

Cynthia Gonzalez  
Orange

Blame game

Dear Editor:  
At the Aug. 12 meeting, the Orange City Council laid the blame for the city’s financial predicament at the feet of the Design Review Committee (DRC) and used falsehoods and misinformation to justify it.

Three projects were cited as examples of the DRC “taking too long to process applications,” and the reason to “rein in the scope of the DRC.” An industrial truck terminal on Struck Avenue, a dental office on W. Chapman, and a fast food restaurant on S. Main. All three projects had significant unresolved design issues before being seen by the DRC.

Reaching back nearly 10 years to cherry-pick these three complicated projects as evidence of “handcuffing businesses” while ignoring literally hundreds of projects that were efficiently approved by the DRC, is both disingenuous and a misrepresentation of the record.

Regarding the truck transfer

terminal: “there is absolutely no reason the DRC should hang up a project in the industrial zone for years ... for one tree.” Stop repeating this fiction and get the facts straight; the DRC did not spend “years” on “one tree!”

That project had more than eight months of staff reviews before coming to the DRC with woefully inadequate landscaping. The Orange Municipal Code required 125 trees for the project, but the applicant proposed only 30. That’s not “one tree,” it’s a deficiency of 95 trees. Ninety-five!

A fatally flawed dental office, designed by an electrical engineer with no architectural training, submitted an inaccurate and incomplete proposal with so many defects the committee doubted it could actually be built.

A fast food restaurant was stuck in the planning department for years because the site was on a corner designated as a gateway to the medical corridor on S. Main. The General Plan called for an architecturally significant project, not a drive-thru.

The problem these examples illustrate isn’t of the DRC “taking too long.” The problem is that projects struggling to meet city requirements are not ready for DRC review.

Solving difficult design problems is not “handcuffing” businesses, but rather working to bring quality projects that meet the city’s development standards into Orange.

The DRC’s purview is design: the quality and integrity of the architecture, the landscaping, the consistency and compatibility with the neighborhood.

Developers and businesses hire their own teams of professionals to promote their projects. The citizens of Orange depend on the DRC.

Anne McDermott, DRC member  
Orange

Hold on

Dear Editor:  
As a member of Orange Unified’s 7-11 Land Surplus Committee, I am pleased the committee has paused in its deliberation about surplus land at La Veta Elementary School until the Consolidation Committee submits revised recommendations.

I also want to thank new OUSD Superintendent Dr. Rachel Monárrez for attending our recent meeting and listening to community concerns.

Declaring this property surplus now would be premature and potentially harmful. The initial consolidation proposals would increase enrollment at La Veta, so reducing the campus footprint could limit opportunities for students. The touted \$30 million sale price is far from guaranteed, especially given rezoning hurdles, and selling would permanently eliminate valuable open space.

Instead of selling, I recommend OUSD explore partnerships to lease the land for youth sports, working with AYSO/OJSC, or even the CIF-Southern Section to host championship events. Partnering with the City of Orange to create a public park could also bring in grant funding

while enhancing recreational opportunities.

These options would benefit students, the district, and the surrounding neighborhood, while preserving long-term flexibility for future educational needs.

The right move is to pause, explore these partnerships, and keep this irreplaceable asset working for our community—not give it away for a short-term windfall.

Eugene Fields  
Orange

Smoke signals

Dear Editor:

It is about time cities start standing up to all types of smoke/vape shops, and I give continuous applause to Orange! We all know the harm smoking/vaping does to our health: body organs become toxic, stop functioning properly, then cause other body parts to fail. Health insurance rises due to poor health, and people die.

Making money cannot be the prime objective of the USA’s foundation anymore. We must look out for our citizens and protect them from harmful substances. So, I applaud Orange for starting a process, which, I hope, will continue, until all cities in Orange County no longer have any type of smoke/vape shops, stores or markets where these perilous substances are available.

Go Orange!

Carolyn Brothers  
Tustin

Medicaid Turns 60!



Supervisor Vicente Sarmiento, second from right, joined OC Health professionals to celebrate Medicaid’s 60th anniversary.

By Supervisor Vicente Sarmiento, 2nd District

This July, Medicaid reached its 60-year milestone. Created in 1965 as part of President Lyndon Johnson’s “Great Society” reforms, Medicaid serves over 85 million Americans – including more than 15 million Californians, or one in three residents.

On July 30, I joined with local healthcare leaders, including Isabel Becerra, CEO of the Coalition of Orange County Community Health Centers, at a press conference where we celebrated this important milestone, but also sought to shed light on the threats that this critical safety net is facing from legislation that provided tax cuts to the wealthy at the expense of healthcare coverage.

Medicaid has transformed lives and strengthened the health and dignity of our most vulnerable communities. It impacts more than just insurance for individuals, but also impacts our ability to have our hospitals and clinics op-

erate properly to protect access to care and safeguard public health.

Protecting Medicaid funding is essential. Any cuts to the system will directly harm millions of families and individuals who rely on it, as early intervention, preventive services, and managed care reduce costly ER visits and hospitalizations down the line. Undermining Medicaid doesn’t just risk individual health; it threatens the economic and public health infrastructure of entire communities, especially during times of crisis or recovery.

Access to healthcare is a fundamental human right, not something that should be determined by income, immigration status, ZIP code, or employment. Denying people access only worsens public health outcomes.

In the United States, the richest nation in the world, no one should be forced to choose between going to the doctor and paying for rent, food, or other essentials. We have the resources; what we need is the will.

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SCE: AI or MIA?

You haven’t lived and died till you’ve met Edison’s telephone assistant “Emily,” who does her absolute friendly best introducing you to other AI robots working for the utility, a word meaning, ironically, “the quality or condition of being useful.” Answer too generally or accidentally press the wrong button and Em will break your heart, forcing you to hang up and dial all over again, just to choose (again) from pre-categorized “options,” perhaps but not always including opportunities to engage with other machine siblings or, wait long enough, perhaps a real person. Helpful, if subversive hint: Leave a message at the SCE claims number, which sly Emily doesn’t offer, (800) 251-3311. Or search online if you enjoy this message: “Page Not Found.”

Traffic survey

The Aug. 5 Inter-Canyon League (ICL) meeting included

a presentation by Public Works consulting firm MBI Media soliciting input on road safety for unincorporated OC. Ten attended in-person, 20 on Zoom, with a third canyon on-site meeting TBA. The project concludes spring 2026. Comment online: OCLRSP.com.

Little beyond signs, lower speed limit, or rumble strips on Silverado Canyon has been offered. Only ghostly signs remain of doomed rumble stripping on Modjeska Grade. Missing is Linda May’s visionary proposal for a Greenspace Corridor, a throughway for both drivers and mountain lions as in national parks or other wildlands. Saddleback Meadows only frustrates any plan.

**Connecting the dots**

What’s up with our legislative representatives? Glad you asked! Assemblymember Sanchez’s latest newsletter addresses “Back to School Safety,” absent safety concerns for children and families kidnapped by DHS. Her attack on a respected rights group — the Committee for Humane

Immigration Rights (CHIRLA) — went nowhere. “I’m formally requesting the Legislature audit the extent by which LA’s riots are being bankrolled by a taxpayer subsidized nonprofit,” she wrote. “There is zero excuse for our tax dollars to go towards these riots.”

Senator Choi, a so-called fiscal conservative, opposes Assembly Bill 84, aiming to increase accountability and financial oversight for — wait for it! — charter schools.

And, despite the unparalleled quality, integrity and transparency of Registrar of Voters (OC VOTE), the Senator, echoing GOP boilerplate, supports SB 408: “...a direct response to growing public concern about sloppy and inaccurate voter rolls [to] restore public confidence in our elections.” Concern? Read: Trump’s mid-term gerrymandering, targeting of California and other red states, claiming (falsely) duplicate, outdated registration and noncitizens or undocumented voters.

Choi cuts and pastes the Election Integrity Project California which sued against (!) vote-by-mail courtesy lawyers at the Christian conservative Advocates for Faith and Freedom.

Representative Kim? Still no mention of her Zoom un-meeting with canyonites. And no position on the specious House Judiciary

Committee CHIRLA “investigation,” inspiration for Sanchez. Kim likely feels more secure with Newsom’s proposed redrawing of CD 40. Perhaps that’s why her latest newsletter email was blank?

“Hypocrisy, is the key” wrote poet Allen Ginsberg, “to self-fulfilling prophecy.”

**“Reach for the book ... it is a weapon.”**

Branch Manager Laura Blasingham’s report on this summer’s Library of the Canyon Reading Program: 122 kids and teens completed 20 days of reading. 1,016 people attended 41 programs. And 53 adults read a total of 98 books!

Funded by Friends of the Library, prizes were awarded to stand-out readers and participants, many visiting from the flatlands. Friend of civic literacy and enemy of invasive species, canyon oaks protector Mike Boeck distributed anti-GSOB T-shirts.

Rumors of a recently formed Enemies of the Library group are unconfirmed. Feel free to spread them toward joyfully reminding others of the assault on public libraries and provocatively promoting September activities including a beginner’s cross-stitch class, a how-to on building a seed tray, and the Mocktail Hour Cookbook Group. September

book club: Susan Meissner’s novel "A Fall of Marigolds," stories of two women experiencing loss in different eras—Clara during the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Fire; Taryn during 9/11 attacks.

**“Our Canyon, Their Home: A Wildlife Awareness Evening”**

Hosted by the Canyon Wildlife Initiative (CWI), this special September 18, 6-7:30 p.m. program title says it all. CWI, in partnership with Wetlands & Wildlife Care Center and ENC Tucker Wildlife Sanctuary, promotes “learning how we can better coexist with the wildlife that call the canyon home.”

The group promises to “explore how poisons impact the entire food chain, how our daily choices affect local predators like coyotes, bobcats and mountain lions, and how community-reported wildlife activity near roads can help build the case for protective solutions—including wildlife crossings and safe-passage infrastructure.” See road safety and Saddleback Meadows, above. \$5 via Eventbrite.

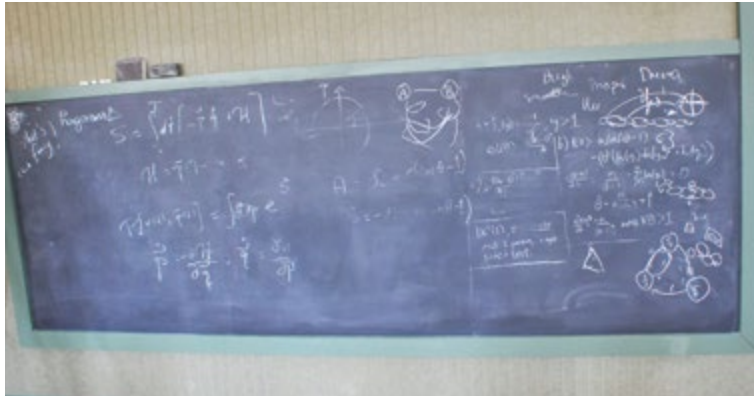
**Final concert**

The final Silverado Summer Concert Series at the Community Center ends Sept. 20 with a reliably eclectic double bill, the hilariously named Jewish Priest (playing “rock hitz”) and Atomic Jones, a Tom Jones tribute show.

Refurbished Killefer School opens for quantum research



The schoolhouse exterior before and after.



Killefer’s original chalkboards were reinstated in the new research facility.



Armen Gulian, senior research scientist and director of the Advanced Physics Lab, explains how the equipment will aid in the search for semiconductor material that can function at room temperature. "Its the holy grail," he says.



From left, Bibek Bhandari, post doctoral researcher; John Howell, professor of physics; President Elect Matt Parlow; and President Daniele Struppa celebrate the dedication of the new research institute.

Back to school crafts at VP Library



The Villa Park Library presents three programs in September for students as they return to school. All programs will feature a craft and, afterwards, an opportunity to learn about resources the library offers to support students and families.

On Wed., Sept. 10 at 3 p.m., children ages 5 and up are invited to a Back to School photo frame craft.

On Sat., Sept. 20 at 2 p.m., students of all ages are invited to make backpack charms.

On Thurs., Sept. 25 at 3 p.m., teens are invited to design their own pencil pouch.

Materials will be provided by the library.

Orange Elks support the Jasper Ray Foundation



Jonathan St. Clair, Jasper’s father, left, receives the donation from Elks Exalter Ruler Kelley Martinez.

Jasper did not reach his second birthday because of a 100 percent preventable tragedy. Drowning is the number one cause of accidental death for children 1-4 years old. More children in this age group die by drowning than by traffic accidents.

The Orange Elks Lodge made a \$1,500 donation to the Jasper Ray Foundation, which will be utilized for swim lessons at the summer swim camp at Youth Center of Orange.

To read Jasper’s story and learn more about the Foundation, see jasperray.org.

### Celebrating 1 Year of Impact

As we mark our first anniversary, we reflect on an incredible journey of empowering the next generation of entrepreneurs. Over the past year, we’ve seen lives transformed, ideas brought to life, and communities strengthened through meaningful discussions and collaboration.

This milestone isn’t just about looking back, it’s about looking forward. Together, we will continue to inspire, educate, and create opportunities that shape a brighter future for entrepreneurs everywhere.

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VPWL begins 56th year



Susan Svoboda

Villa Park Women's League ushers in its 56th year with a day-time and evening option for the first General Meeting. Both an 11 a.m. luncheon or 6 p.m. light dinner will be offered at Trinity Episcopal Church Community Room, located at 2400 N. Canal Street.

The featured speakers include Susan Svoboda, women's health advocate, breast cancer survivor, and author of "I Hate the Color Pink." She will present at both morning and evening events. William Matthies, author of the fictional "The Unlived Lives of Raymond Quinn," and business



William Matthies

book, "The 7 Keys to Change," will speak in the evening.

The League welcomes new and returning members, as well as prospective guest members who currently reside in Villa Park, to attend and experience all that the Women's League has to offer.

Annual dues of \$75 (July 1 - June 30) gains access to 20-plus activity groups and themed socials for Villa Park female residents, as well as four all-inclusive general meetings and an annual board installation event.

For more information about membership and activities, visit VPWL.org.

John Schutz will lead memorial wall motorcade



John Schutz at another memorable event.

By Chris Locke

Orange resident John Schutz, is a driving force behind "The Wall That Heals — Orange 2025," a three-quarter scale replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, coming to Grijalva Park this October.

Many know Schutz as the Commander of American Legion Post 132 and through the thunderous rides of the Legion Riders, who raise money for nonprofits. A distinguished veteran, John served in both the U.S. Army and the Marines.

His military journey began in 1969 when he received his draft notice. Advised by his Korean War Marine veteran boss, John joined the Marines, initially slated for aviation. However, a clerical error sent him to Camp Pendleton instead of aviation school. After a detour to Huntsville, Alabama for radar school, he trained in Memphis before being stationed at El Toro Marine Base and then received orders for Vietnam.

Schutz rarely discusses his

time in Vietnam, but after his tour, he was stationed back at El Toro. He went to Japan for 13 months before being sent to the helicopter station in Tustin, where he completed 11 years with the Marine Corps. He then spent a year in the Army National Guard, reenlisting for four years to attend electronics school, which led to him serving 20 years as an Active Guard Reserve soldier.

In 2000, Schutz was encouraged to join American Legion Post 132, and he's been there ever since. His Post work perfectly aligns with his work for The Wall as the Motorcade Director, overseeing a large motorcycle escort comprised of mostly veterans to escort the memorial. His plan is to have the CHP and Orange PD lead the motorcade down the freeway, to S. Glassell Street, around the Orange Plaza and on to Grijalva Park. The public is encouraged to fill the sidewalks and overpasses to support the riders, and meet them at Grijalva Park where the Orange Fire Department will display its giant American flag to welcome the wall.

Bringing The Wall That Heals to Orange is personal for Schutz. He knows many names on The Wall, He hopes the exhibit will remind everyone that those names on The Wall paid the ultimate price for our freedoms. For veterans, he hopes it brings healing and a sense of appreciation. For the community, he wants it to serve as a tangible reminder that freedom isn't "just history," but a legacy built on the sacrifices of many people.

WCO's new year builds on success of last year



WCO President Carol Allen, left, presents Jodi Hess with the Club-woman of the Year award.



Recipients of Woman's Club 2025 scholarships are, from left, Alexis Barron, Makayla Roberson, Minerva Ipatzi, Sharon Cruz Calderon and Nadia Flores Lopez.



The 2025-26 Woman's Club of Orange board members are: front row, from left, Marcie Scott, communications co-chair; Susan Moore, financial secretary; Dorinda von Tersch, social media; Kathy Host, treasurer; Kathy Wilhelm, parliamentarian. Back row, from left, Kathleen Stevens first vice president; Kathy Thomas, recording secretary; Diane Clemensen, corresponding secretary; Carol Allen, president; Pat Hamilton, director of house; Rebecca Martinez, programs; Monica Aguilar, second vice president, membership; Herlinda Hicks, fundraising; and Terrie Richardson, catering.

The Woman's Club of Orange reports that its 2024 -25 club year was highly successful, with fundraising earning over \$45,000 that was shared with more than a dozen local charities.

Members contributed over \$20,000 of in-kind items including diapers, school supplies, books for CHOC, gift cards for veterans, and snack items for the Youth Center of Orange summer program. The club also awarded \$6,500 in scholarships to five students in the Orange Unified School District. The winners were: Nadia Flores Lopez and Alexis Barron from Orange High School and Sharon Cruz Calderon, Minerva Ipatzi and Makayla

Roberson from Richland High School.

Jodi Hess was named Club-woman of the year, recognized for her creation of a popular new activity section called "Day Trippers." Ten members who devoted many hours of service throughout the club year were recognized as the club's "Shining Stars." They are: Desiree de Liser, Pietra Gaw, Janet Gugino, Susan Lewis, Kathy Thomas, Debbi Todd, Suzanne Vaugine, Jennifer Lee, Mary Majors and Joan Starr-Panther.

September opens the new club year, and with it a new Board of Directors and two new activity sections, "Hooks and Needles," and "Friends and Fiction" eve-

ning book club.

On Tuesday, Sept. 23 from 6 to 7 p.m., the WCO Evening Social Club will host a new member interest meeting at the Clubhouse Garden, 121 Center St.

RSVP by Sept. 13 to Joan Starr-Panther at panthercastle8@gmail.com or the club website Womanscluboforange.org.

The Holiday Boutique and Craft Fair is slated for Oct. 4 and the 87th Annual Flower Show on April 11, 2026. A capital fundraising campaign is ongoing to maintain the 100-year-old clubhouse and replace the stage curtains. The goal is to raise \$35,000. Check the club website for sponsorship information.

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## Past Chapman University president reflects on the institution's transformation



Jim Doti

In a compelling new book, "Using Data Analytics to Drive Transformational Change," Chapman University President Emeritus Dr. Jim Doti provides a behind-the-scenes look at how the university transformed its academic standing, reputation and financial trajectory by focusing on data-informed decisions.

Over the course of his 25-year presidency, 1991-2016, Doti challenged traditional institutional planning.

His book opens with the statement, "Most strategic plans are a waste of time — a drain on precious resources." He then proceeds to outline a replicable framework that prioritizes focus, measurable goals and economic analysis over wishful thinking.

The book takes readers through five planning periods during which the university saw tremendous gains in student selectivity, academic reputation, graduation rates, faculty investment, building and land development, and net assets.

"The first five years were critical," Doti said. "Moving from open enrollment to a more selec-

tive admissions process — focused on SAT scores — became the foundation for growth over the next 20 years."

Key results include:

- Raising the graduation rate from 37% to 75%
- Elevating the U.S. News & World Report regional reputation ranking from #90 to #6
- Increasing net assets by more than 700%, far outpacing peer institutions
- Investing in campus facilities with 1,102% increase in buildings and land
- Creating a budget model that placed faculty salaries in the 95th percentile nationally

While emphasizing "focus, focus, focus" on a central goal each planning period, the author admits to some contradiction: "Opportunities fall into your lap every now and then." It was that contradiction that brought the Hilbert Museum of California Art and the Musco Center for the Arts to Chapman.

The book ends with Doti reflecting on a conversation with his mentor, colleague and friend George Argyros. As they sipped wine and watched sailboats drift through Newport Bay, Doti recalled a phone call from 33 years earlier, when Argyros invited him to become Chapman's next president.

"I reminded George that he told me, 'We're going to build a great university,'" Doti writes. "Then I added, 'You were right, George, we did build a great university.'"

Published by Bloomsbury Academic, the book is available through major online retailers.

## Register for flag football!

The Vince Ferragamo Flag Football League, in conjunction with Santiago Canyon College, teaches the fundamentals for boys and girls in first through eighth grade, in a fun and confidence-building environment. Kids will

learn about teamwork and sportsmanship from professionals. Practices are during the week, with games on Friday nights at Santiago Canyon College.

For information, see ferragamofootball.com or call (714) 628-4960.

## Flag retirement at the Orange Elks Lodge



Shiree and Kent Colton fold a flag

Over the course of the year, the Orange Elks have several programs about the United States flag, including the June Flag Day program, Flags Over Orange and the flag lowering program at the Plaza.

During the year, the lodge collects flags that need to be retired. Boy Scout Troop 1475 Eagle Scout, Matthew Miller, built a flag deposit box as part of his Eagle project.

Several times a year, the lodge has a flag folding event. Each November, the old and tattered flags that have been collected are delivered to the Orange Coast's District for the Flag Retirement Ceremony, where those flags are respectfully retired.

A big thanks to Americanism Chairmen Chris Michaelis and the Americanism committee for putting on this event, but a special thanks to the volunteers for rolling up their sleeves.



Flag retirement box in Elks lobby

## OPA Women's League update



Out-going President Tani Stein, left, helps hold the banner for in-coming President Charla Harris.

We, the 2023–2025 Orange Park Acres Women's League Board, are excited to announce that the new 2025–2027 OPAWL Board is officially stepping into their roles. Led by President Charla Harris, this dynamic team (to be introduced next month) already has plenty of fun and meaningful plans in the works—so stay tuned for upcoming an-

nouncements.

The outgoing board reports it is thrilled to pass the reins, and is grateful to leave the League in the capable hands of Charla and her team, and looks forward to supporting them in every way we can.

For information about membership and activities, see opawomen.org.

## OC Dems offer redistricting workshop

The Central Orange County Democratic Club will host a "Redistricting Activism 101 Bootcamp" at its Wednesday, Sept. 24 meeting.

Attendees will learn about all the different ways they can volunteer to help pass redistricting in California, including canvassing, writing postcards, phone banking, dropping literature on porches, and more. RSVP is required to attend.

Central OC Dems includes Tustin, Tustin Hills, Orange, Villa Park, and surrounding communities. Democrats from throughout Orange County are welcome to join. Meetings are held on the fourth Wednesday of each month in Tustin.

## Tustin Museum explores the Victorian death culture of Early OC

By Guy Ball

The Victorian Age and culture dates from about the 1840s to 1900 — just as early Orange County started its impressive growth. Fortunately, we can still see some majestic and unique Victorian-style homes in communities like Orange, Tustin and Santa Ana.

On Thursday, Sept. 25, join the discussion at the Tustin Area Museum's monthly Night at the Museum event as historian, death scholar, and paranormal investigator Darcy Staniforth takes us on a journey to the other side of the veil through the lens of Victorian Death Culture.

While modern Americans might shy away from talking about death, grief and loss, the Victorians were immersed in it. From the clothes and jewelry they wore, the way they decorated their houses, to picnicking among the dead, this talk touches on all of that.

Darcy Staniforth is an academic, historian, writer, performer,

ghost host and paranormal investigator. She has been interested in death and dying since she was very young, and that interest has carried into both her personal and professional life. Darcy holds a B.A. and a M.A. in American studies. In addition to death, dying and grief, her research areas include race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, ideals and institutions and the paranormal.

In addition to supporting students in her work in higher education, she also serves as the paranormal coordinator for the Heritage Museum of Orange County and the Director of Tour Operations for Haunted Orange County.

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

For more information and tickets visit TustinHistory.com or call the museum, (714) 731-5701.



Darcy Staniforth

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Free estate planning workshop returns to Orange library

Financial & Estate Literacy (FEL) is bringing its no-charge financial education workshop series back to the Orange Public Library, beginning Tuesday, Sept. 9 at 10 a.m.

The six-week series, titled “It’s Your Estate!,” is specifically designed for adults aged 55 and older. Its goal is to give older adults the tools and knowledge to make informed decisions about their finances. Guest speakers present on a different topic each week and are vetted volunteer industry experts with a fiduciary duty to act in the best interest of participants. The series includes a detailed look at estate planning, wills and trusts, retirement account planning, tax advantages for philanthropy, trustees and executors.

FEL founder Peter Kote is the

longtime moderator of the sessions in Orange. “There will be no salespeople — it’s a safe environment that your mother can attend,” he emphasizes. Presenters are not provided with the participants’ contact information.

Both in-person and virtual options for the workshops are available.

To register for the Orange Public Library series online, visit [iyme.org](http://iyme.org) or call (714) 288-2468. The Library is located at 407 E. Chapman.

The organization offers two six-week tracks, “It’s Your Money!” and “It’s Your Estate!,” currently at nine libraries and senior centers across Orange County. For the full, countywide workshop schedule, visit [iyme.org](http://iyme.org) for more information or email [reachus@it-yourmoneyandestate.org](mailto:reachus@it-yourmoneyandestate.org).

Orange will not relieve Mabury Ranch of tree burden

The Orange City Council rejected a request by the Mabury Ranch Homeowners Association (HOA) to transfer maintenance responsibility for 226 mature trees along public right of ways to the city. The council voted 4-3 against the proposal at its Aug. 12 meeting.

The pine, eucalyptus, elm and crape myrtles were planted along Serrano, Cannon, Mt. McKindley, Yellowstone and Orange Park Boulevard by the developer when Mabury Ranch was built in the late 70s, early 80s. It was, however, never clear to either the city or the HOA who had responsibility for those trees. The HOA maintains the trees within its borders, but those on the public right of ways have been an issue for years.

The HOA began negotiating with Orange staff regarding the city takeover of tree maintenance about eight years ago. A thorough review of the documents and council meeting minutes related to the streetside trees indicated that no one had ever been designated caretaker.

During the negotiations, a city arborist examined the trees in question and found that many of the Canary Island Pines had defects and were planted too close

to private retaining walls without adequate soil. The arborist concluded that 126 trees should be removed, at a cost of \$80,000. The remaining trees required pruning, for an additional \$19,000.

Mabury Ranch agreed to reimburse the city \$16,000 for the pruning and provide \$5,000 next year to replant some of the removed trees.

The council, however, was reluctant to commit an initial \$99,000 to cut down and prune trees while Orange is facing potential bankruptcy looming. The question of the city’s liability came up, should a diseased tree cause damage to other properties. The “ownership,” and thus liability, of those trees is not clear. It was noted, however, that Orange, and not the HOA, would likely be pursued for damages.

Councilman John Gyllenhammer pointed out that the city would eventually have to accept responsibility for those trees and, from a cost perspective, should take it on sooner than later.

The council however, found “sooner” to be too costly. Denis Bilodeau, Jon Dumitru, Kathy Tavoularis and Ana Gutierrez voted no. Mayor Dan Slater, Arriana Barrios and Gyllenhammer voted yes.

Knoll continues to roll

Orange’s own Phil Knoll, 89 years young, won two gold medals at the California Senior Games, competing in the 5 kilometer and 10 kilometer time trials. The Games are held in several locations throughout California; Knoll competed on June 17 and 18 in El Dorado Park in Long Beach, part of the Pasadena Senior Games.

There were 30 cyclists, ranging from age 50 on up. Knoll had the fastest time in his 85-89 age group for the two-wheel recumbent bikes, but also beat some of the “younger regular road bike guys” in ages 70-74, 75-79 and 80-84. He has been competing since 2014.

Phil still cycles about 110 miles each week, and plans to continue to compete. He has bicycled for



Phil Knoll

decades, riding across America in 1980 to raise money for his music program at Peralta Junior High,

and then subsequent bike tours supporting music programs at Cerro Villa Middle School.

Orange Elks cook for the Hangout Group



Left to right are Elks Henry Hwang, JC Cortez, Angela Ambriz, Kevin Wagner and Tiffany Montero, cooking for the Hangout Club.

The Orange Elks epitomize the “Elks Care and Elks Share” motto with the Hangout Group.

The Hangout Group is a monthly get-together for children with special needs to have fun and enjoy a day in the park. It is also a day for parents to meet and socialize with other parents.

Fifteen lodge members cooked hamburgers and hotdogs and served them with all the “fixins” to about 20 kids and their family members.

Elks do what Elks do best, supporting our lodge members and other family members who have kids with special needs.

Last call for OPA Annual Fall BBQ and Dance

Hurry and get your tickets for the Orange Park Acres 54th Annual Fall BBQ and Dance Saturday, Sept. 27.

This OPA signature fundraiser will be held at the Sandford home. Gates open at 5:30 p.m.

The event proceeds will benefit the 25-mile public multiuse trail

system with connections to OC Regional Parks. The community is dedicated to the expansion of equestrian and animal keeping and, at 98 years old, is self sustaining with your support.

The BBQ features traditional fare, silent and live auctions, plus dancing under the stars to

the Chris Lozano Band, back by popular demand.

The event is expected to sell out, so buy your tickets soon. For information and tickets online: [orangeparkacres.org](http://orangeparkacres.org).

To donate an auction item or volunteer to help contact Mary Nori Forester at (949) 244-9080.

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## OC Grand Jury explores cities' responses to short-term rentals

By Carrie Graham

In response to countywide complaints about short term rentals (STRs), the Grand Jury of Orange County has released a report on cities' responses to them.

Short-term rentals, often referred to as "Airbnbs," are dwellings that are rented out all, or in part, to tenants for less than 30 days.

Not all cities allow STRs. Of the 34 cities in the county, 19, including Tustin, Villa Park, Yorba Linda and Santa Ana, have banned them. While more than half of the county has put the kibosh on the burgeoning industry on paper, it can often leave code enforcement playing a never ending game of "whack-a-mole."

A code enforcement official has to observe a code violation to be able to issue a citation. With many enforcement employees working only during regular business hours, and the most common complaints like noise and nuisance occurring on evenings and weekends, there's little recourse other than verbal warnings to the property's emergency contact person after the fact.

Emergency contacts are another issue themselves. Cities typically have requirements that an owner have information on file in the event of a complaint, and are often expected to respond to those complaints within either a 30- or 60-minute window. However, in many instances cities reported that those contacts were unresponsive, leaving issues unresolved.

Several Orange County cities – Orange, Seal Beach, Dana Point – have clear permitting procedures that explicitly outline "Good Neighbor" policies, yielding lower complaint rates. These policies require the owner to directly notify immediate neighbors of an STR, provide contact information, and provide proof of that notice to the city.

Another thing the Grand Jury

believes Orange got right is its system for collecting Transient Occupancy Taxes or TOTs. The city utilizes an online portal where owners must report the number of nights their STR was rented each month and pay the appropriate taxes. However, Orange is an outlier. Many cities are using outdated reporting systems like paper forms, and rely on an honor system for payments, sometimes on a quarterly or annual basis. While TOT revenue makes up a relatively small part of the average city budget, some may still be missing out.

One issue pointed out among cities that allow STRs was the creation of "quasi-monopolies." Though some cities, like Orange, have waitlists that are meant to make it more equitable for new owners to eventually get a permit, it's not so simple in practice. The permits can often be transferred to a new owner or family member, meaning they aren't vacated for new applicants. The report recommends cities with waitlists consider setting a limit on permit durations to allow others the opportunity to get one.

Some opponents of STRs claim that STRs are taking up valuable units in an area that is desperate for more affordable housing. The Grand Jury review did not find any evidence to support the allegation, with STRs taking up a negligible amount of units available in each city. In Orange for example, they account for only about 2% of otherwise affordable housing.

Finally, the county recommends that cities have a plan in place to reevaluate their STR ordinances in regards to potential surges in demand. While Los Angeles is set to host the 2028 Olympics, two venues in Orange County, the Honda Center and Lower Trestles Beach at San Onofre, will host the indoor volleyball and surfing competitions, respectively. That may well bring many more short term renters to the county.

## Crescendo kicks off fall with Beach Boys tribute

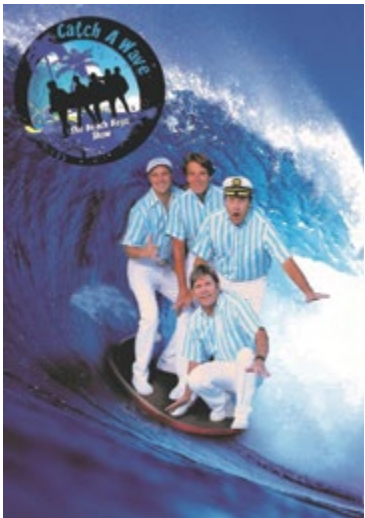
The Celebrity Speakers Series of the Crescendo Guild of Segerstrom Center for the Arts presents the Beach Boys tribute band, Catch A Wave at its Sept. 18 program, the first of the 2025/26 season.

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.



Catch a Wave

## Early Punk in OC will rock OC Historical Society meeting



Cover of "Tearing Down the Orange Curtain," the break-out of the Punk Rock scene in Orange County, by Nate Jackson and Daniel Kohn.

By Guy Ball

Author and journalist Nate Jackson will discuss pivotal years of Orange County's punk and third-wave ska scene (1978-2000) at the next monthly meet-

ing of the Orange County Historical Society. Jackson will focus on the historical and musical roots that led to this creative explosion of rock-and-roll amid the relative calm of suburbia.

The meeting will be held on Thursday, Sept. 11, starting at 7:30 p.m., at Trinity Episcopal Church, 2400 N. Canal St. Attendance is free for OCHS members or a \$5 donation for non-members.

The Orange County punk scene stands out as an undeniable trendsetter that helped define the sound and style of the rapidly evolving genre. From hard luck storytellers Social Distortion and multi-platinum sellers like The Offspring to cult heroes like The Adolescents and T.S.O.L., there's much insight to gain from the story of this popular though often misunderstood music scene.

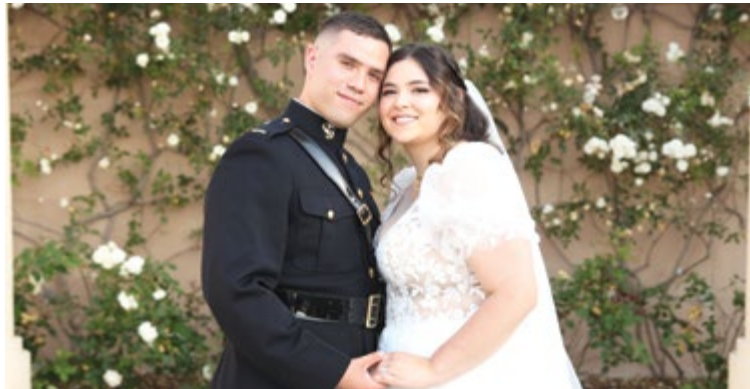
Nate Jackson is co-author of "Tearing Down the Orange Curtain: How Punk Rock Brought Orange County to the World," with fellow journalist Daniel Kohn. The book explores the trajectory of punk and ska from

their humble beginnings to their peak popularity years when their cultural impact was felt around the world. Delving deep into the personal and professional lives of local bands like Social Distortion, The Adolescents, The Offspring, and their ska counterparts No Doubt, Sublime, Reel Big Fish, Save Ferris, and more, this book gives readers a deeper look into the very human stories of these musicians, many of whom struggled with acceptance, addiction, and sometimes brutal teenage years.

Jackson was born in Orange County and came up in the local punk scene, playing in bands and rumbling through the mosh pit in warehouses, DIY venues, and clubs across SoCal. He is currently the Deputy Editor of entertainment at the L.A. Times. He was previously the Music Editor for OC Weekly and staff writer for the Times.

For more information about the Orange County Historical Society, local history, and future meetings, visit [OrangeCountyHistory.org](http://OrangeCountyHistory.org).

## Jeremiah Gilbert and Talia Estrada wed



Jeremiah and Talia Gilbert

Keith and Gloria Gilbert of Orange announce the wedding of son Jeremiah and Talia Estrada following the groom's graduation from the United States Naval Academy in May.

The couple were married May 30 at the Aliso Viejo Country Club. Ryan Cavin, Youth Pastor at Liberty Baptist Church Newport Beach, officiated.

The bride is the daughter of Erik and Laura Salazar of Fountain Valley. Talia and Jeremiah met while attending high school at Newport Christian School in Newport Beach. They were both at the top of their graduating class and were accepted at their first choice schools on the East Coast.

Jeremiah graduated from the Naval Academy in Annapolis with a bachelor's degree in aerospace engineering. Upon graduation, he was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the Marine Corps with a Service Assignment as a Marine Aviator.

Talia graduated from Johns Hopkins University with a bachelor's degree in chemical and biomolecular engineering. She plans to pursue her master's degree during Jeremiah's upcoming Marine training and flight school.

The newlyweds will move from Annapolis to Quantico, Virginia, while Jeremiah attends the Marines Basic School and then on to Pensacola, Florida.

## Boutique Noël to ring in holiday season

Get a jump on holiday shopping at the 31st annual Boutique Noël, to be held from Wednesday, Oct. 8 through Saturday, Oct. 11. The Assistance League of Orange® recasts its historic Chapter House, in the heart of Old Towne Orange, into a shopper's paradise.

Boutique Noël is well known for its many one-of-a-kind items hand-crafted by its members, unique décor and gift items from select local artisans and vendors, plus a kitchen filled with edible treats.

The "Shop with Purpose" motto of Boutique Noël means each purchase will help support the more than 20 philanthropic programs of the Assistance League of Orange®. "Our mission is to transform lives of children and adults through our community programs."

Hours for the free event are Wednesday, 2:30 to 7 p.m.; Thursday and Friday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.; and Saturday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. The Chapter House is located at 124 South Orange Street.

For further information about Boutique Noël or Assistance League of Orange, please email us at [boutiquenoel@alorange.org](mailto:boutiquenoel@alorange.org) or visit [alorange.org](http://alorange.org).

## West Katella ripe for opportunity



Artist conception of visionary Katella gateway

The City of Orange, focusing on future economic development, is exploring opportunities for growth in the West Katella Avenue area to compliment Anaheim's OC Vibe project on that city's side of the Santa Ana River.

That multi-year project will eventually include entertainment venues, restaurants, office space, public parks, housing and two hotels. Orange is currently working with Anaheim on the OC Riverwalk, a project intended to turn that waterway into a regional destination.

The Orange side of the river also has potential for recreation, entertainment and hospitality. The vision for the area between

Batavia Street, Katella Avenue and the water channel is to create a similar hub that would also include an innovation district for educational and health institutions.

The city is working with area property owners and other stakeholders to advance that vision, and will seek funding to build out the public infrastructure and incentivize private investment.



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