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A Monthly Community Newspaper

MAY 2025



An estimated 2,000 people gathered at Orange City Hall, lining both sides of Chapman Avenue, April 5, to protest the nation's current administration. The rally was part of a nationwide effort that took place in all 50 states.

RSCCD finds funds hidden by insurance cooperative

By Tina Richards

An off-the-books cache of money, totaling some \$7.1 million, was hidden from the board of Rancho Santiago Community College District (RSCCD), its auditors and the public as far back as 1997.

The funds were held in an account by the district's insurer Alliance of Schools for Cooperative Insurance Programs (ASCIP), a nonprofit joint powers authority wherein school districts pool their money for property, liability and health insurance. To date, about 140 school districts in California are members of ASCIP.

Unreported surplus

When payments exceeded claims, the surplus was apparently credited back to districts via a risk management deposit fund. While those funds belonged to the member district, they were never disbursed. In RSCCD's case, those funds were never reported to anyone beyond a handful of

A Letter of Intent (LOI) between

the City of Orange, Milan REI X

and Landify ECT, for potential

open space development on the

96-acre Sully-Miller dumpsite

in East Orange is punctuated

with maybes. The majority of

the site falls within the Orange

Park Acres Specific Plan.

April 22, the letter is essentially a

good-faith agreement detailing the

parties' roles and responsibilities

as the property is evaluated for

open space/park possibilities.

Approved by the city council

district administrators. They were never included in the district's budget and never disclosed to the firm that handled RSCCD's annual audit.

The Board of Trustees discovered the unknown account in mid-2024 when it was reviewing proposals for employee health insurance. An ASCIP member since 1997, it had signed on for health insurance in 2016 and was debating whether to renew that policy or switch to Aetna, which was offering a competitive rate. The board was advised that ASCIP would be cheaper in the long run, due to the rebates.

What rebates? Barry Resnick, a retired Santiago Community College professor, wondered where those rebates were. If the district was getting money back, why were some employee premiums so high? He began his own investigation, learned of ASCIP's unreported risk management fund and

transformation of the site to

accepting the land as an open/

space park in consideration of

other development proposals.

The document does not commit

the parties to move forward on a

park project, which is contingent

on feasibility studies (soils and

reports)

See "RSCCD" continued on page 3

company

environmental

OUSD honors legacy of **Lorenzo Ramirez**

By Tina Richards

A tribute to Lorenzo Ramirez, a plaintiff in the landmark lawsuit that ended school segregation in California, gave speakers at the April 16 Orange Unified School District Board meeting a platform to broach the idea of renaming Jordan Elementary School after the historic figure.

Jordan Elementary is the closest school to where Ramirez lived in El Modena, the barrio wherein he raised his family and fought for educational equality for his children. The name change was first requested in 2011, but proponents were told the district only named schools after the streets they were on.

OUSD did name the El Modena Library after Ramirez and proclaimed that it would honor him every year on March 2, the anniversary of the 1946 ruling. Since then, the date and recognition for him has fallen by the wayside.

Times may have changed. Board President Kris Erickson

The agreement enables Milan

project, but when completed,

the parties retain sole discretion

whether to continue or not. If

they choose to continue, Landify

will submit a proposal for the city

to review and approve. At that

time, the parties may proceed with

the design phase, entitlements

Orange/Milan tiptoe towards Sully-Miller site solution

has been talking with Landify, Control Board's assessment

degraded land, about a possible materials deposited on the site.

open space/park. It has also and Landify to proceed with their

been talking to the city about due diligence on the proposed

Milan, the property owner the Regional Water Quality

that reclaims of any potential hazardous

and Orange Councilwoman Ana Gutierrez placed the April 16 acknowledgement on that night's meeting agenda. Erickson noted the contributions Ramirez had made to education in general and the local community specifically. "Rarely does a community witness something so historically significant as that court case," she said. She pointed out that OUSD teaches the Ramirez story in grades 5, 8 and 11, but admitted that memories can fade.

Making up for lost time

"None of us were on the board in 2011," she said, "but today, OUSD is committed to ensure this important legacy lives on."

While Erickson did not mention renaming a school after him, several Ramirez family members and friends who were in attendance did. Janice Perez lived two doors down from the Ramirez family. She shared her experi-

See "Lorenzo" continued on page 3

definitive

The LOI is clear that the parties

have the right to terminate it with

or without cause, that the city is not

committed to approve anything,

and that Milan may develop

an alternative use for the site.

noted the long history of the

Sully-Miller site and wanted to be

sure that the city would have no

See "Tiptoe"

continued on page 3

Councilwoman Arianna Barrios

agreements.

NEWS INSIDE

THE GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING

Campaign contributions in Orange can now be transferred from one political committee to another.

See Orange Council, page 2

GOING, GOING, **BUT NOT GONE**

Decommissioned and empty Orange fire station will house a museum and learning center until the city tears it down.

See Old, page 4

TALK OF THE TOWNE

Orange leaders field topical questions at the annual State of Old Towne meeting.

See Officials, page 5

SPEAK THE

Villa Park High French classes puts language skills to test in lavish wedding ceremony.

See French, page 8

LANGUAGE

LAST HURRAH

Retiring Orange police chief presents his final crime report, reflecting a decrease in misdeeds and mayhem.

See Chief, page 13

Serrano Avenue to lose trees

Orange Homeowners near Serrano Avenue may soon wake to the sound of chainsaws.

If the Orange City Council approves, Public Works plans to immediately remove 72 mature trees on Serrano between Cannon Street and Orange Park Boulevard. The removal plan is part of a proposed tree maintenance agreement between the city and the Mabury Ranch Homeowners Association.

A total of 126 of the 226 trees turned over to the city for maintenance are earmarked for removal. Seventy-one of those are Eucalyptus trees which, according to the staff report, "typically sustain failure without any sign of defect which, can create a safety hazard."

Fifty-seven of the trees to be removed on Serrano are Canary Island pines, described in the report as showing no sign of disease but, according to staff, were planted too close to walls. The city estimates the cost to remove the pines at \$31,000. Council is scheduled to consider the agreement at its May 13 meeting.





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Canary Island pines line a portion of Serrano Avenue

Orange council's weakening of campaign contribution ordinance irks its initiator

By Tina Richards

Following the money donated to political campaigns has been Shirley Grindle's personal crusade for 50 years. She has successfully spearheaded local ordinances restricting contributions and does not take kindly to backpedaling on that front.

Her appointment to the county planning commission in the 1970s gave her insights into the impact large campaign donations and gifts had on individual politicians and the favoritism that resulted. She initiated a campaign finance ordinance, TIN CUP (Time Is Now, Clean Up Politics), and convinced the Board of Supervisors to adopt it.

Effective in December 1978, it limited contributions to \$1,000 per election cycle. In 1992, she amended the TIN CUP ordinance to ease compliance. County supervisors placed it on the ballot, and it passed with 85% of the vote. Since then, she has promoted ordinances prohibiting county employees from accepting gifts and post-employment lobbying, and helped create a county ethics commission approved by voters in 2014.

The cities of Orange and Anaheim subsequently adopted the TIN CUP ordinance. A resident of Orange, she now focuses her attention primarily on those cities.

Thanks, but no thanks

Last year, the Orange County district attorney awarded her a Lifetime Achievement Award for Excellence in Campaign Finance Reform. She was invited to attend an Orange City Council meeting the following month to accept a similar honor. She declined.

"There is no way I will accept an award from a city council that deliberately weakened the Or-

SCC MUN team wins top honors

Santiago Canyon College's (SCC) Model United Nations (MUN) team earned the Outstanding Delegation Award—the highest team honor presented—at the 2025 National Model United Nations (NMUN) Conference in New York City.

This marks the sixth consecutive year SCC has achieved this distinction, showcasing the college's unwavering commitment to academic excellence and global engagement.

The NMUN conference is the world's largest and oldest ongoing intercollegiate Model UN, with participants representing more than 250 colleges and universities from over 100 countries.

In addition to the team's success, students Jenna Darwish and Sabine Farhat received the Outstanding Research and Position Paper Award for their work representing the General Assembly Third Committee.

SCC student Elyse Halbreich achieved individual distinction by being selected to chair the General Assembly Third Committee—one of NMUN's premier bodies—and was also invited to join the NMUN staff for its Washington, D.C. conference this fall.

Complementing the student successes, SCC Professors Chris Haynes, Michiko Kuroda, and Professor Cale Crammer co-organized a session focused on international diplomacy education.

ange campaign ordinance solely for its benefit. Council members created a loophole whereby they could unknowingly accept donations over the contribution limit that are laundered through other candidate-controlled committees."

Grindle's ire was ignited by the Orange Council's 4-3 vote to rescind a campaign finance limitation from the municipal code last May. A city ordinance relating to campaign donations had prohibited donations from one candidate-controlled political committee to another.

In other words, Candidate A could not funnel money to Candidate B through his or her campaign committee. By the same token, a donor who had met the contribution limit for Candidate A could give money to Candidate B, whose committee could in turn pass it on to Candidate A.

An unnecessary loophole

Grindle sees that restriction as a means to circumvent individuals or special interests from exceeding contribution limits for a specific candidate or measure. Because Orange now has by-district elections, candidates have fewer

voters to reach, which means campaigns cost less and fundraising efforts are more focused. An individual in a given district may donate to a candidate running in that district. They may not, Grindle asserts, want their candidate's committee to pass their donation on to a candidate running in another district.

"Councilmembers Jon Dumitru, Denis Bilodeau, John Gyllenhammer and Kathy Tavoularis degraded a campaign ordinance that has been recognized up and down the State of California," she says. "The loophole they created is in opposition to the purpose of the ordinance, which is to prevent evasion of contribution limits by funneling or laundering them."

If a candidate in one district wants to support a candidate running in a different district, she says, they can write a check. They are free to do so, up to the maximum (\$1,500) allowed.

Calling the restriction an infringement on free speech and unconstitutional, both Jon Dumitru and Denis Bilodeau pointed out that Orange, Anaheim and Orange County are the only jurisdictions in the nation to prohibit candidate committee transfers. Dumitru added that there have been no legal challenges to the restriction and no findings to support it because "it doesn't exist anywhere else."

Supported by law

Grindle suggests that Dumitru may be mistaken. "Since many California local ordinances are patterned after TIN CUP, one would have to wade through 180 city and 27 county codes to prove or disprove that," she notes. And there has been a legal challenge.

An Alaska Supreme Court case found that the ban on inter-committee transfers was constitutional because the "state has a right to enforce its contribution limits; no one's free speech rights are being violated; it prevents the funneling of contributions through candidate-controlled committees."

She also notes a 2002 finding from the California Attorney General that "a county ordinance may prohibit the transfer of funds from campaign committees." That opinion restates a 1995 Attorney General report that said a candidate may accept inter-committee transfers "unless prohib-

ited from doing so by county ordinance." The same applies to city ordinances, Grindle says.

"Just because we're one of the few," Arianna Barrios contended during the council discussion, "that doesn't make us wrong. Sometimes standing up for the right thing is the right thing to do." Barrios, along with Ana Gutierrez and Mayor Dan Slater, voted against the amendment to change the ordinance.

"I'm deferring to Shirley Grindle," Slater said. "She's devoted her life to this. Perhaps other cities should hold Orange up and say this is a model for the correct direction."



Shirley Grindle





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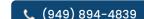
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•

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"RSCCD" continued from page 1

alerted Trustee Phil Yarbrough.

Yarbrough, a board member since 1996, chair of the district's fiscal/audit committee and president of a mortgage corporation that he founded, was furious. Why was that money not disclosed? Who was hiding it? How long has this been going on? What laws have been broken? He demanded the money be returned.

He hired a forensic audit firm (separate from the annual auditors) to look into it. The firm was able to trace the fund back to 1997, noting the balance ranged from \$1 to \$7.1 million. ASCIP reported the fund as a lump sum on its financial statements, but did not specify how much, including interest, belonged to RSCCD or any other district.

Audit did not augur well

The audit, completed in March, identified numerous violations of California state law and the state education code. The violations included funds not being reported as district assets, nor provided to external auditors; inaccurate accounting methodology; failure to disclose fund balances; improper investments or use of excess funds; and the impairment of public confidence.

The audit also noted that Chancellor Martin Martinez and

his staff were aware of the risk management fund and received annual statements, but did not share them with the board or the independent auditor. Further, the chancellor misled the board about who held the funds or how they were allocated in the budget.

The chancellor had claimed during an October board meeting that the funds were audited every year and the board should have known about it. The district's independent auditor later advised that he didn't know anything about the ASCIP fund until he read about it in the L.A. Times.

The short version of the forensic audit's findings, Yarbrough says, is that "it is illegal for a school district to have any financial holdings not reported to the public. Every penny must be accounted for in the budget. In this case, ASCIP was holding district funds that neither the board, the auditor nor the taxpayers knew anything about."

He notes that there are two elements in this deception: employee discipline and potential criminality. "All the board can do is deal with the involved staff members. We don't know who, if anyone, benefitted from the unreported fund. We can't launch a criminal investigation, but Barry and I have referred the matter to the state Attorney General. That office is looking into it."

Although RSCCD got its \$7.1 million back, it is not clear wheth-

er the other impacted districts did. "This has statewide implications," Resnick says. "RSCCD is just one part of it."

To Yarbrough, however, RSCCD is what matters. "I've devoted 30 years to this district because I care about it," he says. "I'm chair of the fiscal committee, and I was kept in the dark. I'm doing everything I can to right the wrong and to assure taxpayers that this will never happen again."

Term Discount	Amount Paid
\$0.00	\$7,167,249.38 \$7,167,249.38

"Tiptoe" continued from page 1

responsibility regarding the cleanup of the property, and that "any materials that shouldn't be there would not put the city at risk."

Interim City Attorney Wayne Winthers explained that the city is not the property owner and that Orange is not responsible for anything at this point. "If the city is not doing anything under this agreement," Barrios asked, "why are we signing this?"

"To give the parties a comfortable feeling that they can work towards this goal," Winthers replied.

Barrios voted "no" on the Letter of Intent. The six other councilmembers voted "yes."

"Lorenzo" continued from page 1

ences as a segregated student and stressed that a school should be named after him, so what he has done "can never be erased."

Layla Grajeda, a niece of Ramirez and an El Modena High student, noted that she appreciates that the school library honors "someone I can relate to."

Need to know

Orange Councilwoman Ana Gutierrez, a staunch supporter of a future Lorenzo Ramirez elementary school, made her case by recounting how she grew up in El Modena, but knew nothing about the neighbor who changed public education in California.

"I've lived in El Modena my whole life, grew up with the Ramirez cousins, played with them, went to school with them. I had no idea of their uncle's impact," she said. "I didn't learn about the Mendez case until 2002. I didn't learn about the 'et als' (Ramirez, Guzman, Estrada,

Palomino) until five years ago. I was surprised to learn El Modena was part of it.

"There has to be something in El Modena that tells residents what happened here, she asserted, "to tell the story of a brave man. Naming a school after him is a good way to do that, and Jordan is the most appropriate one."

"We need to highlight Mr. Ramirez and make it permanent in the El Modena Barrio, she concluded.

The conversation, Erickson summarized, is just starting.



Michael Ramirez, son of Lorenzo Ramirez speaks to the audience, flanked by his brother Tony and Niece Layla Grajeda.

Local Author!

Erica Mae and her new romance book, the Stars of Scotland - the first in her Scottish Stars series



Book available now at Barnes and Noble or a cute shop in Anaheim - Heartbound Book Shop.

Orange Elks donate to community partners



From left, Elk Terrie Schatz, HomeAid board member Dave Prolo, Elk Janine Storm, HomeAid Executive Director Gina Cunningham and Elk Marilyn Dinger.

The Orange Elks Lodge recently donated funds to HomeAid Orange County for La Veta Village and to the Ronald McDonald House.

La Veta Village is a unique and affordable housing community for families and seniors experiencing homelessness. The lodge donated \$2,500 to help provide small homes to the unhoused and



From left, Ronald McDonald House Executive Director Noel Burcelis, with Orange Elks Marilyn Dinger and Terrie Schatz

low-income seniors.

The Ronald McDonald House received \$2,600 to provide housing and support for families when their child needs long-term medical care in a local hospital.





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Guest Commentary

A New Era for Orange Unified: stability, planning and community engagement

By Kris Erickson

School board meetings in Orange Unified may no longer be making headlines, but that doesn't mean critical work is not happening. In fact, the board has been hard at work ensuring the long-term success of our district by fostering civility, securing financial stability, and planning for the future.

At the start of the year, the board held several study sessions, including one on governance. We committed to strengthening our decision-making process by prioritizing respectful dialogue and collaboration. With the addition of new members, we took the opportunity to set new norms, prioritizing productive debate while ensuring that even when disagreements arise, they remain constructive. In a time when public meetings can often become contentious, we believe

that school leaders should set an example for students.

Financial stability remains a priority for this board. In June 2024, after two years of negotiations, the board approved a 9.75% raise for district employees, bringing our pay scale to the median of comparable districts. This was accomplished using reserve funds strategically set aside for this purpose. Today, Orange Unified maintains a \$200 million reserve, a necessary cushion as the district prepares for potential budget reductions and shifts in federal funding.

Looking ahead, declining enrollment is a reality faced by school districts across California, mostly driven by lower birth rates and shifting demographics. In January 2025, the board approved a comprehensive study to assess the impact of enrollment changes on Orange Unified, and to explore whether school consolidations could provide opportunities to upgrade facilities while cutting costs. This initiative aligns with our commitment to serving students in modern, well-equipped campuses while ensuring responsible use of resources.

Facilities planning remains a key focus. With Measure S projects nearing completion, our high school facilities are serving our students well. The board has now turned its attention to elementary schools, which are in clear need of upgrades.

Our Asset Management Plan aims to optimize revenue streams and maintain district assets for the long term. Consolidations, if deemed necessary, could lead to significant investments in campus improvements and the potential for state matching funds, ensuring our schools are not only wellmaintained, but equipped for the future.

Ultimately, our goal is to en-

hance educational quality for all students by:

- Reducing combination classes · Reintroducing assistant prin-
- · Increasing staff collaboration to improve student outcomes

In December, the board brought in former Superintendent Michael Christensen as Interim Superintendent. He has offered steady, experienced, and thoughtful leadership during a crucial time of transition. He will continue to serve through the end of the school year, and the board is grateful for his service.

Orange Unified School District is preparing to welcome its next Superintendent—a milestone moment for the community. The board expects the name to be public soon.

The search for a permanent superintendent attracted 24 highly qualified applicants. Following a thorough selection process, the board unanimously chose a leader they believe will drive the district's progress. Community engagement was instrumental in the search, with more than a dozen forums and over 2,000 survey responses shaping the criteria for selection. The board is confident that its final choice reflects the priorities identified by those who participated.

As the district moves forward, the board encourages continued involvement from parents, students and community members. While meetings have become less contentious, they remain an important space for discussion.

Our students are our number one priority, and a well-informed and engaged community ensures that Orange Unified will continue to thrive and uphold its commitment to excellence in education.

Kris Erickson is president of the OUSD Board of Education.

By Barry Resnick

Over my four decades as a faculty member in the Rancho Santiago Community College District (RSCCD), I've had the privilege of working with some outstanding educational leaders. Unfortunately, I've also witnessed a few whose failed leadership brought embarrassment to our community's two colleges.

In the early 1980s, Santa Ana College was led by J. William Wenrich, a visionary who recognized the need for a community



Circulation ... 40,000

Publisher/Editor

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Published on the last Tuesday of each month and distributed to residences, businesses, libraries and civic centers.

> Printing by Advantage, Inc.

714-532-4406 Fax: 714-532-6755 foothillssentry.com

1107 E. Chapman Ave., #207 Orange, CA 92866 ©Foothills Sentry 2025

college in East Orange. His leadership was instrumental in laying the foundation for what would become Santiago Canyon College. His legacy set a high standard that has proven difficult for successors to match.

Fifteen years ago, Raul Rodriguez assumed leadership over both Santa Ana and Santiago Canyon Colleges. One of his most controversial decisions was entering into a training contract with two colleges in Saudi Arabia, purportedly to generate additional revenue.

The deal quickly unraveled when Rodriguez stated that female employees from the district would not be allowed to participate on-site. What was originally touted as a \$100 million opportunity ultimately yielded a mere \$60,000, which was not even enough to help offset the legal costs of a faculty-filed lawsuit.

Today, RSCCD serves over

50,000 students across multiple sites, with an annual budget nearing a billion dollars. Marvin Martinez, who became chancellor in 2019, initially inspired optimism. However, his recent actions have cast doubts upon his leadership.

Local college district faces leadership challenges

Some may think community college leadership is of limited relevance, but it's your tax dollars that operate both our community's two colleges and related sites. Additionally, local bond Measures E and Q, which imposed long-term financial commitments on taxpayers, are administered by this very leadership.

Off-site and out of sight

Martinez is now at the center of a growing controversy involving \$7.1 million in taxpayer funds. Multiple news outlets-including the Orange County Register, Times/OC, and Foothills Sentry—have reported that the funds were kept in an account managed

by a vendor, not on the district's

The Alliance of Schools for Cooperative Insurance Programs (ASCIP), which has managed RSCCD's various insurance coverages since 1997, operates as a risk pool with other school districts. ASCIP was expected to return excess premiums after reconciliation of the pool, but instead those funds were retained in an ASCIP-controlled account.

RSCCD Trustee Phillip Yarbrough called for the immediate return of the money upon discovering its existence last June. He also alleged that district leadership had withheld information about the fund from the board.

A forensic audit, initiated at Yarbrough's request, confirmed that the funds had been kept off the district's books since 1997. Even the auditors were kept in the dark about the fund. The audit also found education code violations and inherent financial conflicts of interest

This places Martinez in a difficult position. There is no record showing the board was ever informed of the account during his tenure. At the same time, he cannot credibly claim ignorance because he is ultimately responsible for overseeing the district's financial stewardship.

Instead, Martinez has gone on the defensive, publicly dismissing Yarbrough's concerns as "reckless" and hiring a law firm to refute the audit's conclusions.

Regardless of how this unfolds, one thing is clear: it's becoming yet another leadership challenge for our community colleges—one that taxpayers cannot afford to ig-

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

Old fire department headquarters to house temporary fire museum

Orange's decommissioned fire department headquarters, unused and slated for demolition, will be the temporary home of a fire museum and learning center, beginning in early summer.

The fire station on Almond and Grand Street in Old Towne has been empty since the department moved into its new headquarters on Chapman Avenue in 2022. The Orange City Council agreed, April 8, to lease the ground floor of the building to the Call to Adventure California Fire Museum for \$1 until it is ultimately torn down. The second floor of the building is considered unsafe, and the stairway will be blocked off. The ground level will be refurbished and cleaned up before exhibits are installed.

What better location for a fire museum than a fire station, Hoddi Hurlings, president of Call to Adventure, says. While the museum will feature displays of historical apparatus and artifacts, it will also be a learning center, designed to teach the public about safety precautions, how to mitigate risks and live more resilient lives.

Virtual learning exhibits will enable visitors to participate in "adventures" related to fires, unintentional injuries and natural disasters. The adventures will be

built around interactive displays, multimedia and theater presentations, and focus on experiential learning.

"The goal," says Hurlings, "is to infuse fun into safety learning experiences." Call to Adventure's goal is to create a world without unintentional injuries and death. The organization notes that accidental injuries are the third leading cause of death in the U.S., and accidental deaths in fires has increased 22% in the last 10 years.

The temporary museum in Orange is, Hurlings says, "an incubator for a permanent facility that will be located in the Great Park in Irvine." That project has been approved by the Great Park Board and three and a half acres set aside for it. In the meantime, Orange will, at no cost to the city, have a productive use of an otherwise inhospitable space that also enhances the historic district and encourages more visitors.

The Call to Adventure California Fire Museum is ready to launch. "We already have exhibits," Hurlings reports. "Once the lease is signed, we'll start work on the ground floor and get ready to move in."



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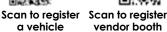
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The city has no immediate plans to raze the old headquarters and expects the lease to continue for at least a year.





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Officials report on State of Old Towne Orange



Residents settle in at the Orange City Council chambers for the State of Old Towne presentation.

City of Orange community leaders addressed a range of issues at the Old Towne Preservation Association's (OTPA) State of the City presentation, April 17.

Topics ranged from Old Town parking fees to city finances to Chapman student housing to the homeless, Mills Act, and city services. Questions, many of them



Mayor Dan Slater

Slater on economic development: "Without economic development, the city will be stuck in the mud. We have a full-time staff member devoted to it, and created an economic forum to bring more business to orange. There are lots of things coming down the pike, but it takes time."

Library services: "We are dedicated to our library system, but we had to make cuts. Orange is fortunate to have its own police and fire departments and its own library system. All of those services cost more money than if we contracted with the county. Library funding will be restored as soon as we have more revenue. For now, the choice is between police officers and librarians."

New city manager: "We have a consultant leading the effort to replace Tom Kisela. Over 65 candidates applied; we have many solid applications. Political stability is a dream situation for a city manager. In Orange, the city council gets along, there's no infighting. We expect to conduct interviews in May."



City Manager Tom Kisela

Kisela on city staffing and services: "Personnel is our number one cost. We're running 82 vacancies. Our pay is not competitive, we're losing people for from Old Towne residents, were posed by OTPA President Rob Boyce. Mayor Dan Slater, City Councilwoman Arianna Barrios, City Treasurer Garrett Smith, City Manager Tom Kisela, Police Chief Adam Jevec and Chapman Vice President of Community Relations Alisa Driscoll did their best to answer them.

that reason. Others are retiring. We're looking at how we are doing business from the top down. The challenge is that we provide service. With vacancies, there is a going to be an impact. We're deferring maintenance, implementing technology, looking to have a balanced budget for general fund this year."

Mills Act: "We're finding out that some people don't recognize that it is a contract, that things have to be accomplished on a timeline. We have 430-ish Mills Act contracts, and a large number are not in compliance. Enforcement is a challenge. We're working with OTPA to come up with options, to come up with a different methodology. Whether the city accepts new applications or not is a policy decision made by the council."



Councilwoman Arianna Barrios

Barrios on paid parking in Old Towne: "I couldn't vote on it because I live there. Paid parking has been a conversation for 20 years. There were parking meters back in the 1960s. Old Towne is growing with an influx of restaurants, shops and businesses. Employees park there all day, and there is no space for patrons. Paid parking is a big revenue enhancement and allows businesses to thrive with more turnover. The lots out of main plaza area are still free, and we're offering permit parking in nearby neighborhoods."

Library services: "The cuts we made were due to metrics, based on when people are actually using the library. It was costing us \$6 million a year, three times that of larger cities. By cutting hours, we have been able to keep all three libraries open."



Police Chief Adam Jevec

Chief Adams on safe and sane fireworks: "The department has a game plan. We're creating enforcement zones, with more officers in smaller areas. We're taking a zero tolerance approach; tickets will be issued. There will be a higher presence of officers in no fireworks zones and using maps of prior calls for service, so we know where problem areas are. Most calls that people make, however, are for fireworks that are illegal."

Update on homeless: "We don't have a homeless shelter, but we have the HUB, just down the street from the police station. The rules there are enforced. Hours are 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. no loitering, no drugs, no pop ups. We estimate between 100 and 115 homeless individuals in the city; our eightperson team maintains constant engagement. We're working with Caltrans, the highway patrol and Santa Ana to eliminate camps. We sheltered over 200 people last year."



Chapman VP Alisa Driscoll

Driscoll on Chapman Specific Plan: "Chapman is asking to increase enrollment at 1.8% per year over 10 years, about 1,800 students. We are committed to housing 50% of undergraduates, and all first and second year students. We've redeveloped several halls to allow for more students and just bought a new building that will house 900. We've made a \$200 million investment in housing over the last decade. Current enrollment is 8,877, just over the 8,700 cap."

Real estate: "Chapman buys properties around itself. We don't go after properties, but they come to us. The majority of houses we own are used by faculty, staff, single families. We pay property taxes on those. We do everything we can to restore those houses."



Treasurer Garrett Smith

Smith on his first months on the job: "You usually think of a treasurer as involved in everything having to do with money. I found out this role is to manage the investment portfolio, so I'm working with Chandler Investments. With that said, there is discussion of making changes and getting more access. I promised you transparency, and I want to do that. I'm working for all of you; maybe by next year things will be slightly different."

Soundness of investments: "I've heard good things about Chandler Investments, met with them in January, calling and emailing them more than they are used to. The city has been with them since 2022. There's over \$120 million in our portfolio, which is 100% bonds. We're seeing 3.5 to 4% percent growth every year. That's a good number."

VPCSF sponsors Wellness Fair

Villa Park Community Services Foundation (VPCSF) and MMG Health and Wellness will sponsor a free Health and Wellness Fair on Saturday, May 31 from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. at the Villa Park Towne Center, 17855 Santiago Blvd.

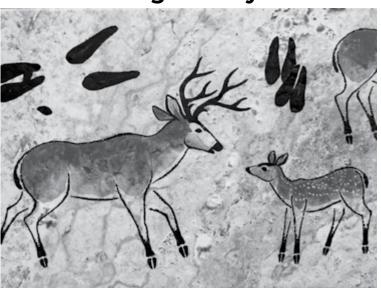
It is a great opportunity to discover local health professionals and businesses that promote wellness, prevention and valuable health resources to help you live your healthiest life. Whether you're looking to start a new wellness journey, or just curious about local health services, this event has something for everyone. Bring your family, friends and neighbors.

It's also a great opportunity if you are a business or organization focused on health, fitness, nutrition or mental wellness to showcase your business by securing a space or providing a demonstration at the event.

For information, see vpcsfoundation.org.



Spring Fling II library fundraiser coming to canyons



Mule deer by Robert Meyer

By Andrew Tonkovich

Library of the Canyons, OC Public Library's smallest branch, is supported by one of the system's most enthusiastic Friends of the Library (FoL) groups, a project of the Inter-Canyon League (ICL). The Second Annual Spring Fling fundraiser, a homemade chili dinner and dessert auction, will once again be hosted by ICL President Geoff Sarkissian and Master Gardener Sarah Sarkissian, caretaker of their award-winning creek-side garden, a Modjeska destination location all its own.

Vegetarian chili with all the fixin's and homemade desserts

—served after competitively friendly bidding for these local culinary creations—arrive with live music, all to support the work of the Friends, whose efforts support family and children's programming and purchases of toys, books and supplies.

Last year's inaugural fundraiser honored the late Fran Williams, longtime FoL chair and onewoman volunteer force of nature. This year the celebration features local artist Robert Mever, whose "prehistoric"-style animal tracks drawings-bobcat, raccoon, deer, skunk and fox-decorate the walls of Orange County's newest, most unique, and much-cherished branch. He'll speak on his work and offer a short presentation including display of plaster casts upon which his representations of local fauna are based.

Tickets are available (\$25 tax deductible donation) at the door but please RSVP: atonkovi@uci. edu or (949) 235-8193. Contributing a cake, pastry, pie or cookies for the dessert auction? Let the hosts know, please. For more on the ICL or to make a donation: intercanyonleague.org.





Yes, and know

SMRPD, meet RPTTF

Recent Silverado-Modjeska Recreation and Parks District (SMRPD) committee meetings --- lately, four in a row on one Tuesday evening! --- document the size and scope of our only local governance agency's mission. Whether maintaining a facility (two, actually) or developing policy, SMRPD is administered by elected and appointed directors. President Ted Wright and both remaining and outgoing board members reported last month on both the success of essential programming and recent struggles. Good news: the weekly seniors "Lunch Bunch" regularly hosts a dozen attendees, and enrollment is solid at the district's singular and enduring project, the Silverado Children's Center. Short-term challenges include working with the Abbey to address use and liability concerns on or adjacent "The Riviera," with negotiations over proposed fencing and a crosswalk. SMRPD

hopes to sponsor nature camps or walks this summer. Responding to complaints, the board drafted a reasonable and enforceable good behavior policy. Our buildings, concert stage, courts, and playground are not in OC Parks' jurisdiction. Independent-minded canyonites seem to like that, but it requires extra care by way of posted rules and regulations to encourage playing well with others. The resignations of director Brittney Kuhn and treasurer Tamara Beauchamp mean the board invites interested residents to self-nominate, with excellent possible appointees already being considered.

"Miscellaneous"

All of the above is complicated by a funding crisis, fully apprehended by President Wright only after months of scrupulous auditing and examining county funding sources since 2019, and next year's incomplete projections. With further info unavailable, it appears that significant funding may have, over past years, been provided on a limited basis with

uncertainty if it will be fully renewed, largely including monies from the Redevelopment Property Tax Trust Fund (RPTTF), last contributed to SMRPD in August 2024. Weirdly, this huge line item is categorized as "Miscellaneous" and, as reported by Wright, the county's AB8 process will allocate "most, but probably not all" of property tax revenue distribution that historically comes our way. Fingers crossed that the Constitutionally required state reimbursement to local agencies and school districts once again includes us. No word on whether this year's massive shortfall (\$95K) will arrive. Next year's allocation numbers arrive in September. Fortunately, your board has maintained a healthy surplus, giving directors more opportunities for further meetings! Wright encourages attendance at monthly meetings, invites committee membership, and says, "SMRPD's dilemma is that, because of the unexpected shortfall in county funding, the district's savings are projected to run out this summer. Uncertainty surrounding the outcome of the AB8 process means we cannot even get a loan to bridge us until increased funding might be avail-

Seeing red

Notwithstanding all-scarlet federal, state, and superviso-

rial governmental representation of the canyons, many locals attended recent regional "Hands Off" rallies and anti-Musk demonstrations outside the Mission Viejo offices of Congresswoman Young Kim (CD-40). Modjeska, Williams and Silverado voters are represented by Republicans State Senator (37) Steven Choi, Assemblymember (71) Kate Sanchez, and Supervisor (5) Don Wagner. Good to know.

Ars gratia canyonis

Canyon Artists invites you to its fifth annual Studio Tour, Saturday, May 24, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Sponsored by local real estate agent Marion Schuller, 13 estimable artists invite you to their studios in Silverado and Modjeska, with a final stop at the ENC Tucker Wildlife Sanctuary. Look for number flags on your tour. Maps are available at Canyon Market and canyonartists.net. Info: artist, organizer Alice Phillips at silveradoglass@cox.net.

If you attend Laguna's Pageant of the Masters this summer, look for work by and about our own local artist. Madame Helena Modjeska, among the tableaux vivants.

Grading

How to know who is grading on local hillsides, or if it's legal? Modjeska residents recently noted bulldozing above Markuson Road, started asking questions, and alerted Code Enforcement. No site mediation (bales, markers, sandbags), a vehicle parked on the property, mud from recent rain, and the eyesore of denuded landscape on a previously scenic ridge got the county's interest.

Memento Mori

May is Older Americans Month. Happily, it's a long month. Celebrate longevity and creativity with diverse Library of the Canyons programming, including origami and knitting classes, rock painting and bingo. This month's Wednesday, May 7, 5 p.m. Book Club read is "A Walk in the Woods" by Bill Bryson, who was a young 45 when he attempted his trek of the Appalachian Trail. Book and film adaptation DVD available, of course, at the library.

Rare fruit and plant sale

The nonprofit OC Chapter of the California Rare Fruit Growers will hold its annual sale of rare and unusual fruiting plants on Sat., May

10, from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. The event will be held at the Costa Mesa Women's Club, 610 W. 18th Street. For more information, see ocfruit.com "plant sale." Proceeds will help fund scholarships for college students majoring in the plant sciences.

Dems feature Supervisor

The Central Orange County Democratic Club will welcome Orange County Supervisor Katrina Foley, and Orange County Board of Supervisors candidate, Connor Traut to its Wednesday, May 28 meeting. They will discuss the state of Orange County now and into the future. Snacks at 6:30 p.m., general meeting starts at 7 p.m. Visit the club website calendar, Mobilize.us or the club Facebook link to RSVP. RSVP is required to attend.

Central OC Dems meet at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 1221 Wass St. in Tustin.







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WWW.CANYONARTISTS.NET @CanyonArtists



Local author spins tale of Scottish Romance By Carrie Graham

Fans of the show "Outlander"

looking for their next kilted fix when the show ends may want to step away from the screen and into the imagination of local author Erica Mae.

Mae's book, "The Stars of Scotland," is a romance novel that follows memoirist and single mom Brielle Hunter as she embarks on a trip of self-discovery and healing after divorce. After devoting herself to rebuilding her children's lives in the wake of the split, she's gifted a trip to Scotland with her best friend where she runs into kilt-clad Bryce Fraser, unaware that he's the star of a popular Scottish show centered on a Highland warrior. As the days of her trip fly by so do the sparks.

Mae, a lifelong Orange resident, always wanted to be a writer, and now her book is available at Barnes and Noble and Amazon. "My little girl dreams came true," she says. "I started writing about fairies and flowers as a kid because I was shy, and writing was how I expressed myself. Now it feels like I achieved one of my life's dreams.'

The mom of two, who also works full-time, began writing "Stars" during the pandemic, after her husband was involved in an accident. She says at times she felt like a single mom, and imagining Brielle's Scottish vacation and romance gave her a chance to live another life and heal from the

The author has Scottish heritage and has always wanted to visit, so thought it would make a perfect setting. "It helped me find peace and joy and escape in a moment that was very trying, and I wanted to share that with other women."

So far, she seems to be doing just that. The book has a rating of 4.4 out of 5 on GoodReads and 4.7 on Amazon, receiving praise from reviewers for her descriptive language, the relatability of her characters and the main character's journey of self-empowerment. While Mae says there are some steamy scenes, fans are more taken with the tenderness with which

Bryce treats Brielle as he attempts to keep her identity a secret from the paparazzi and teaches her to love again.

In addition to "The Stars of Scotland," Mae has written a holiday romantic comedy based around cooking, called "Falling for Lemon Snowballs" that she says is a quick read meant to be similar to a Lifetime Christmas movie. Though romance is her primary genre, she also writes children's books. She's done several picture books and is currently working with her son on a book about a magic tractor as a means of encouraging him to read.

Her son isn't the only family member she's motivating. After seeing her mom's book on sale at Barnes and Noble, her daughter says she wants to write a book too.

And those who think Mae's Scottish warrior sounds like their cup of tea are in luck, because "Stars" is just the first in a threepart series, with the other two installments planned for falls of 2025 and 2026. She also has a spin-off planned.



Orange Unified showcases student talent



Musicians from the Orange Honor Orchestra



Villa Park High School Dance team

The best of Orange Unified ing work from schools across the School District's student performers and artists took center stage on March 25-26, at the annual VAPA (Visual and Performing Arts) Showcase, a celebration of music, dance and visual arts.

Sponsored by the Orange Unified Public Schools Foundation (OUPSF) and hosted at Chapman University's Memorial Hall, the showcase brought together students, families and community members to celebrate the district's thriving arts programs.

The event kicked off with performances by the district's elementary, middle and high school honor bands and orchestras on the first night.

The second evening highlighted the district's dance teams, featuring performances by Yorba Middle School, Canyon, El Modena, Orange and Villa Park High Schools.

In addition to the stage performances, both nights featured a student art exhibition, displaydistrict.

"We are proud of our amazing artists, dancers and musicians, said Frank Tucker, OUPSF President. "Thank you all for two nights of inspiring work."

Orange Unified Public Schools Foundation, a nonprofit dedicated to supporting educational programs in the district, has awarded over \$150,000 in grants for innovative initiatives in recent years. The organization also contributes funding for high school sports programs and works to address the diverse needs of students and

Looking ahead, OUPSF invites the community to participate in upcoming events, including the OUSD Olympiad Games on May 23 at Fred Kelly Stadium; Children's Street at the Orange International Street Fair on Aug. 29-31; and the annual Celebration of Schools on Oct.15.

For information on OUPSF, or to donate, visit oupsf.org.

Orange Emblem Club #418 has an ongoing relationship with Esplanade Elementary's after-school library program. Community Service Chair Carole Walters and Jan Genelle, both Emblem Club members, met at the school, April 17, to distribute Easter Baskets to the library program students. The children were surprised and thrilled to be able to pick out a basket from those that had been delivered earlier in the day.



The Orange Emblem Club held its annual Appreciation Luncheon for non-members who volunteered on behalf of the club last year. Those attending the March 22 event included, top row from left, John Raya, Shawn Collins, Gary Dobereiner, Joyce Claussen, Tom Brown, Braeden Bailey, Jason McWhirter and Mike Duff; middle row, from left, Deann Collins, Lynn Butler, Laurie and George Padilla; front row, from left, Ana, Vanessa and Jaylene Fragoso, Wanda McWhirter.



Donna and Ken Barasch named **Distinguished Citizens**



The city council, from left, Mayor Pro Tem Jordan Wu, Councilwoman Crystal Miles and Mayor Nicol Jones, with honorees Donna and Ken Barasch, Councilmen Kelly McBride and Robert Frackelton.

The City of Villa Park recently honored Ken and Donna Barasch as Distinguished Citizens, in celebration of their many contributions to the community and beyond.

Donna taught special education students for over 30 years. She shared her love of cooking by founding the Orange County Cooking School and teaching cooking to the blind at the Braille Institute and cooking at numerous Girl Scout camps.

Ken owned and operated a marketing firm for over five decades, authored a best-selling book, and served as a wine, restaurant and travel correspondent for Elmer Dills' "Good Life Report." He donated wines for fundraisers for Rotary Club, Boys & Girls Club, Orange Home Grown and others.

A visit to Fiji inspired the couple to found the Savusavu Community Foundation, which contributed \$200 million for medical care, pharmaceuticals and education in Fiji. The Foundation has also constructed schools, libraries, medical facilities and evacuation centers there.

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French Wedding is highlight of VPHS



Groom Jimmy Falk and his groomsmen



The beautiful tiered wedding cake

By Andie Mills

A combination of theatrics, ceremony, music and camaraderie, celebrating springtime and love, is a highlight each year at Villa Park High School.

The school's French Program, headed by Madame Fatima Pazargadi, has produced the extravaganza for 19 years. With student Ivy Lloyd as the wedding coordinator and emcee, this year's theme incorporated butterflies. signifying the preservation of nature. Also celebrating world cultures, the event was dedicated



Bride Kathleen Tighe in her bespoke gown and veil

to the Notre-Dame Cathedral of Paris. An arch of flowers, tulip centerpieces and a three-tier cake adorned with flowers and butterflies carried out the theme.

The Orange High Marine Corps JROTC presented the flags, and teacher Jonathan Pongco played the "Wedding March." Principal Dennis Mc-Cuistion played the father of the bride, walking Kathleen Tighe down the aisle to meet her groom Jimmy Falk. Mme. Kathryn Moffat was the mother of the groom. Lexi McCarroll was the maid of honor, while Brian Wilson



Orange High School Marine Corps JROTC



The bride and groom light a new candle together, signifying their union, as Priest Louis Hermann directs.

TAWC announces Young

Women of the Month

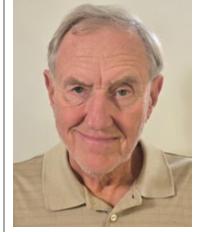
was best man. Bridesmaids in mint included Samaira Multani, Yvonne Vu, Sadie Clemmons, Sophia Imsande, Emily Cooper and Kiana Ramirez. The groomsmen were Youssef Badr, Yoshua Alcantara, David Arguello, JT Meredith, Anthony Elkhoury and Ryan Gerger. The ring bearer was Johnathan Bates, and the flower girls were Vivienne Bennett, London Clemmons, Kenzi Clemmons and Abigail Robinson.

Louis Hermann acted as the priest; garland holders were Alexis Aakre, Jessie Richards, Eleanor Hutchinson, Lauren

Deschenes, Kara Smith, Sydnie Bennet, Lucy Barnhart, Isabella Camera, Amani Rahman, Taylor Foster, Brianna Santiago and Fernanda Trujillo. Readings were given by Lily Barajas, Darla Flynn, Alia Erkelens, Tyler Rallison and Erica Wynn. Ava Moore, Antonio Romero, Mars Elizarraras, Aaron Woolett and Kayla Hodge added to the ceremony with their musical talents.

Guests included city officials, OUSD board members, parents and community members, enjoying fresh crepes and the beautiful rendition of a timeless story.

Local author hosts book signing in **North Tustin**



Andrew Suskind

Andrew Suskind, a retired doctor and North Tustin Resident, has turned his experiences working in the aftermath of worldwide disasters into a book, "On the Edge: An Everyday Doctor's Adventures in Disaster Medicine," and will introduce it to the community at a book signing and discussion, May 4.

His discussion topics will answer such questions as: how could a biologic male be complaining of vaginitis? Were zombies real (probably yes) and do they still exist today? Can voodoo curses really harm people (answer: yes)? How did the United Nations cause one of the worst cholera epidemics? And why maybe you shouldn't say it with roses?

The signing event will be held at the Tustin Racquet Club, 11782 Simon Ranch Road, beginning at 11:15 a.m. A limited number of books will be available for sale. They can also be purchased ahead of time on Amazon.

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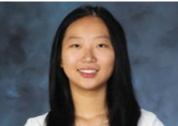
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Aubry Johnson

The Tustin Area Woman's Club named Aubry Johnson and Elaine Cui its Young Women of the Month for April.

Aubry Johnson from Tustin High School has excelled academically and athletically throughout her educational career. She participated in water polo, swim and volleyball. She has demonstrated leadership in the Tustin High School Model United Nations program. With a passion for adventure and personal growth, she is a certified SCU-BA diver, has gone skydiving and enjoys snowboarding. She is currently an employee at REI. Aubry looks forward to attending the



Elaine Cui

University of California at San Diego or Santa Barbara this fall.

Elaine Cui, from Beckman High School, is a viola player in the chamber orchestra group and enjoys making music with her friends. She is the founder of the Astronomy Club, which aims to spread love and appreciation for worlds beyond our own. Cui is the President of OC Science, an organization that encourages STEAM education among youth She is interested in applications of computer science to other fields and has performed interdisciplinary research. She plans to major in computer science at either Cal



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1801073

State Farm, Bloomington, IL

Tustin Sunset Market returns



By Guy Ball

The Tustin Sunset Market in Old Town Tustin returns on May 15. This special mid-year event occurs on the third Thursday evening of the month through September, from 5 to 8:30 p.m. draws thousands of attendees. It offers a unique shopping experience, live entertainment, food trucks and an evening Farmers Market on a pedestrian-only street in the center of Tustin.

El Camino Real will close to traffic from 2nd to Main Streets. allowing guests a peaceful stroll through one of Tustin's oldest historic districts. The street fair features various commercial and craft vendors, community organizations, a beer/wine garden, and live music from a number of area bands.

There is no admission charge, and nearby restaurants are open for full dinners. Free parking is available on nearby streets and a city parking lot.

There are still opportunities for sponsorships, vendors, and even volunteering. Contact Erin at the Tustin Community Foundation at (714) 393-8506 for information about available slots.



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OBITUARIES

Bob Bell 1934-2025



On March 12, our beloved dad passed away. He was a husband, father and grandfather of four beautiful grandkids, Rob Welty, Alessa Bell, Presley Bell and Hunter Bell. He was 90 years young. Bob lived a wonderful life, full of happy times traveling, being the Volunteer Fire Chief in Villa Park, serving as councilman and mayor of Villa Park for 16 years, spending time with family, as well as achieving a myriad of accomplishments.

Born in Marshalltown, Iowa in 1934, both he and his family moved to San Jose, California when he was nine years old. After living there for about two years, his dad, Orin Bell, got a job with the WMCA in Orange, where dad grew up. He attended elementary school, middle school and then Orange High School, which, at that time, was where Chapman University sits today. It is at Or-

ange High where he met his wife Karen. They were high school sweethearts. Dad found many joys in life reading history books, as he "loved history." You could ask him anything, and if he didn't know, you could bet he would research it and find the answer.

The world has lost a wonderful person. Bob will be missed dearly by all who knew him, especially his family and great friends all over. You always knew when Bob was in the room with his powerful voice and wonderful laugh. He was "Bob Bell."

Bob is survived by his aforementioned grandkids, his son and wife Mr./Mrs. Scott Bell, his daughter Mindy and husband Mike Corbin, and our truly great and dear friend and long-time neighbor, Steve Palmer, who is like a brother and family to all of us.

Dad was laid to rest at Fairhaven Cemetery in Santa Ana next to his wife Karen.

VP Councilman Robert Frackelton adds: One of the faces on Villa Park's Mount Rushmore (if there was one), Bob Bell, will be memorialized on Memorial Day. Bob spent 47 years protecting Villa Park as our volunteer fireman, Engineer, Captain and Station Chief out of Fire Station 23. He served a record 16 years on the City Council, and a record three terms as mayor.

The Memorial Day celebration of his life will take place at 2:30 p.m. at Fire Station 23 on Villa Park Road. Fun fact, Bob was born on Memorial Day 91 years ago.

Parking for folks 65-plus is in back of the Fire Station, or in the front lot. All others, please park on North. Linda Vista between the fire station and Cannon.

SCC to host Neon Night Tech and E-sports

Santiago Canyon College will host Neon Night, a market-style event celebrating technology, gaming and e-sports, on Wednesday, May 8, from 4 to 9 p.m. at the college's gymnasium. The event is free and open to the public.

Geared toward students and the greater Orange community, Neon Night will feature live e-sports competitions, hands-on technology exhibits, interactive booths, and showcase local artists and food vendors.

The main attraction, the Neon Night Main Stage, will feature a series of e-sports matches between student teams. A 40-foot stage and 20-foot LED video wall will create an immersive experience for attendees.

The event also includes the Prompt-a-Thon, an AI-powered tournament where teams of local high school and SCC students will use artificial intelligence models to solve real-world problems centered around the healthcare industry. The competition blends creativity, strategic thinking and technology, culminating in a live finale on the main stage.

In addition, Resource Alley will showcase academic programs at SCC, as well as career opportunities in tech, gaming and healthcare. Local artists and vendors will round out the night, offering handmade goods and community connections.

SCC is located at 8045 E. Chapman Avenue.









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Living History Garden Party coming to Stevens' mansion



Stevens' mansion

By Guy Ball

The Tustin Area Historical Society is hosting a unique Living History event on Saturday, May 17 as a major fundraiser.

The evening will include early architecture, with music, food, beverages silent auction, and in-person history at a Garden Party at Tustin's historic Stevens' Square in Old Town Tustin.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, Sherman Stevens was one of Orange County's most successful and wealthiest businessmen. He and his wife Martha raised their family in Tustin, traveled the world, collected art, and played a large role in the local social and fine-culture scene.

Their custom-built, 1880s Victorian style home on Main St. is still a picturesque Tustin land-

mark.

While guests are enjoying food and drink, they will meet re-enactors portraying Sherman and Martha, talking about their early work and social life in the growing town of Tustin prior to the 20th century, as well as discuss their beautiful home and vacation trips to other parts of the world.

All proceeds will benefit the Tustin Area Historical Society, the Tustin Area Museum, and its programs for schoolchildren.

The Garden Party runs from 5:30 to 8 p.m., is for adults only, and tickets, \$75 per person, must be purchased in advance. Tickets are available at TustinHistory. com or at the Tustin Area Museum at 345 El Camino Real.

For additional information, call the Museum at (714) 731-5701 or email tustinmuseum@att.net.

Assistance League's evening programs give volunteers more options

Assistance League of Orange is proud to transform the lives of children and adults through community programs. One such event is the Orangewood Children & Family Center – Evening Program, offered in partnership with the Orange Blossoms Auxiliary.

Each month, they host a craft night for middle and high school girls currently supported by Orangewood. These evenings are filled with creativity, conversation and a meal—an experience that lifts spirits on both sides.

As many Orange Blossom members work during the day, this evening philanthropy, chaired by Cheryl Scudday and Lori Powell, is a perfect fit, allowing more volunteers to stay connected and engaged.



Assistance League of Orange Orangewood activity chairs, Cheryl Scudday, left, and Lori Powell, far right, with Orange Blossoms Jessica Gonzalez and Oana Murray.

Assistance League is always looking for ways to connect its working members with community needs through evening and

weekend programs and its Assisteens and Orange Blossoms auxiliaries. To learn more, visit assistanceleague.com/orange.

Rotary Club offers scholarships

Villa Park Rotary is now accepting applications for two Endowment Scholarships for graduating high school seniors.

The Rich Freschi Vocational Studies Scholarship is offered to a Villa Park High School senior planning to attend a vocational or trade school. The Scott Family Health Studies Scholarship will be awarded to a senior graduating from any local high school and pursuing a career in the health The deadline to inquire is May 22. Email pdmortg@msn.com and indicate which scholarship you are interested in.

The awards will be presented on June 5 at the Villa Park Rotary meeting.

Historical society features the world of Eichler

The Orange Community Historical Society will feature architect and historian Alan Hess, discussing the backstory of how and why Eichler homes became significant, on Wednesday, May 14.

Orange hosts three Eichler neighborhoods of unique Modern homes designed 65 years ago. As Mid-century Modern style was rediscovered, those neighborhoods were given City of Orange Historic District status in 2019.

Alan Hess is the author of 22 books on Modern architectural history. A graduate of the UCLA School of Architecture, Hess lectures nationally on Modern architectural history, preservation, and urban planning, and has appeared in numerous architectural documentaries.

The meeting will be held the Community Room of the Main Library, beginning at 5:30 p.m. A members-only tour of selected Eichler homes will be announced at the meeting, to take place later in the month. Attendees may join the Society at the meeting, or online at historicalorange.org. Signups for the tour will follow the program.









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Writers talk shop to benefit VP Library

Friends of the Villa Park Library will host best-selling mystery series author Mike Befeler and nonfiction crime writer Duane Swierczynski in its continuing series of author presentations.

Befeler authored the Omnipodge Mysteries, "Old Detectives Home," "Last Gasp Motel" and "A Mystery Yarn," six novels in the Paul Jacobson Geezerlit Mystery Series, including "Retirement Homes Are Murder" and "Living With Your Kids is Murder," plus 11 other mystery novels.

Swierczynski is the author of 15 novels, including "California Bear" and "Expiration Date," graphic novels "Breakneck" and "Redhead" and over 250 comic books, including "Deadpool" and "Birds of Prey."

The fundraiser will be held on Saturday, May 24 Mike Befeler from 2-4 p.m. in Villa Park City Hall, 17865 Santiago Blvd. Tickets are \$40 at the door. Book signings and refreshments will take place following the presentations. For more information, see fovpl.org.





Duane Swierczynski

The winner of the Orange Unified Public Schools Foundation (OUPSF) 2025 Car Sweepstakes was announced at the VAPA Showcase. Glory Johnson of Orange won a three-year lease for a 2025 Nissan Rogue, courtesy of Stadium Nissan. From left, OUPSF President Frank Tucker, sweepstakes winner Glory Johnson, OUPSF board members Todd Hanson, Whitney Amsbary and Rosei Goldsmith.



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Chief Adams' final crime report is good news

By Carrie Graham

Crime is on a downward trend in the City of Orange according to a recent report given by former Police Chief Dan Adams.

The report on crime statistics from 2024 was presented at the March 25 city council meeting, a day before Adams' retirement. Overall crime in the city decreased by about 10% from 2023 to 2024, and is down 20% in 2025, compared to the same time last year. While robberies and stolen vehicles increased slightly, homicide, sexual and aggravated assaults, and crimes against residential and commercial buildings decreased.

In their efforts to address the unhoused population in Orange, the OPD Homeless Engagement, Assistance and Resource Team, or HEART, made contact over 5,000 times, helped direct about 200 to shelter and conducted 133 mental health follow-ups.

"While we all would like to end homelessness, it's going to be tough as long as it's legal to be homeless," Adams said. "But we will continue with this level of staffing to make sure that quality of life issues are dealt with and that when people do commit law violations we will arrest them.

In total, Orange PD received 95,570 calls for service, an aver-

age of 260 calls per day. Nearly 50,000 of those were emergency calls, and over 99% of those were answered within 10 seconds. Officer response time was about four minutes, and nearly 6,000 arrests were made.

Adams also addressed a topic of frequent criticism, the Plaza Park. While it feels like someone hits the fountain every other month, collisions are actually down significantly. "I want to report so everybody hears it from me," the Chief stressed, "that in 2024 we had one collision in Plaza Park compared to four in 2023 and 12 in 2022. So, obviously, there were a lot in 2022, but for everybody on social media who says 'there's another one,' 'happens all the time,' 'so dangerous,'we had one collision in 2024 and zero so far in 2025."

Decrease is twofold

Although crime has decreased, so have the number of OPD officers with "boots on the ground." The department had managed to hit its staffing goal of 170 in 2023, but has since decreased to cies can be attributed to retirements or injury, Adams said some officers and other members of the in other cities for more money.

"It's about retention right now.

It's about pay. That's the only way we're going to retain people," he said. "All the police departments are competing, all the departments are finding new ways to recruit officers, including referral bonuses. Police officers are looking at the end result, what are they taking home every two weeks?"

Adams said that they do have several officers ready to start the police academy and several more already in training, but stressed the importance of being able to plan for growth in the future.

It's also worth noting that the community is part of what has helped officer success. Last year, 61 volunteers worked over 5,600 hours, saving the department close to \$160,000 in salaries. Additionally, 133 residents participated in community academies, and 56 neighborhood watch meetings were held.

After finishing up the presentation, former chief Adams wished incoming chief Adam Jevec luck and thanked the city for the opportunities he's had.

"After 35 years, tomorrow is my last day," he remarked. "So 153. Though some of the vacan- I say thank you all, good luck to everybody moving forward. I hope Orange continues being an awesome community. It's given department have left for positions me my whole career, this has been my only job so it's been pretty cool."

Edison meets with residents to discuss power shutoffs

Southern California Edison (SCE) representatives provided a tutorial on Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS) and heard from angry residents whose electricity had been interrupted for days at a time at a public meeting, April 9, at Salem Lutheran Church.

"The big reason we are here," Cynthia Quimby, Edison government relations manager, explained, "is to listen to you. The decision to cut power is not taken lightly. It is only a last resort."

That last resort has, apparently, impacted some customers more than others. Audience members described losing power repeatedly, with little, if any, warning, and living without it for, some reported, up to five days. Others noted the danger to people who rely on electricity to power medical equipment and elderly neighbors who need extra help. They also noted the high cost of generators. Edison claims it will offer rebates for generators, but as several audience members noted, not all of them qualify.

The primary complaint was, "why doesn't Edison simply fix the problem areas and avoid PSPS's all together."

Mitigating measures

The company is trying, according to Emergency Operations Manager Cameron McPherson, but the fixes are daunting. The grid is 50,000 square miles, with 14,000 square miles in a high fire risk area. The company services 51,000 miles of overhand lines, 14,000 miles of which are in high risk zones. It encompasses 1.4 million towers and poles.

Senior Manager Chris Clark reported that Edison is hardening the grid by covering conductors, segmenting circuits and undergrounding when possible. Last year, he said, the company replaced three miles of circuitry serving Villa Park and a portion of East Orange with covered conductors. Covered conductors can withstand higher winds and avoid sparking or arcing if an overhead line is hit by a tree branch or other objects, therefore reducing fire risk and improving reliability. The company also performed over 100 maintenance repairs in those areas. Those improvements are not guaranteed remedies but they do mitigate the possibility of outages.

McPherson explained that wind speed thresholds, dry weather conditions and fire science are the factors considered when Edison invokes a PSPS. Weather patterns are forecast for areas down to 1 or 2 kilometers to assess wind speeds that may cause damage the system. Conductors can withstand sustained winds up to 31 mph, with gusts of 46 mph. Covered conductors can handle 40 mph winds with 58 mph gusts.

Dry weather results in dry brush, which increases the possibility of fire. SCE conducts biweekly sampling of vegetation to determine dryness in high-risk areas. That data is fed into a fire potential index to calculate the risk of fire. Fire scientists can predict potential ignition and in what direction a fire might spread.

As conditions threaten the grid, individual segments of a circuit are, when possible, switched to neighboring circuits so power can be retained and delivered. During large scale events, however, power may be turned off anyway.

That isn't what residents wanted to hear.

OPA to host **Town Hall**

Residents of Orange Park Acres are invited to a Town Hall meeting, Wednesday, May 14 at Salem Lutheran Church.

The meeting, commencing at 7 p.m., will cover fire and police safety, Orange County Animal Response Team evacuation and animal safety, the 4th of July Parade and Community Updates

Salem is located at 6500 E. Santiago Canyon Road.

Registration for the 58th annual OPA 4th of July Parade opens June 1. This year's parade theme is "OPA Dreamin." Visit orangeparkacres.org.



Amelia Castro of the Orange Emblem Club is collecting unwanted clothing to distribute to those in need. If you are into "spring cleaning" and have any clothes to donate, please contact her at amelia castro@hotmail.com and she will pick them up. The project ends May 17.

Orange Art Association features Mark Jacobucci

The Orange Art Association will feature artist Mark Jacobucci at its Monday, May 12 meeting. Jacobucci, an oil painter, will begin his presentation at 7:30 p.m.

The meeting will be held at the Community of Christ Church, 395 S. Tustin Street. For information, contact Pat at (714) 538-





Orange High School pitcher Jason Huerta hauls in the infield pop-up.



Nathan Valdez from El Modena slid safely into second after a pickoff attempt. Dirk O'Dette from Orange High missed the throw. ElMo won the non-conference game, 11-1.

CIF Ford Academic Awards honor local athletes

The 37th annual CIF-SS Ford Academic individual and team awards were presented April 22 at pre-game ceremonies at Angel Stadium.

Individual winners were: Claire Vaughan, 4.0, Canyon High, swimming and diving, water polo; Joey Gregorio, Canyon High, 4.0, lacrosse; from Foothill High, Ashley Kwan, 3.7, cross country, track & field; Gavin Lauridsen, 3.6, baseball; from Orange High, Natalie Ramirez, 3.7, tennis and Xavier Valentine, 4.0, football; from Orange Lutheran, Cameron Krueger, 4.0, cross country and track & field, Malia Yehya, 4.0, beach volleyball and volleyball; from Villa Park, Isabella Puccio, 4.0, swimming and diving, water polo and Jason White, 4.0, golf.

In team sports, Villa Park took second overall, and first place in its enrollment category in baseball, with a 3.743 GPA; and earned second overall and first place in its enrollment category in boys golf with a 3.863 GPA.

Orange Lutheran earned second place in its enrollment category in girls flag football with a 3.783, with Villa Park High earning third with a 3.765.

Villa Park placed second in its enrollment category for football, at 3.574. Orange High, Orange Lutheran, Villa Park and Canyon earned honorable mentions in various other team categories.

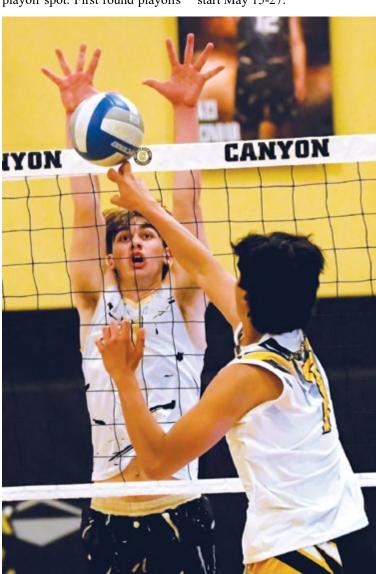
Spring CIF-SS playoff info

Canyon High School's (5-6, 11-8) girls beach volleyball team captured third place in the Crestview League and was the fourth seed in the Division 3 playoffs. Foothill (5-7, 9-9) took fourth place in the Crestview League race and did not qualify for a playoff spot. First round playoffs

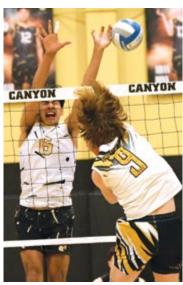
started April 22 and the finals are set for May 3.

In other spring sports, boys and girls lacrosse first round runs April 28-May 16. Boys volleyball starts April 30-May 10.

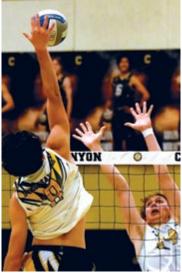
Tennis starts May 7-14, and softball and baseball playoffs start May 15-27.



JJ Barraza (7) from Foothill High School battles the net with Canyon's Brayden Van Hook.



Caden Epperson (9) from Foothill High School scores over Julian Chamu (6) from Canyon High



Ethan Fernandez (8) from Foothill High School gets over the block of Jackson Carlew from Canyon High School to score.

Canyon holds NCAA signing party for eight athletes

Canyon High held its annual NCAA Letter of Intent signing, April 16, where senior studentathletes signal their intent to continue their athletics and education.

Signing were: Nate DeSouza, to play lacrosse at Tusculum University; Madison Gallacher, track and field at Azusa Pacific University; Emily Howard, cross country and track and

field at California Polytechnic University-Pomona; Ainsley Jackson, lacrosse at Colorado State University Pueblo; Jayden Legaspi, track and field at Concordia University Irvine; Connor Lindauer, lacrosse at University of Dubuque; Everett Roach, basketball at University of Hawaii at Hilo; and Brayden Van Hook, volleyball at William Penn University.

Unity students set personal bests at Santiago Canyon 5K

Head coach Dylan Trumbull from Unity Middle College High School of Orange announced that new personal milestones were achieved at the Santiago Canyon College's Hawk's Flight 5K, held March 22.

For some of the runners, it was their first 5K. Emmanuel Hernandez Navarrete, a senior, placed 13th out of 37 in the 30 & Under division. Braden Goodrich, a sophomore, dropped 3 minutes off his time, posting a 24:05.9. Jomar Bernal, a junior from Yorba Linda posted a 38.11.7. Sophomore Chelsea Zonick posted a 40:09.8.

The first runner to cross the line at the SCC 5k was Jesus Retiguin from Orange in 16:47.6. The second place finisher was Nathan Fisher from Corona in 17:18.2. Third place was Alyssa Armendariz from Yorba Linda in 17:57.1.



Head Coach Dylan Trumbull, left, from Unity Middle College High School joins the post-5K race awards of his runners, left to right, Emmanuel Hernandez (12), the SCC Hawk, Brayden Goodrich (10), Chelsea Zonick (10) and Jomar Bernall (11)



The youngsters that ran the kids trot after the SCC 5K were all presented metals by SCC President Jennie Kim.



Clarity Williams, a 1-year-old from Irvine, finished the Kids Trot in record time. Williams charmed the spectators at the finish line at Santiago Canyon 5K race.



Jeannie Kim, president of Santiago Canyon College, right, awards Jesus Retiguin of Orange the first place medal at the 5K race. His time was 16:47.6

Steve Patterson named Div. 3 Coach of the Year

Steve Patterson, head coach at (senior) D. Foothill High School, was named Coach of the Year in Division 3, after guiding the Knights to a Division 3 CIF-SS Girls Soccer Championship.

Hannah Werdel, a junior, was recognized as Player of the Year.

Foothill teammates named to Div. 3 ALL-CIF were Vanessa Paredes (soph) M, Arllene Vite (soph) F, and Melanie Salazar

In Division 1 from Orange Lutheran, named as ALL-CIF were Joey Birkbeck (11) D, and Madi Eguia (10).

In Division 2 Boys Soccer, named as ALL-CIF from Canyon High School were Luke Ward (senior) F, and Ryan Grimm (junior) M; Jacob Garcia (senior) M, from Foothill High, was also named All-CIF.





Logan Cummins from Foothill High School runs the offense after the face off in the St. Margaret's game.



Lizzy Weaver from Foothill High School (in white) advances the ball up field in the Mira Costa game.



Kyle Seinturier from Foothill High School brings the ball upfield in the St. Margaret's game.



Tavin Russell from Foothill High School takes a shot in the St. Margaret's game.



Ava Pistone from Foothill High School (11) lines up for a shot on goal in the Mira Costa game.



Gavin Shultz, Foothill High School goalkeeper, goes up to take away a goal in the St. Margaret's game.



Elle Vickers from Foothill High School takes control of the ball on the face off against Mira Costa.



Foothill High School goalkeeper Nella Banuelos and Hadley Mills (1) eliminate the scoring threat in front of the Foothill cage.

Century Conference awards Girls All-League Soccer

In the Crestview League, Mia Gonzalez (10) from Villa Park High School was named Co-Offensive Player of the Year.

Named to the First Team: from Villa Park High School, Ruby Fisher (11) and Harmoni Brown (11). Villa Park High athletes named to the Second Team include Alia Dadabohy (12), and Evi Berrera (10).

In the Freeway League, Caroline Hicks (11) from Canyon High School was named Co-Offensive Player of the Year. Ashlee Backoff (12) from Canyon High was named Defensive Player of the Year. Named to the First Team from Canyon High were Julia Fritzgerald (12), Ava Brobst (12)

and Sophia Punsalang (10). The Second Team athletes from Canyon are Ryley Piche (11), Sophia Gallacher (10) and Kinzie Krause (10).

In the North Hills League, Hannah Werdel (11) from Foothill High School was named Co-Defensive Player of the Year. Athletes named to the First Team from Foothill High are Melanie Salazar (12) and Brady Campbell (12); First Team honors went to Katelyn Galasso (12) from El Modena. Second Team honors went to Foothill High School's Arllene Vite (10) and Vanessa Paredes (10), and Scarllett Lopez (12) from El Modena High School.



Carlos Diaz, goalkeeper from El Modena High School, climbs the ladder to take a goal away in the non-conference game against Hart High School.

Century Conference awards Boys All-League Soccer

In the Crestview League, Jacob Garcia from Foothill High School (12) was named Most Valuable Player. Matthew Mendoza (12) from Foothill High was awarded Offensive Player of the Year, and Austin Carey (12) from Canyon High School was named Defensive Player of the Year.

Four Foothill High athletes were named to the First Team: Quinn Frye (12), Alexander Rios (11), Brock Chapman (12) and Garrett Zehner (11). Three from Canyon High School were named to the First Team: Ryan Grimm (11), Trevor Ray (11) and Luke Ward (12). Second Team honors went to three from Foothill High: Saul Fiallos (10), Devin Orozco (12) and Aidan Robinette (12). Three Canyon High athletes were awarded Second Team honors:

Karan Shingre (11), Macoy Smith (11) and Toby Itoyama (12).

In the Freeway League, Jesse Herrera from Villa Park High School was named Offensive Player of the Year. Joan Magana (12), also from VPHS, was named Defensive Player of the Year. First Team honors were awarded to Villa Park High athletes: Parker Vititoo (12), Dalton Lang (10), Jude Califf (10) and Daniel Merin (12). Second Team honors went to Oswaldo Salgado (12), Damien Amorino (11) and Leonel Guillen (11).

In the North Hills League, First Team honors went to Tristen Martinez (12) and Cameron Collazo (10) from El Modena High. Second Team athletes from El Modena are Connor Chu (12) and Jake Davis (11).

