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A Monthly Community Newspaper

JULY 2025



Anticipating the arrival of Representative Young Kim and Supervisor Don Wagner for an invitation-only meeting at the Silverado Community Center, residents gathered to demonstrate their opposition to a federal budget line item that would sell off 2.1 million acres of public lands, including the Cleveland National Forest. Citing safety concerns, the scheduled meeting was changed to Zoom, so the electeds did not show up. The meeting, attended by representatives from several canyon organizations, had been called to discuss wildfire prevention and response, forest service staffing and the Gold Spotted Oak Borer. The sell-off of forest lands was, however, raised by several Zoom participants. Kim advised that the land sale was inserted into the bill by the Senate, and the revised version would come back to the House for approval. She told those attending the meeting that she would show photos taken of the canyon protest to House leadership.

Orange Audit Committee traces city deficit back to 2008

By Tina Richards

A review of the City of Orange's budget, going back to 2008, reveals that the current deficit is rooted in the recession that began that year and the subsequent dissolution of the state Redevelopment Agency. The city's inability to recover was, and is, due largely to ever-growing pension fund obligations.

The review was conducted by the city's Audit Advisory Committee at the request of the city council. The committee is composed of Orange residents with financial expertise appointed by the council. They include Chair

Carolyn Cavecche, Vice Chair Financial Reports, which are au-Brian Wilterink, Caleb Brown, Jeff Grampp, Andrew Li, Chris Horton and Jack Schroeder. City Treasurer Garrett Smith is an ex officio member. The dive into 17 years of financial data was assisted by Orange's Finance Director Trang Nguyen. It was Nguyen ing the recession years, 2009-12, who identified the deficit as a serious problem when she joined the city in 2023.

No extraordinary spending

In a report to the city council, June 10, Cavecche and Wilterink reported that the data used by the committee was taken from the city's Annual Comprehensive es just under \$85 million.

dited by independent firms. None of the audited reports showed any significant spending beyond what had been approved by the attendant councils in their yearly budget allocations.

The committee found that duras revenues slumped, the city had to dip into its reserve funds to continue operating. At that time, employee contracts were renegotiated and the workweek reduced to 36 hours. The largest gap between income and outgo occurred in 2010 when revenue was slightly below \$80 million and expens-

As the imbalance began to even out by 2012, the state dissolved the Redevelopment Agency and the city had to repay \$10.7 million. By 2013, the operating fund balances had dropped from \$90 million to \$67 million. Long-term debt, primarily pension liability, had increased from \$93 million to \$156 million.

Treading water

During the post-recession years, 2014-2019, revenues exceeded expenditures, but not enough to make up for the short-

See "Orange Audit" continued on page 5

OUSD board meets declining enrollment with possible school closures

By Tina Richards

An in-depth study conducted to identify options for school consolidations in Orange Unified narrowed the field of feasible mergers to eight elementary schools and one middle school.

The results, presented to the of Trustees at a OUSD Board special meeting, June 18, suggested that Prospect Elementary be closed and students moved to

Esplanade; Imperial Elementary be closed and students transferred to Crescent; Jordan Elementary incorporated into La Veta, with Jordan remaining open as a dual language magnet school; Fletcher Elementary and its Mandarin program merged with Taft, which could become an "international language school;" and Portola and Yorba Middle Schools combined.

The consolidation study is a response to declining enrollment, a

statewide phenomenon, that has reduced OUSD's student population by some 15% since 2014. That translates to 4,500 students. Enrollment is expected to decrease an additional 3% by 2034. Smaller school populations may result in combo classes, fewer programs and shared resources.

Benefits, not bucks

When the board established a committee to explore consolidation, it stressed that the move was not due to financial distress, but rather to make better use of existing staff, facilities and program opportunities to benefit all students. Higher enrollment at a given location, for example, increases the chances of state funding for modernization. Counselors, now chared among schools could be

See "OUSD" continued on page 5

Villa Park finalizes Housing Element to satisfy state mandate

By Andie Mills

Villa Park inched toward full compliance and certification with the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) State Housing Element, voting unanimously to update the General Plan Land Use Designation, adopt the Final Initial study and Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND), and accept the first reading of ordinances.

Ray Pascua of Kimley-Horn and Associates, the firm hired in September 2022 to assist with completing the onerous Housing Element requirements, provided an overview of the many iterations of the project to council.

California cities are required to update their General Plan Housing Element every eight years for certification by HCD, demonstrating site development capacity to facilitate the construction of housing for all income levels. Whether or not the housing is actually built depends on the market, but the city is responsible for providing the programs and policies to facilitate new housing development, especially for low and very low-income housing. Villa Park is 99% built out, but is mandated to provide sites and policies to allow 296 new units for low and moderate income housing.

(OC median income for a household of four is \$136,000.)

The city council had worked with a different consulting firm (now retired), and first submitted a draft Housing Element in June 2021; submitted a revised Housing Element in September 2021; adopted the required 2021-2029 Housing Element Update in June, 2022; a revised Housing Element was submitted in December 2022; a December 2022 letter from HCD required further iterations, requiring a revised submission and, in July 2023, a final letter from HCD found the Housing Element to be in statutory compliance. However, the city must complete necessary rezones in order to be certified.

To the point that rezoning and compliance is necessary, City Manager Steve Franks interjected that the state has already withheld funds from the city, pending the certification.

The areas to be rezoned include the city hall and library building, and the commercial office building adjacent to the library, from "commercial" to "commercial mixed use;" and a portion of the Smith Basin, from "open space" to "commercial mixed use."

See "VP Housing" continued on page 5

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LOOK BOTH **WAYS**

City of Orange guards for busy streets near OUSD schools. See Crossing, page 2

NO FLY ZONE

efforts have pest from OC's homegrown fruits

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Special ed students 2025 Olympiad Games. See OUSD, page 3

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Crossing guards approved for 2025/26 school year

The Orange City Council has contracted with All City Management Services to provide crossing guards at 17 locations for the next school year.

The locations were selected after a study, paid for by Orange and OUSD, determined where crossing guards would be of the most benefit. The study collected vehicle and traffic counts at locations that had been previously staffed or recommended for consideration. Using state guidelines, practices of other municipalities and local foot traffic thresholds (20 pedestrians per

drop off and pick up hours), the study identified four sites to be removed from the list and five locations to be added.

Crossing guards will no longer be stationed at Almond Ave. and Batavia St.; Canyon View and Aspen St.; Palm Ave. and Main St.; and Palmyra Ave. and Tustin St.

Guards from those locations will be transferred to Prospect and Spring Sts.; Almond Ave. and Pepper St.; Cambridge St. and Adams Ave.; Santiago Blvd. and Serrano Ave. An additional guard will be placed at Spring St. and Seranado Ave.

The remaining 12 locations are: Cambridge and Glendale; Cannon and San Juan Drive; Fletcher and American Way; Handy and Collins; Hewes and Jordan; La Veta and Malena; Palmyra and California; Spring and Virage; California and Quincy; Cambridge and Sycamore; Cambridge and Walnut; and Prospect and Palmyra.

As walking and traffic patterns evolve and Orange Unified considers school consolidation, the city will review crossing guard locations and make needed changes.

Oriental Fruit Fly quarantine lifted

Thanks to the cooperation and efforts of Orange County residents and local agricultural officials, the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), in partnership with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Orange County Agricultural Commissioner, have declared an end to the Oriental Fruit Fly quarantine in Orange County following the eradication of the invasive pest.

The Oriental Fruit Fly infests over 250 types of crops, including citrus and other fruits, nuts and vegetables, when it lays its eggs in the produce.

Officials detected an infestation of the pest in November 2024 and established a quarantine that included portions of the City of Orange. During the quarantine, potential host crops for the fruit fly were not allowed to be moved

RSCCD board slow to respond to audit allegations

It's been almost four months since the Rancho Santiago Community College District Board was given a report by an independent auditor spelling out questionable financial practices within the college district.

The report, presented March 10, highlighted financial conflicts of interest from former and current administrators. It also outlined millions of dollars that were kept in an off-site account without the knowledge of the elected trustees. It pointed to the failure of the college district's administrators, one of whom is a certified public accountant, for failing to accurately report to their financial auditors.

After the March meeting, Board President Daisy Tong promised there would be continued discussion on the matter. Instead of discussion, however, she insisted on hiring another firm to audit the audit.

It took two months for the college district to post a proposal request for another firm to review the audit. Two firms submitted proposals and appeared on the agenda for the board's June 9 meeting. Led by Tong, the board agreed to extend the proposal request to allow additional firms to respond.

Staff members, including Chancellor Marvin Martinez, who were named in the report, remain employed by the college district.

from properties where they were grown, including homegrown produce.

While Orange County's Oriental Fruit Fly quarantine has been lifted, the ongoing threat of new infestations by non-native species remains. To learn more about invasive species and how to protect California's fruits and vegetables, please visit cdfa.ca.gov/plant/fruitfly.



Oriental Fruit Fly

Orange selects new city manager

Following an extensive search, the Orange City Council is proud to announce the appointment of Orange native Jarad Hildenbrand as the next city manager.

Hildenbrand comes from the City of Laguna Hills, where he has served as city manager since 2022. He has also held city manager roles in the cities of Stanton, La Habra Heights and Villa Park. He will take over the post from retiring City Manager Tom Kisela, who has led the city since November 2022, after retiring as chief of the Orange Police Department.

"I'm very happy with our council's choice for our new city manager," Mayor Dan Slater said. "Between his city manager experience and solid background, Orange will be in very capable hands."

Hildenbrand is focused on fiscal responsibility, operational efficiency and strong community engagement. As Orange's city manager, he will oversee a General Fund budget of approximately \$156.2 million and a workforce of more than 700 full-time



Jarad Hildenbrand

employees.

A graduate of Villa Park High School, Hildenbrand holds a master's degree in public administration from California State University, Long Beach and a bachelor's degree in public administration from California State University, Fullerton. He is married to Jessica, with whom he shares three children, Ryleigh, 12, Jaxon, 10, and Teagan, 6.

Hildenbrand is slated to officially join the city on August 11.



Santiago Hills landscape assessment will increase again

Property owners in Santiago Hills will see their annual assessment for neighborhood landscaping services increase by three percent. The fees, which appear on property tax statements, pay for the upkeep of the communities common areas and provide a capital budget to replace aging landscaping and infrastructure.

Santiago Hills is the sole member of two landscaping management assessment districts. The first was established in 1986 and is capped at \$369.44 per year for a single-family home; \$221.66 per year for a condominium. The second district was approved by voters in 2015 to supplement the inadequate returns of the first.

The second assessment is subject to an annual cost of living increase. Single-family homes will rise from \$271.17 per year to \$279.30. Condo fees will increase from \$192.53 to \$198.31. That brings the total property owner assessment to \$923,615. Santiago Canyon College contributes \$34,228, brining the total to \$957,843.

The projected costs for fiscal year 2026 are \$1,100,708. The shortfall will be made up using the districts' reserve fund.

A public hearing on the increase was held June 10.

OPA prepares for barbecue

The Orange Park Association has set the date for the community's 54th annual Fall BBQ and Dance for Saturday, Sept. 27. Tickets will go on sale beginning Aug. 1. Details will be available at orangeparkacres.org.

OUSD's 2025 Olympiad Games honor inclusion, courage and community



Imperial Elementary students launch a disc at the throwing event.



Sofia Alfaro sprints towards her Sycamore Elementary teacher Alyse Gay.

Orange Unified School District hosted the 2025 Olympiad Games, a celebration of athleticism, inclusion and community spirit, organized by the District's Special Education Department. This year's event held special significance, as it honored the 50th anniversary of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), a landmark law ensuring equal access to education for students with disabilities.

Now in its second year, the Olympiad Games brought to-

gether student-athletes, educators, families, community leaders and distinguished guests for a day filled with perseverance, unity, and school pride at Fred Kelly Stadium. The event opened with a spirited welcome, followed by the introduction of honored guests, live music from the Villa Park High School Band, and dynamic performances by the El Modena and Canyon High School Cheer and Song teams.

"What a joy it was to attend the Olympiad Games, a truly inspir-



Arturo Gonzalez, Joey Mejia, Logan War and Jason Lopez from Olive Elementary have fun at the kicking event.



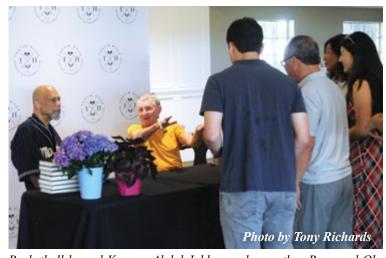
Representing event sponsor Luna Strength are, from left, Dave Brown, Alberto Lerma, Isabel Lerma and Matthew Keyser.

ing celebration where courage met determination, and every stride, every cheer, and every smile reminded us of the strength and resilience within each of us," said Superintendent Michael L. Christensen. "These Games embody the inclusive spirit of IDEA and the belief that ability comes in many forms."

The Olympiad Games and IDEA share a unified vision: a world where every individual is seen, heard, supported, and celebrated. From competitive events

to moments of shared joy and encouragement, the 2025 Olympiad Games served as a powerful reminder of what can be achieved when we champion inclusion, celebrate differences, and believe in the potential of every student.

Orange Unified acknowledges the generous sponsors whose support made this event possible: Luna Strength, the Orange Unified Public Schools Foundation, Chapman University, Ralphs, the Orange Chamber of Commerce and Leadership Orange.



Basketball legend Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and co-author Raymond Obstfeld signed copies of their latest book, "We All Want to Change the World," at the Tustin Racquet Club, June 14. Obstfeld, a Tustin resident and member of the Racquet Club, is a prolific writer, publishing some 40 books. This is the ninth book Obstfeld has co-authored with Abdul-Jabbar.



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LETTERS to the EDITOR



Best laid plans

Dear Editor:

As you might be aware, the member of Congress elected to represent the 40th Congressional District, Young Kim, is refusing to hold any open town hall meetings. Congresswoman Kim's office recently reached out to canyon residents, who her staff considered "community leaders," a closed-door meeting regarding wildfires and other issues she prioritized. Her staff made it clear that it was invitation only (Supervisor Wagner and his staff were invited) and she set the agenda.

The meeting was set for Friday, June 20, at the Silverado Community Center at 1 p.m. Canyon grapevine being what it is, the news circulated and a welcoming committee of residents of the 40th Congressional District was organized. The main topic of protest was the Senate version of the reconciliation bill now being considered. This version of the bill contains provisions to sell off/transfer millions of acres of public land in most of the Western states, including much of Cleveland National Forest. The protestors realized that Young Kim had NOT voted for this provision, because it was NOT part of the original bill that the House of Representatives passed earlier (that Kim voted for). The message for Young Kim was: Do NOT vote to approve the Senate's version of the bill when it comes back to the House.



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Naturally, when discovered an opportunity to face her constituents (gasp!) was planned, she canceled the inperson meeting, and it became a Zoom meeting. The protest was held, Kim got a 30-second view of her gathered constituents (76 of us) via Zoom and once again, the woman elected in the 40th Congressional District to represent her constituents refused to do her job. Young Kim, have you no shame?

of 40th Voters the Congressional District: elect a candidate that will represent your concerns. They work for US!

Julie A. "Rusty" Morris Silverado

Dear Editor:

On June 18, when we learned the Senate added the sell-off of National Forest Land as part of its budget plan, we expanded our planned Friday protest outside Silverado Community Center to include that issue, along with our protest about Young Kim having a closed meeting in our backyard. The instant ad hoc protest planning committee formed and started getting the word out. The Kim meeting was going to start at 1 p.m. so we invited people to arrive at the park at 12:30 p.m. We planned for a peaceful, respectful demonstration of our disappointment about the closed meeting and our concerns about our neighbor, the Cleveland National Forest, one of the forests on the For Sale list.

We contacted friends and neighbors using social media and good old-fashioned phone calls. We did not want a huge crowd of "outsiders." We just hoped for an opportunity to, at best, have Young Kim meet with us and hear our concerns or, at worst, let her see the crowd of people who were concerned about open democracy and the sale of public land.

It turned out that selling the Cleveland National Forest was a hot issue for lots of people, and word spread about our protest faster than our dreaded wildfires. By Thursday, we saw a flyer someone had designed to promote the protest outside the canyons. Fortunately, it included our words "peaceful and responsible," and we were excited, but also concerned enough to make plans for a bigger crowd.

We lined up some experienced rally monitors and discussed ways to de-escalate if the crowd started getting angry. We planned on a picnic table with snacks and water, music, and, maybe, even games on the blacktop. We would gather in the shade of the pepper tree about 60 feet from the building.

At 9:42 Thursday night, Geoff Sarkissian, president of the Inter-Canyon League, texted to say the meeting at the community center had been called off, but would continue as a closed Zoom meeting. I wrote back, "I'm still having my picnic."

Young Kim's excuse for the cancellation seems to be a flyer that looked a little bit menacing. It was distributed under the names of four organizations, two of which I have never heard of. It had the time and location wrong, misrepresented the intent of the demonstration, and tried to turn it

from a demonstration about free speech and the federal budget into a political protest catch-all.

Our picnic/demonstration was a joyful, fun event. We chanted, sang and had an open-mic speech fest. Anyone who wanted to talk signed up. The were no limits on topic or length. Fortunately, the speeches were heartfelt and the crowd remained engaged. Young Kim got a chance to see us when JJ Galvez came out with his computer and panned the crowd. At its peak, we had 76 people there. I had hoped for at least 35.

I am mad at the unidentified organizers who tried to hijack our demonstration and gave Young Kim an excuse to run away. But I am much more angry at Young Kim. She is trying to run as a moderate, creating photo ops with community leaders, making promises she has no intention of keeping, all while following in lockstep with MAGA and being more concerned about what the President thinks than what her constituents think.

Her credibility is dropping like a rock. Every time she dodges a real meeting with constituents, she makes it worse. Every time she runs away from a community gathering, we get angrier. She uses the excuse that she is afraid of a misbehaving mob while ensuring that if we ever get to see her, we will be mad as hell.

Young Kim, if you are reading this, call me. I have some great advice. One is, stop relying on your staff who did not do enough legwork to find out all the preparation we did to make our rally peaceful democracy in action. And two, the longer you hide the worse it looks.

Linda May Silverado

Localmotion

Dear Editor:

Hats off to everyone who participated in the No Kings rallies on June 14. Thousands of our community members came out in bipartisan gatherings to make our voices heard. The family-friendly event reminded us of everything we treasure about joining together to make neighborhoods friendly

places where children grow, families thrive, and we all do our best to make our neighbors feel safe and valued.

We will undoubtedly see more and bigger – rallies as word spreads that they are indeed the best that America has to offer: Speaking up for our freedoms while keeping it friendly and often quite funny. We've all seen the cheeky signs that make us giggle. I saw a crowd of hundreds dancing to an impromptu "Chicken Taco" song at the rally in Anaheim.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I was struck by the number of young people at the rallies. Our next generation cares. Let's keep giving them this opportunity to find their voices in their communities. It's the ticket to a better future.

Ronna Sarvas Weltman Cowan Heights

No sale

Dear Editor:

The Elisabeth Beall Letter to the Editor in the June edition titled "Shock and bah" had some great points. I've lived in Orange for 47 years. My three children were in the OUSD system, and over these 47 years, the board is far from being members of Phi Beta Kappa. Even an 83-year-old man knows you never give up school property. Neighborhoods change, old people die and new young people move in and quickly discover watching TV is boring and early to bed is more fun, and Voila! -- we need more classrooms. It happens. I know from experience. Also, what happens to our property values when new home buyers discover there are no schools nearby? Property values drop and take property taxes down.

Hey OUSD, find a piece of property in Orange you could purchase to build a school on now. I'm talking a real school like La Veta or El Modena High School, not a little six room charter school. Duh, I'm waiting. Elisabeth, I'm your first vote for OUSD board member.

Leonard Musgrave

It's the principal

Dear Editor:

I am a recent graduate of California iInspire Academy. I recommend that the Orange Unified School District keep Dr. Misty Brunasso at California Elementary.

I started in kindergarten at California with Dr. Albert. I felt, back then, kids weren't motivated to go to school, and school really wasn't fun.

When Dr. B came, she made all the difference. She knew all our names, and we felt like we belonged because we were known by her. I know that a lot of kids in our school were motivated to come to school, and it's shown by the school winning the district trophy for attendance multiple times.

I think students felt individually supported because she personally met with those who were having difficulties, and counseling was provided as needed.

I have seen some kids go from sad kids who hang out at their classrooms all day, to kids who are out playing sports every day. Kids knew they are safe with her in charge.

Dr. Brunasso also made school more fun. She turned boring assemblies into exciting experiences to get awards and interact with students at different grade levels. She was also out at the front of the school every morning to greet us with joy and make us feel welcome.

If Dr. B doesn't stay, kids might not feel as comfortable and find school as welcoming, and it could lead to lower attendance. And kids who don't feel safe at school cannot do as well in school.

Another principal wouldn't likely be able to match her unique way of running the school.

Please consider keeping Dr. Brunasso at California next year.

Wesley Woody California iInspire Academy Class of 2025 Orange

Ed. note: This letter is in response to an OUSD administration plan to move principals from one school to another.

Orange Police Foundation secures funding to expand access to AEDs

AED Awareness Week, the Or-Orange Police Department, announced a donation of \$50,000 from Providence St. Joseph Hospital to purchase and deploy Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) across the department.

The funding will help the Foundation equip half of the 40 marked patrol vehicles with life-saving AED devices, ensuring rapid access to essential medical equipment during cardiac emergencies. Additional AEDs will be placed throughout specialized department units. This initiative is part of a broader effort to reduce sudden cardiac arrest deaths and improve survival rates.

The AEDs will also be valuable in the unlikely event a police officer becomes a victim. In March 2023, an on-duty police officer had a heart attack. The availability of an AED in the first responding police car may have lessened the impact of his medical emergency.

As AED technology has evolved, these devices have be-

As part of National CPR and come more accessible and widely understood by the public. With ange Police Foundation, a non- AEDs already present in schools, profit organization supporting the businesses, and public spaces throughout Orange, expanding their availability in police vehicles ensures that life-saving tools are on hand when every second counts.

Officers receive regular training in the use of AEDs, and this initiative will maintain consistency by deploying the same type of device in every vehicle. While less expensive AEDs exist, they are typically designed for stationary use and lack the rugged features required for mobile environments.

"We are thrilled to partner with Providence St. Joseph Hospital to continue our mission of making life-saving resources more accessible to the public," said Sean O'Toole, President of the Orange Police Foundation. "Having AEDs in every patrol vehicle can mean the difference between life and death in a cardiac emergency. This funding ensures our officers are equipped to respond to emergencies swiftly and effectively."

To join Providence St. Joseph

in supporting our ongoing AED fundraising efforts, donations can be made online through the Police Foundation website at orangepolicefoundation.org. For more information about the AED program or to support the initiative, please visit the website or contact Dan Adams Dan@orangepolicefoundation.org.

The Orange Police Foundation was founded in May 2023, to provide funding for training, programs and specialized equipment to ensure a safer City of Orange.

New speed limits set in Villa Park

The speed limits in Villa Park have changed – surprisingly, they have increased. On Center Dr., from Villa Park Rd. to Santiago Boulevard; from Santiago to Taft; and from Taft to Valley Drive, the new speed limit is 35 mph. On Cerro Villa Dr., between Rama St. to Canyon/Mesa, the new limit is 30 mph.

"Orange Audit" continued from page 1

falls that came before. And the city's debt continued to grow, reaching \$259 million in 2019. Cavecche, who served as mayor of Orange from 2006-12, notes that the city's failure to actively pursue economic development during those years bears part of the blame for the city's current deficit. It wasn't paying attention to its long-term debt.

The city has little control over its pension liability, as it depends on the performance of CalPERS, a statewide agency that manages pensions and health benefits for state and municipal retirees. Employees and employers contribute to that fund, which was intended to be self-sustaining over time via investment returns. When CalPERS fails to earn needed funds through its investments, it goes back to employers (cities) to make up the difference.

In 2021, the city issued pension obligation bonds totaling \$265 million to pay off its CalPERS obligation. With lower interest rates at that time, the city believed it would be advantageous, in the long run, to pay off the unfunded pension liability with a bond. Orange now pays \$15.6 million a year to service that bond, but escalating CalPERS costs to the city have been less than they would have been without it. As Councilman John Gyllenhammer put it, "the bonds were necessary to smooth out the curve."

Orange also issued a bond to finance its new fire department headquarters in 2020. It is paying off that \$34 million bond at \$1.8 million annually.

CalPERS and bondage

Both bonds were issued during the COVID years. The city coffers were boosted with \$28 million from the federal government in 2021 and 2022. That helped, but, the committee reports, the city still had deficits in three reserve funds adding up to nearly \$15 million.

"VP Housing" continued from page 1

The rezoning of a portion of Smith Basin has been controversial, as it is a known riparian habitat, part of the flood control and Santiago recharge basin and a wildlife corridor. During public comments, two residents of Orange spoke to the long-lasting impacts on the animals and ecosystem to Villa Park, Orange and beyond, the fact that OCWD owns the property, and requested an alternate be found. One commenter had sent a letter to Sen. Stephen Choi, lamenting that the state mandate imposed an impossible burden on cities such as Villa Park, which would be forced to destroy much-needed open space.

Councilman Kelly McBride drily noted, that at a Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) meeting, Villa Park was not the only city unhappily burdened with an untenable allocation.

The committee concluded that the city never fully recovered from the recession or the payback to the Redevelopment Agency. In subsequent years, revenues were not enough to enhance set-aside funds and debt service. Pension contributions and bond payments have become 20.5% of the annual budget.

The current city council and city management have largely inherited the deficit, and those who were on watch at the time are gone. These issues are not unique to Orange, Cavecche said during the presentation, but "nobody was seeing it for what it was."

Arianna Barrios pointed out that the committee presentation had standardized all the data, giving the council a clear overview. "Before the current director of finance," she said, "everything was reported differently every year. Looking back, we couldn't find like-to-like years."

Silence on the subject

She also noted that while the council made adjustments in 2023 to increase staff, "not one person said 'maybe you shouldn't do this, that maybe this will put you way outside your pocketbook." And, she said, "that includes the mayor at that time and the finance director at the time. No one said 'boo,' and shame on them."

Kathy Tavoularis added that when she was appointed to the council in 2021 and lobbied to hire more police officers, "no one said anything."

Following the presentation, Mayor Dan Slater asked the committee to confirm that it did not find anything "nefarious, malicious, suspect or dirty tricks." Cavecche responded that the committee researched any apparent discrepancies and found they could be explained by changes in reporting requirements.

The council agreed that finances would remain a focus for the future. "Going forward," Mayor Dan Slater summarized, "we certainly have our work cut out for us."

"OUSD" continued from page 1

permanently assigned to one.

The consolidation committee, consisting of 30 teachers, principals, administrators and parents, convened in April. It was tasked to study school populations, classroom capacity, program needs, the state of school facilities, and environmental factors. In making its recommendations, the committee considered options that would allow programs to be enhanced, that could be managed efficiently and not exceed receiving school capacity. The committee also accounted for transportation impacts for general and special education students, availability of modernization funds and master plan improvements, repurposing of closed schools and the potential for future growth.

The committee divided its work by high school feeder groups; that is, which elementary and middle schools fed into each of the district's four high schools.

After analyzing the potential closure or boundary changes for 11 elementary schools and two middle schools, the committee concluded the best outcome for district students as a whole would be the scenario presented to the board.

No easy task

"This is not easy," Board President Kris Erickson said at the outset of the study session. "It's not a simple process, and tonight is just the beginning. There is no set timeline. This is not a decision-making session, it's a learning opportunity for the board."

It was noted that teachers and programs would follow the students to the school where they were transferred. The exception is Olive Elementary. Originally considered for consolidation, it was removed from the list because it is an "AVID showcase" school that was certified at that location and cannot be moved. Because Olive has a large field

and historic gym, it could, in addition to its AVID focus, become a "sports academy" for parents interested in matching students to a sport at an early age.

The potential closure of Imperial Elementary drew the most immediate attention, with a dozen teachers, parents and very young students in attendance to plead with the board to keep it intact. They noted the school's sense of community, its connection with families and the continuity of teachers who taught siblings one after the other.

Stakeholder input is welcomed

"We're taking your comments and concerns into consideration," Andrea Yamasaki assured the audience.

"We've read all your emails," Ana Page added, "we're thinking about the community's concerns."

"We need to hear your perspectives," Sara Pelly said. "We're learning, and seeing your support for your school means a lot."

Imperial, it turns out, may not be a priority for closure. "This is a big deal," Erickson advised. "School communities are what is great about our district." She noted that Crescent was already a large school and was concerned that it had enough facilities to accommodate Imperial's students. "It's not our biggest priority," she said.

For Erickson, creating a magnet school and building programs at Jordan is a priority, as is combining Prospect with Esplanade. Both schools are tiny, she explained. Esplanade has already been remodeled, is a good candidate for matching funds and the two schools are only .6 miles apart. "It makes sense programmatically and geographically," she said.

Combining Portola and Yorba Middle Schools could be another priority, she suggested. Their combined enrollment would be just 800 students. Some of the other options would create "huge" schools that would need

The Orange Elks Lodge #1475

hosted 110 Navy, Marines, and

Coast Guard active personnel

who visited the City of Orange

The day started with a cer-

emony at Orange City Hall. Next

stop was the Orange Elks Lodge

for a hearty breakfast prepared

and served by lodge veterans, as-

sisted by the Orange High Marine

Following breakfast, the ser-

vicemen and women visited the

Hilbert Museum, had lunch at the

American Legion Post and then

Mayor Dan Slater, an Orange

Elks member, presented a procla-

mation from the Orange County

Board of Supervisors to Navy

Rear Admiral Richard Meyer,

Deputy Commander of the U.S.

during Fleet Week.

Corps JKOIC.

went to Disneyland.

considerable modernization.

No decisions yet

Other board members were not ready to prioritize or decide next steps without getting more information. Stephen Glass wanted to learn more about the projected enrollment decline, possible worst case scenarios and when the district might reach its fiscal cliff. He also said there were issues of adolescent development to be explored, and that he had approached this meeting as a data gathering session only.

Sierra Vane wondered about the academic prowess of the schools in question, and asked if student outcomes were part of the analysis? Board members also cited concerns about space for wellness centers, community resource centers and other non-classroom uses. Pelly wanted OUSD constituents to be sure that the board is doing its due diligence.

"That's the purpose of this discussion," Superintendent Mike Christensen said, "so we can have these conversations. We can bring back specific information about specific schools, how many classrooms there are, who would be housed where. We can bring back more of that minutia."

"Looks like we'll be back for another study session," Erickson concluded. Once more information is available, the district intends to send out an opinion survey to OUSD constituents.

Trustee Matthew Thomas summed up the sentiment in the room: "The challenges of declining enrollment are many – there's so many. It's rough. No one wants to think of school closures."

OCHS presents histories and mysteries of Black Star Canyon

The Orange Community Historical Society (OCHS) invites the public to a free exploration of "The Histories and Mysteries of Black Star Canyon and Irvine Park," presented by local historian and naturalist Joel Robinson.

Robinson will lead a unique tour into the nature and history of those East Orange County landmarks, July 22 at the Orange Public Library Main Branch meeting room from 5:30 to 7 p.m.

Raised in West Orange, Robinson began exploring Black Star Canyon in the late 1990s because, he says, "It felt like I was traveling back in time. It was a treat to wander the dusty road where rusty cattle fences, an abandoned corral and the gnarled oak trees offered a glimpse of the county before most of it was replaced with subdivisions, malls, freeways and theme parks. It was the closest place to home where I could find tangible evidence of the past and a chance to see a bobcat or deer." His present day work is in environmental public

Spending time talking with blacksmiths, homesteaders, Native American storytellers and soldiers in relic settings, including the Ainsworth House in Old Towne Orange, Olvera Street in Los Angeles, Old Town San Diego State Historic Park, Wawona in Yosemite, Calico Ghost Town and Irvine Regional Park has given Joel firsthand accounts of many of the local histories and mysteries he'll share.

Orange Elks welcome military personnel to Fleet Week



Mayor Dan Slater (left) presents a county proclamation to Rear Admiral Richard Meyer.

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No news is not (good) news

SMRuPDate

Silverado-Modjeska Recreation and Parks District (SMRPD) seems to have gotten good news. President Ted Wright shared it, quoting a communication from the Auditor-Controller's office, which confirms the welcome allocation of additional Redevelopment Property Tax Trust Fund (RPTTF) monies to its "Miscellaneous" category. Confused?

Wright explains: "The \$36,000 brings SMRPD very close to what the office says we will be due next year. The additional funding also certainly means that, with a reduced budget, we can make it until new funds arrive in November.

Of course, we still must figure out how to deal with receiving only about two-thirds of what had been coming to us in earlier years. Recall that our current tentative budget still has a \$17,000 deficit. Everything is not rosy, but it no longer seems like doom and gloom time."

A nation turns its lonely eyes to

A project of the SMRPD, the Saturday, July 19 Summer Concert Series lineup includes The Brother Jonathan and Simon Sez Revue, performing the music, they say, of Paul Simon.

Failing grade

Responding to complaints from Modjeska and Harding residents, Code Enforcement identified illegal grading above Markuson Road. Of three sites under investigation, the owners of one property were found in violation, and will work with Public Works engineers to repair and restore (at owners' expense) toward satisfactory resolution.

Reported two months ago, the site of this extravagantly unpermitted grading (where owners inexplicably abandoned a van with a flat tire) impacted at least an acre, most of it at a 45-degreeangle hillside absent permits or

mediation. Code Enforcement encourages residents to keep an eye on the eyesore and report any further illegal grading. Meanwhile, it could take weeks or months to restore the damage.

No comment!

Your humble scribe reads newsletters and solicits comment from our four (Republican) elected officials. All routinely release calendar announcements, invitations and commentary. In response to my queries of three about ICE raids, illegal detention and kidnapping (including at OC-area Home Depots), none answered, declining to provide statements or share press releases. If you'd like a condescending remedial civics lesson from an aide, do call the offices of Assemblymember Sanchez (71) or State Senator Choi (37).

Both offices reminded me that we all have a right to our opinions because we are Americans, then scolded me for asking a state official to take a stand, notwithstanding Newsom v. Trump. (Perhaps introduction of SB627, banning local, state, and federal law enforcement from wearing masks will elicit responses.)

Choi's staffer explained that, no, a California state legislator could not, would not, ever comment on federal matters, then helpfully volunteered that Choi is "from Korea" and frequently weighs in on, yup, South Korean politics!

Try calling Sanchez's office. I dare you. Answering the Sacramento line is a cheerful recorded voice: "Hi, this is Grace. Please leave a message." When the Assemblymember's Chief of Staff herself responded, it was to deliver more patriotism-as-coercion but no statement.

At least embattled Congressmember Young Kim (40) is on record, repeating MAGA talking points. Recently interviewed, she appeared not to recognize the Insurrection Act and repeatedly answered, in apparent reference to protests, "These illegal immigrants are taking innocent lives."

Death by chocolate!

Thanks to 80 Friends of the Library supporters who dined on chili and cornbread at the Sarkissian's then cheerfully outbid each other for homemade desserts shared with fellow attendees. In addition to Silverado baker Rusty Morris's homicidally delicious brownies, purchased and consumed were "Chaotic Canyon Cake Cookies," pistachio cheesecake with chocolate ganache, classic carrot cake, lemon pudding cake and both coconut and banana cream pies.

The second annual Spring Fling raised \$3k for programming and materials for the Inter-Canyon League (ICL) Friends

committee to support materials and programming at the Library of the Canyons.

Long live Fran!

And in a posthumous further gesture of her lifetime of civic generosity, items (including originals by canyon painter Dorothy Rice) sold at the late Friends chair Fran Williams' estate sale to benefit ICL to the tune of over \$7k. Intrepid organizer Alice Phillips thanks fellow volunteers Judy Myers, Melody and Phil McWilliams, Scott Breedon, Mitzi Perry, Francis Garcia and Bic Edwards.

Polemology to numeracy

July's first Wednesday Library of the Canyons Book Club pick is "Chenneville" by Paulette Jiles, historical fiction about a Union soldier bent on revenge and postwar discovery.

Join this summer's "Level Up" program, June 16-Aug. 3, and cash in. Branch Manager Laura Blasingham explains: "Kids and Teens read for 20 days and receive their own 'Reading Buddy' stuffed animal."

They also enter to win prizes donated by the Friends of the Library. Adults receive an entry ticket for every book they read during the summer, each ticket an opportunity to win a gift card for breakfast/lunch donated by Silverado Canyon Market & Kitchen." Ready, set, read!

Assistance League of Orange hosts Salute to Service



Recruits honored were, front row, left to right: Montserrat Avelar Reyes, David Meraz, Thomas Sotelo, Paul Fernandez, Henry Garcia, Noelia Garcia-Ramirez; second row, Loraine Martinez Sandoval, Karelle Soriano; third row, left to right, Jack Lohrman, John Sandoval, Jason Mejia, Isaac Young, Daniel Baron, Samuel Cisneros and Matthew MacDonald.

Each year, the Assistance League of Orange recognizes high school seniors who, after graduation, have enlisted to serve families are honored at a ceremony and dinner.

The Orange High School Color Guard presented the American flag, followed by a rendition of the national anthem and the service branch anthems, sung by Chief Petty Officer Jeff Schilden.

Each recruit was honored with a Challenge Coin and Certificate of Appreciation in recognition

of their commitment to serve. Steven Stenersen, Veterans Resource Center, Santiago Canyon College, provided an explanation ner, where many recruits and their our country. The recruits and their of the Challenge Coin tradition. logether with Mariana Flores, from Congressman Lou Correa's office, they presented each recruit with their coin and certificate, commemorated with photos.

In addition, thanks to the Support Our Troops Pen Program of the Orange County Woodworkers Association, each recruit received a handcrafted ballpoint penmade especially for those entering military service.

ceremony, Following the guests enjoyed a community dinfamilies shared their appreciation for the meaningful event.

The evening concluded with a recognition of Assistance League volunteer Patty Waasted, who was presented with a gift in gratitude for her dedication and tireless efforts in helping bring the ceremony to life.

For more information about the Assistance League of Orange, visit assistanceleague.org/orange.

Elks present Youth Appreciation Awards at annual program



From left, Elk Lynda Einstein introduces scholarship recipients, Bryant Zarnte, Hannah Cho, Ashley Vicerate, Abigail Phan, Emily Elizabeth Pasillas, Henry Lloyd, Aarushi Ghildyal, Doanah Dinh and Tatyanna Reyes; not pictured, Gisselle Muniz.

By Bill Neessen

The Orange Elks celebrated National Youth Week with its annual Youth Appreciation Night, showcasing the many programs the Lodge has for our young people, and recognizing 48 students.

The Orange High School ROTC presented the flag and led the Pledge of Allegiance, while Paloma Cortez sang the national anthem.

Orange Mayor Dan Slater's message to the parents was "thank you for supporting your kids," and to the kids, "pursue your education and do your best."

Orange Police Chief Adam Jevec echoed the message, urging students to strive to do your best, do the right thing, be resilient and

love your family.

Miss City of Orange Kylie Seppala helped present the awards: Orange Elks Youth Award; First Responder Awards to Orange Police Explorers, Orange Fire Explorers and Orange County Fire Explorers; Orange High School ROTC awards; Hoop Shoot awards, GRIP Drug Awareness awards; Boy and Girl Scout awards; and Americanism Essay awards.

Elks Scholarship Chairman Lynda Einstein introduced 10 high school seniors, each awarded a scholarship: Aarushi Ghildyal, Abigail Phan, Ashley Vicerate, Bryant Zarnte, Doanah Dinh, Emily Elizabeth Pasillas, Gisselle Muniz, Hannah Cho, Henry Lloyd and Tatyanna Reyes.

Supervisor Sarmiento supports bike trail improvements in North Orange

Rest areas along the Santa Ana bike trail near Riverdale have been improved through a collaborative effort of Supervisor Vicente Sarmiento, OC Parks, OC Public Works, Orange City Councilwoman Kathy Tavoularis and city staff.

The trail runs through county land, as well as through sections of the City of Orange and special districts. The various entities work in partnership to maintain and make improvements to the

Second District Supervisor Vicente Sarmiento, who represents portions of Orange and Tustin, worked with those agencies to identify areas for improvement and selected a location for a new rest stop.

"I was very proud that we were able to secure funding to support this project," said Sarmiento. "Our office greatly appreciated working with Councilmember Tavoularis to identify what improvements made the most sense and would best serve residents."



The new rest area on the potion of the Santa Ana bike trail near Riverdale was a collaborative effort.

VPWL welcomes new board members



The 2025-26 Executive Board, from left, includes Terri Vernon, treasurer; Marilyn Liu, membership; Anita Kanta, programs; Cecile Wight, president; Eva Wyszkowski-Hartman, parliamentarian; Alina McFarlane, vice president; Johanna Kwan, recording secretary; and Pam Dunn, community support.



Diane Cole received the Community Service Award.

The Villa Park Women's League held an outdoor "Summer Switch" meeting to thank the prior year board for its service, and welcome a new board for the coming year. Fourteen past presidents were in attendance, including VPWL founder Sherry Zakowicz.

Two annual awards were given. The Community Service Award, established in 1971 to recognize



Pam Dunn was awarded the Circle of Friendship.

exceptional service to Villa Park and the surrounding communities, was presented to Diane Cole.

The Circle of Friendship Award, established in 1996, honoring a member who fosters unity and friendship among women, was given to Pam Dunn.

The all-volunteer organization will resume its many activities in the fall. For membership information, see vpwl.org.



The Savannah Bananas, the irreverent, entertaining baseball team in bright yellow uniforms, made a special appearance at Villa Park Dunkin' Donuts early Saturday morning, between their Friday and Saturday night games. Local Lori Powell, with her grandkids Chad and Savannah "Banana' Nieblas, got a hug and swag from Vincent the Umpire and Princess Potassia.

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Sisters of St. Joseph Motherhouse transformed to house low-income seniors



Orange Mayor Dan Slater is flanked by Tami Adams, CEO, Southern California UnitedHealth care (slightly behind him); Sister Mary Beth Ingham, General Superior, Sisters of St. Joseph; Sister Mary Bernadette, Sisters of St. Joseph (at his left); Sister Diane Hejna and Tiffany Bohee, president, Mercy Housing California (at right); along with representatives from the agencies and private sector who helped make it happen.

The new Villa St. Joseph affordable senior community opened with a ribbon-cutting ceremony June 3. The 50-unit facility was converted into low-income housing from the Sisters of St. Joseph Motherhouse that had served the nuns since 1958.

The \$38-million community was funded through public-private partnerships, including

\$16.3 million from UnitedHealth Group, \$6.1 million from Orange County, \$5.6 million from the state, and a \$5.7 million seller carryback loan and a 99-year lease for the property from the Sisters.

Villa St. Joseph, located at 490 S. Batavia St., offers permanent, supportive housing with integrated health services, helping older adults live with greater stability, dignity, and well-being. Residents, many of whom have been homeless, will be referred by Mercy Housing California.

Other partners in the project include the California Department of Housing and Community Development, Orange County Health Care Agency, Enterprise Community Partners and CalOptima Health.

Local students receive scholarships from SchoolsFirst Credit Union

Four students from Orange, two from Tustin and one from Villa Park were among the 248 statewide scholars to receive scholarships from SchoolsFirst Federal Credit Union.

They are Cassidy Christensen, Daniel Kurimay, Isabella Malone and Naomi Nguyen from Orange; Carin George and Laura Alexsandra Barajas from Tustin; and Megan Kim from Villa Park.

SchoolsFirst FCU presents scholarships each year to eligible high school graduating seniors, college freshmen and sophomores to help cover the cost of books, tuition and other educational expenses. Scholarships are awarded based on students' grade point average, difficulty of courses completed, letters of recommen-

dation, community and school involvement and leadership positions. All applicants must be a SchoolsFirst FCU Member, have completed no more than 60 college credits and must be registered at an accredited college/university for the upcoming fall term. Awardees can reapply each year if they continue to meet the applicant criteria.



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Museum features the Japanese-**American community of Tustin:** before and during WWII



By Guy Ball

Prior to World War II, there were small Japanese communities throughout Southern California, including in Tustin, centered around Browning and Bryan Aves. Most of the families leased land from The Irvine Company and grew vegetables.

The children attended local schools, including Tustin High School. But once the attack on Pearl Harbor occurred, the families were uprooted and interned, primarily to the Colorado River Relocation Center in Poston, Arizona

Historical researcher Tim Zierer shares his research on the community and their lives in the decade leading up to the war at the Friday, July 25 meeting of the Tustin Area Historical Society.

He will also look at the growing number of Japanese-Amer-

discuss their fate: particularly 13 former students, who despite being unjustly imprisoned along with their families, chose to serve their county in the U.S. Army during WWII.

One of those was Yukito Murakami, THS Class of 1935, who served in the legendary 442nd Regimental Combat Team, composed of all Japanese-American soldiers. Murakami was wounded twice while fighting in Italy with his unit.

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 each 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.

icans at Tustin High School and

Emblem Club welcomes holiday vendors

The Orange Emblem Club #418 is teaming with the Garden Grove club to host a holiday craft fair in October. The clubs are inviting vendors of holiday fare and boutique items to participate. Those interested may contact Jan Genelle at (714) 235-5314 or Joyce Claussen at (714) 504-4934. The cost is \$50 per space; tables provided. The fair will be held Oct. 4, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Garden Grove Elks Lodge, 11551 Trask Ave.



North Tustin and City of Orange residents participated in the event.

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Locals join national rally



A last-minute gathering at Newport Avenue and Main Street in Tustin acknowledging No Kings Day, June 14, attracted an estimated 1,000 people. The rally was one of over 2,000 held nationwide.



The No Kings rally in Anaheim brought together some 10,000 to 12,000 people from throughout Orange County.



Individuals from all walks of life attended the rally at La Palma

Graduating Assisteens lauded and applauded



The 2025 Assisteens Medallion honorees are: front row, left to right, Ayden Santana, Kathleen Tighe, Norah Dome, Sam Malo, Amaya Patel, Annika Patel, Kaycen Kraft; middle row, from left, Hudson Kridle, Makenna Simpson, Amelia Gray, Claire von Ting, Alia Dadabhoy, Kaitlyn Helffrich, Kishan Master; and back row, left to right, Jonah Meis, Cassidy Christensen, Payton Kauffman, Emily Woodford, Taylor Yasuma, Hailey Gorton, Leila Wu, Audrey Romo and Cameron Scales. Not pictured: Ella Bonn, Ava Brobst, Landon Hogan, Valentine Lopez, Gwen Morrison and Kyla Snell.

Graduating seniors gathered with family, friends and guests to be recognized for their service at the 58th annual Assisteens Medallion Ceremony. The Assisteens Auxiliary of Assistance League of Orange, comprised of students in seventh to 12th grade, serve the community through programs for children, families and senior citizens.

The Medallion Ceremony, held at the Hotel Fera Anaheim, April 27, celebrated the culmination of high school for students representing Canyon, Crean Lutheran, El Modena, Fairmont, San Juan Capistrano, Foothill, Mater Dei, Orange Lutheran, Samueli Academy, Troy and Villa Park High Schools.

The Chairman's Award was presented to Sam Malo, who has served as chapter president for two years, bringing energy and leadership to the role. Most Spirited New Member was awarded to Santino Uriostegui; Outstanding New Member was Claire Mouw. Olivia Drapalski, Kaitlyn Helffrich, Gavin Cortes, Maddie Romo and Valentine Lopez were each recognized with Chairmanship Awards. Audrey Romo and Emily Woodford received the Above and Beyond Hours Award.

The NORMA Award was presented to Cameron Scales and Celiana Eaton as members who live up to the motto "Nothing Overwhelms 'R' Magnificent Assisteens." Amelia Gray and Claire von Ting received the Coveny Spirit Award; the Acts of Kindness Award was presented to Adria Eickhoff and Shrey Master. Leila Wu was recognized as Most Outstanding Assisteen of the Year. Parents of two Medallion recipients were honored with the Medallion Circle Award for their contributions to the Auxiliary: Kathleen Scales and Neena Master.

Veteran Susan Wood has personal connection to "The Wall That Heals"

By Chris Locke

Orange resident Susan Wood, a veteran of the U.S. Air Force during the Vietnam War, is dedicated to giving back to her fellow veterans. This Oct. 2-5, she is helping to bring "The Wall That Heals – Orange 2025," a three-quarter scale replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., to Grijalva Park.

Wood's support of her fellow veterans is deeply personal. Growing up in Los Angeles during the Vietnam War, she witnessed the turmoil firsthand. Reports of casualties, widespread protests, and seeing male classmates drafted weighed heavily on her. As many prepared to leave for war from bases like Camp

Pendleton and El Toro, Wood and her friends grappled with the reality of war looming over their peers.

Called to serve

After graduating high school in 1968, Wood enlisted in the Air Force, feeling a calling to serve. She worked as a clerk-typist, starting with basic training at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio.

It was a significant transition; she had never been on a plane or away from her family before, leading to a twitch in her eye that lasted for six weeks.

After basic training, she was assigned to Randolph AFB in Texas, then Malmstrom AFB in Montana, and later in Torrejon

AFB near Madrid, Spain. She was honorably discharged while stationed there and returned home.

Following her military service, Wood worked at Northrop and later at Disney. Upon retirement, she felt a strong desire to contribute to her community. After attending a party at the Orange American Legion in 2019, she joined and quickly took on the role of finance officer in 2020, where she now manages various operational aspects, including the bar and human resources.

Her recent initiative, "The Wall That Heals," holds profound significance for her. Having seen the Vietnam Wall in D.C., she connected it with her memories of the lives lost during the war. Although she personally didn't lose friends in Vietnam, she feels a strong sense of responsibility toward the memories of those who did

Sacrifice remembered

Wood hopes that "The Wall That Heals" will educate younger generations about the Vietnam War and its historical context, fostering awareness and understanding. For veterans, she wishes for the Wall to provide a sense of peace. It is also vital, she says, for Gold Star families to see firsthand, the acknowledgment of their loved ones' sacrifices.

She stands proud of the role she plays in honoring her fellow veterans in a way that fosters healing and remembrance for all affected by the Vietnam War.



Susan Wood

Author presentation benefits Villa Park Library



Front, from left, Harriett Wedemeyer, Ann Sallar, Monica Helzer, Marianna Cooper, Eva Wyszkowski, Jonna Allison. Back row, from left, Bill Baker, Jack Cleary, Authors Mike Befeler and Duane Swierczynski.

The Friends of the Villa Park Library hosted a mystery authors presentation in its continuing series of author speaking events. This included *New York Times* best-selling mystery series authors Mike Befeler and nonfiction crime author Duane Swierczynski.

Befeler is known for his mystery series, including "Retirement Homes are Murder" and "Living with Your Kids is Murder." Befeler has penned more than 11 other mystery novels.

The audience asked him if he builds the story around one character. His answer, was that he enjoys developing the story to fit all the characters as he builds the

story line.

Swierczynski has authored 15 novels, some of which have been adapted into TV scripts and a movie. His current best-selling novel is "California Bear." Additionally, he has written over 250 comic books, e.g., "Deadpool" and "Birds of Prey."

The format of the event featured many interesting questions to the authors and their informed responses. At the conclusion of the event, the authors signed books for eager readers, while all enjoyed beverages and hors d'oeuvres. Event proceeds will be used to purchase books and art materials for the library's expanding children's programs.



The Orange Rotary and Chapman Crafted sponsored the largest ICS international chili cook-off this side of the Mississippi in Old Towne, June 21. Chili chefs competed for a slot at the World Championship Chili Cook-off to be held next year. Chili tasting booths were joined by artisan vendors and live bands. Seen here at the Lagunatic Chili Company booth are, from left, Lagunatic team members Simon, Julie and Charlie Link, and Coldwell Banker's David Silva.

Orange Elks donate to the OHS ROTC



Elks members with OHS ROTC cadets

The Orange High School Marine Jr. ROTC program is a program for male and female students, designed to help them succeed in college, in their career and in life. The students, many of them survivors of traumatic events, develop leadership skills, self-discipline and physical fit-

These cadets excel in the classroom and participate in school activities and athletics. They join ROTC teams in drill, marksmanship, academia and cybersecurity, and test their skills in local and national competitions.

They also do much for their community and the Elks. Cadets have helped clean up Santiago Creek; assisted with the lodge's Christmas Basket Program; and posted the colors at the 9-11 Memorial Program, Fleet Week

Breakfast and the Flag Lowering Ceremonies at the Plaza. Several members have been presented with the Elks' Youth Appreciation Awards. Several have gone straight into the military to serve our country.

The Elks donated \$1,475 to retired Col. Mark Tull, who leads the program. The funds will be used to participate in local and national competitions.

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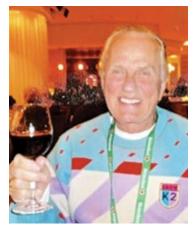
Service clubs

commemorate

Memorial Day



Robert (Bob) Joseph Walters 1941 – 2025



Robert (Bob) Joseph Walters, 83, passed away peacefully on May 23 at his daughter's home in North Tustin, surrounded by family, after a courageous battle with cancer.

Born in Birmingham, Alabama, Bob was the eldest of nine children of Hugh and Alice Walters. He earned the rank of Eagle Scout with five Palms and nurtured early passions for camping, stamp collecting and launching homemade rockets in the desert.

Bob graduated from Lakewood High School in 1960 and worked as a dishwasher to put himself through UCLA. At UCLA, he participated in the debate club, founded Gargoyle Magazine, and was a proud member of the Theta Xi fraternity.

In 1969, Bob founded American Traffic Services, one of the country's first non-asset-based freight logistics firms. That same year, he married Patricia Neaves, with whom he raised four children. The family lived in Buena Park before settling in Orange Park Acres in 1979.

Bob was active in civic life and served as president of the OPA community association. He helped build the original horse arena at Salem Lutheran Church—it has since been relocated to its current site—and championed the fencing and preservation of the OPA trail system. He was a passionate voice against overdevelopment, particularly the Sully-Miller project, and built strong friendships through his community efforts.

A published author, Bob was driven by a belief in good government, strong moral values in public policy, and improving children's education. His writings and advocacy reflected his deep convictions and thoughtful perspective.

Bob is survived by five sisters, three children, 12 grandchildren, and three great-granddaughters. He leaves behind a legacy of leadership, integrity and service—to his industry, his community, and his family.

Ameriof the based t same eaves, r chil-Buena Drange

From left, Terrie Schatz, Marilyn Dinger, Jay and Vicky Chaisson placed 400 flags on veteran's graves.



Orange Elks Exalted Ruler Kelley Martinez placed a wreath in honor of our fallen heroes at the Tri-City Memorial Day Observance and at the Fairhaven Memorial Day Service.

Assistance League joins Independence from Hunger campaign

Assistance League of Orange and the Friendly Center are partnering with Orange Grocery Outlet for its annual Independence From Hunger campaign, running from June 25 through July 30.

The program is simple. When customers check out at the Grocery Outlet register, they have the option to donate money in any denomination.

If they choose to donate \$5 or more, the customer will receive a \$5 coupon for a future purchase.

The funds raised will allow food to be bought and delivered to people in the Orange Community facing food insecurity. 100% of all donations, will go back into the community.

Orange Grocery Outlet, owned by Mike and Melanie McCormick, is located at 1803 E. Chapman.



Orange Emblem Club #418 shared in the commemoration of Memorial Day at the Santa Ana Cemetery. Club President Laurie Padilla placed a wreath at the foot of the monument that honors all the veterans who gave their lives in the fight for our country's freedom. The Memorial Day remembrance, an annual event hosted by the cities of Orange, Tustin and Santa Ana, has been going on since 1881.

REAL ESTATE with David Silva







Kiwanis brings Concerts in the Park to Orange

The Kiwanis Club of Orange will host this summer's Concerts in the Park for the Orange community

Last year, the City of Orange realized that it did not have the funds to continue the Summer Concert Series. Wilson Automotive stepped up with the needed funds so that this event could continue. The Club was grateful to Wilson Automotive because the food concession at the concerts is it main fundraiser.

As the host of this year's Summer Concert Series, Kiwanis Club not only provides all the food concessions, but also books the bands, hires the sound crew, handles the finances, and everything else that it takes to make these free concerts happen.

It is a lot of moving parts and a big undertaking for a small club made up of all volunteers. Everyone associated with this endeavor -- from the bands to the community sponsors -- has been very supportive.

All the concerts will take place at Hart Park on Wednesday evenings. The lineup is:

July 9th – Stone Soul playing Classic Soul & Motown

July 16th – The Trip – 60s, 70s, 80s Rock

July 23rd – Ronstadt Revival - Linda Ronstadt tribute



Back row, left to right: Noah Echegaray, Steve Hunt, Mike Clements, Bruce Morrison, Gregg Williamson, Frank Tucker; front, left to right: Shannon Tucker and Debbie Booth.

July 30th – The New Romantics – Taylor Swift tribute

August 6th – 90s Rockshow – 90s Rock

Sponsorship opportunities are still available; contact Shannon Tucker at KiwanisofOrangeCA@gmail.com.

Kiwanis is a nonprofit organization that focuses on assisting children in the community.

In addition to sponsoring the high school Key Club program, Kiwanis awarded \$20,000 in

scholarships to six graduating seniors. Kiwanis also awarded grants to Orange schools for academic enhancement, provided breakfast for the GRIP (Gang Reduction Intervention Partnership) spring break soccer camp and hosted a bowling field trip for children with special needs.

If you have ever been to the Santa photo booth during the City's Tree Lighting ceremony, then you have enjoyed another community event provided by Kiwanis.



The Orange Emblem Club #418 presented an appreciation plaque, June 3, to volunteers at Toyota of Orange who participated in the group's annual toy drive in December. From left, Nick Calderon, Daniel Jeronimo, Emblem Community Service Chairman Carole Walters, Barrie Wallach, Azin Sanchez, Samantha Zavala, Heather Palmer, Emblem Jr. Past President Kim Smith, Shawn Cutts and Emmanuel Lezma. The toy drive is organized by Vikki Murphy.



The Seniors over Sixty Zumba group made an impromptu appearance at the Albertsons at Chapman and Hewes, entertaining shoppers with several dance routines, June 21. The group is led by Susie Vanderlip (center).

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Villa Park High students

Villa Park High School students participated in the powerful "Every 15 Minutes" program, sponsored by the California Highway Patrol (CHP) in collaboration with local agencies. This two-day experience encourages students to consider the consequences of

The program began with students being removed from class a life lost to an alcohol-related crash, reflecting the national statistic. A CHP officer and an Orange County Sheriff's deputy

Later, juniors and seniors gathered to witness a dramatic simulation of a fatal DUI crash involving their peers. Emergency responders from the Orange County Fire Authority (OCFA), paramedics, and CHP arrived to perform a realistic emergency response, which included the Jaws of Life and the transport of a critically "injured" student to a hospital, where the student was pronounced "dead."

This event was made possible through the support of community partners, including grants from CHP, Supervisor Don Wagner's office and ATI Restoration. Services were provided by Fairhaven Mortuary, Omega Society, OCFA, OC Global Medical Center, Archie's Towing, OC District Attorney's Office and The Flowery. Refreshments were donated by 5th Avenue Bagels, Dunkin' Donuts and Jersey Mike's.

experience Every 15 Minutes

drinking and driving.

every 15 minutes to symbolize entered each classroom to read an obituary written by the students' parents, outlining the circumstances of their "death" and their impact on the school and community. The students then reappeared as the "living dead," silent, dressed in black, unable to communicate with others for the rest of the day.

Tustin Host Lions named Club of the Year

The Tustin Host Lions Club was recognized as Lion Club of the Year for Lions District 4-L4. This honor celebrates the club's exceptional service, leadership and commitment to the community throughout the past year.

In addition to this top distinction, the Club was given the "Hands in Service" Award, acknowledging its outstanding collaboration with the City of Tustin. The club played an instrumental role in several key community events, including the City of Tustin's annual Easter Egg Hunt and Tustin Tiller Day's Pancake Breakfast

of our mission: to serve," said John Nielsen, President of the Tustin Host Lions Club. "We are incredibly grateful for the opportunity to partner with the City of Tustin and to make a meaningful impact in the lives of our neigh-

CPR training kiosk debuts at SCC



The mobile Hands-only CPR training kiosk is located at SCC.

Santiago Canyon College is home to the West Coast's first mobile Hands-only CPR training kiosk, part of a new initiative launched by the American Heart Association (AHA) in partnership with Edwards Lifesciences Foundation.

Installed in SCC's E Building, the kiosk offers a five-minute training session designed to teach the public how to perform Hands-only CPR. The program uses a combination of instructional videos, a practice manikin, and real-time feedback on hand placement, compression depth, and rate.

The kiosk is part of the American Heart Association's broader public education effort to improve cardiac arrest survival rates.

The training is brief and selfguided. After a short video introduction, users are prompted to practice chest compressions and then complete a timed test. The kiosk delivers immediate feedback to help users improve their technique.

The kiosk will remain at SCC through early fall and is open to students, faculty, staff and campus visitors.

Dr. Pranav M. Patel, board president of AHA's Orange County/Inland Empire Division and Chief of Cardiology at UC Irvine, said making CPR training accessible to the public is key to improving outcomes.

"This kiosk takes away the intimidation factor," Patel said. "You don't need prior training or certification—just five minutes and a willingness to learn."

Hands-only CPR, which focuses on continuous chest compressions without mouth-tomouth breaths, is recommended for use by untrained bystanders in most cardiac arrest situations. Studies have shown it can be as effective as conventional CPR.

The American Heart Association and Edwards Lifesciences Foundation plan to rotate the mobile kiosk to other locations over time, but SCC is serving as the pilot site for Orange County and the broader region.

Porter to speak to OC Dems

Former representative and current gubernatorial candidate Katie Porter will discuss the state of the state and the country and take questions at the July 23 meeting of the Central Orange County Democratic Club. Snacks and is required to attend.

There is a new tree rapidly grow-

ing at the intersection of Villa

Park Road and Cannon. A rare monoeucalyptus, planted by

AT&T on OC Parks land, will

reach 65 ft. in height and 8 ft. in

diameter.

conversation 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 access the Mobilize link to RSVP. Seating is limited. RSVP



Left to right, Villa Park Mayor Pro Tem Jordan Wu, Congresswomen Young Kim, event chair Michelle Gonzales and Ed Carter, president of the Villa Park Community Services Foundation.

Congresswomen Young Kim, who represents the 40th District, attended the inaugural Villa Park Health & Wellness Fair, dubbed "Spring into Health" on May 31. Twenty-five vendors from the

health and wellness fields provided information and demonstrations, along with physicians discussing eye, brain and lung health. Plans are for the event to also feature a 5K run next year.

"These awards reflect the heart bors."

Coaches Hall of Fame inducts locals

Eleven former standout softball players and coaches were inducted into the 2025 Orange County Softball Hall of Fame at the All-Star doubleheader, North vs. South and East vs. West games. Local inductees included Lauren Young from Canyon High, Suzanne Barnett from Villa Park High and Dan Hays, a former Canyon High coach.

Dan Hay, former head coach at Canyon High School, stepped down in 2015 after nine seasons, posting a 123-58-1 win-loss record, the highest winning percentage as a coach in Canyon softball history. Hays guided the Comanches to two league finals, four CIF-SS semifinals, and one trip to the CIF finals. Hays founded the Premier Girls Fastpitch, and now coaches at Marina High.

Lauren Young was a four-year letterman under Head Coach Dan Hay at Canyon. Young was named team Most Valuable Player and First Team All-Conference honors in her junior and senior years, and named All-County and All-State as a senior

She was named 2012 Athlete of the Year at Canyon as a senior as well as the school's Junior Player of the Year the previous season. The four-year scholar-athlete posted a .394 batting average with a .746 slugging percentage and five home runs in her senior season.

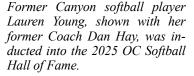
Young played college ball at University of Arizona where she earned Pac-12 freshman team honors in 2013 and All-Academic Honorable Mention in 2014 and 2015.

Suzie Barnett (now Lanzone) played four years at Villa Park High School, lettering in volleyball, softball and track, 1985-88. Barnett was a three-time All-Century League First Team selection in softball, a two-time League MVP, and earned All-CIF-SS honors in both her junior and senior seasons. Selected as Orange County Athletic Directors Assoc. Athlete of the Year, VPHS MVP and OC Register Athlete of the Year and VPHS Top Scholar-Athlete for 1988, she broke multiple school records, including home runs, runs scored and total hits. She was also named Century League volleyball MVP and League 220 Champion in track. Barnett was a three-year varsity letterman at infield, leading Villa Park with a .348 batting average.



Dan Hay, left, former Canyon High School softball coach, accepts induction into the 2025 OC Softball Hall of Fame from Doug Myers.







Suzanne Barnett, right, former Villa Park softball player, was inducted into the 2025 OC Softball Hall of Fame by her former coach, David Shelton.



El Modena catcher Parker Mayes makes the tag at the plate. El Modena beat Poway, 8-2, in the playoff game.



Sofia Ramos from El Modena High lays down the perfect sacrifice bunt against Poway.



Kylie Tafua from El Modena takes the throw to record the out at second base against Norco in the CIF-SS Div. 1 finals.



El Modena's Parker Mayes puts ElMo up, 3-0, over Poway, hitting three home runs in the game.



El Modena Principal Bob King, left, accepts the CIF-SS Div. 1 Softball runner-up trophy from CIF Commissioner Thom Simmons.

El Modena and Canyon High School qualified for the CIF-SS softball playoffs. El Modena, in Div. 1, was tied with Pacifica High as the Crestview League No. 1. ElMo advanced to the second round with a 9-5 win over Rosary High School. Play against Notre Dame, 6-4, and Temescal Canyon, 13-3, put El Modena in the

El Modena took a 3-0 loss to Norco, and as runner-up in the Div. 1 finals, advanced to the

finals to face No. 1 in the state.

state SoCal playoffs. Seeded No. 1, they got a bye first round, to face Poway second round. A convincing 8-6 put El Modena in the finals against Mater Dei Catholic High of San Diego. There was something notably missing at the introduction of the players pregame: six starters chose to play travel ball.

Spring playoffs end of the road

El Modena jumped out to a 3-0 lead, but Mater Dei closed the door with six runs in the fifth, and added five runs in the seventh,

eliminating El Modena, 12-3.

Canyon High School, the Crestview at-large entry, was eliminated by Temescal Canyon in the first round, 6-4.

In baseball Div. 2, Villa Park High pulled out a win over Granite Hills, breaking a 4-4 tie in the seventh inning. VP was then eliminated by St. John Bosco, 7-4, to end the season.

The season also ended for both Canyon and Foothill High School in Div. 2.

COMMUNITY SPORTS BY CLIFF ROBBINS AND CHAD CLINE



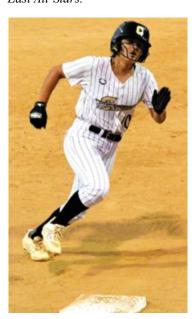
Brenda Shine welcomed former El Modena athlete Brett Johnson into the El Modena Hall of Fame.



Jim Bollinger welcomed former ElMo athlete and coach Jessica Foley into the El Modena Hall of Fame.



Auddrey Lira, VPHS, flies off the mound after coming in to pitch for the East All-Stars.



Victoria Oropeza from Canyon rounds third, heading for home to score for the East All-Stars.



El Modena's Monica Garcia handles the hot corner in the East vs. West All-Star game.



Sara Pinedo from El Modena started in the circle for the East All-Stars.

El Modena holds Hall of Fame sports banquet

The always-colorful Bob Rudy, the voice of El Modena, opened the Hall of Fame banquet, introducing the newest members of the Hall of Fame, Brett Johnson and Jessica Foley.

Johnson was a multi-sport athlete at ElMo from 1982-85, playing baseball and football. Johnson was selected for football, as All-Century League, All-County, All-CIF and All-State in 1984. Johnson was on the CIF-SS Championship teams in 1983 and 84, and was named Most Valuable Player of the Orange County All-Star game.

He lettered in baseball, 1983-35, leading the team in RBIs, stolen bases and batting average in 1985. Johnson received a scholarship to play at Arizona University, and was on the PAC-10 Rose Bowl Championship team

in 1986-87. Johnson graduated from ASU in 1991 and went into broadcasting.

Foley was a multi-sport athlete, 2002-05, playing volleyball and softball. She was selected to the All-Century League softball team, 2004-05, leading the county with an 800-plus on-base percentage in 2005.

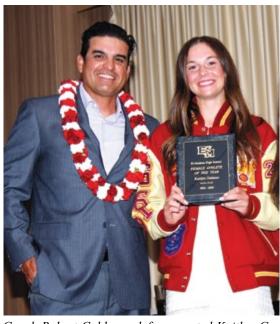
She was named Most Valuable Player in 2005 and First Team All-County and All-CIF. Foley ended her prep career playing in the Orange County All-Star game.

Foley was awarded an athletic scholarship for softball at St. John's University. She returned to El Modena to coach 2007-15. Foley's jersey #00 was retired in 2014. She was Mater Dei head coach 2017-19, leading the team to two League titles in 2018-19.

Awarded Athletes of Character were: Brodie Hitchens, football; Nathanial Phipps and Sophia Andrews, cross country; David Razon, water polo; Avery Owen, girls tennis; Alina Casares, girls golf; Monique Del Toro, cheer; Shaylan Morgan, pom; Emily Aufdemberg, volleyball; Kobe Oliva and Mackenzie Brehm, basketball; Alejandro Escalera and Jocelyne Perez, soccer; Cindy Teyul Cuc, water polo; Zackary Daniel and Elizabeth Alvarado, wrestling; Christian Tafua, baseball; Trent Senters, golf; Matthew Valencia Beltran and Ariana Kang, lacrosse; Kylie Tafua, flag football; Julianna Brower, softball; Joshua Poylio and Brianna Soberano, swim; Cristian Cortez, tennis; Matthew Reyes and Madison Tran, track and field; Aaron Buckley, volleyball.



The Shine: Play It Forward foundation is in remembrance of Coach Tom Shine, former El Modena athlete, teacher and mentor who demonstrated strength and a positive attitude during his courageous battle with cancer. It recognizes the athletes for their leadership, character, service and positive impact to the community. From left, Brenda Shine, Casey Shine, ElMo scholarship recipients Dylan Leslie, Ben Astor, Logan Carrera, Nolan Wyser, Kaitlyn Galasso and Lisa Shine.



Coach Robert Calderon, left, presented Kaitlyn Galasso with the El Modena Female Athlete of the Year award at the sports banquet.



Coach Tim Craycraft, left, presented Nolan Wyser, center, with the El Modena Male Athlete of the Year award at their all-sports banquet, as boys swim coach Nicole Clark, right, looks on.

East All-Stars come from behind

Sara Pinedo from El Modena High started on the mound for the East All-Stars, and gave up four runs on three hits before giving way to Canyon High School pitcher Jordan Simmons in relief. Katelyn Galasso from ElMo jumped all over the first pitch, drilling a single to right in the bottom of the first inning.

Auddrey Lira from Villa Park hit into a double play to end the inning, leaving two stranded. Elle McClosky from Mater Dei led off the second inning with a triple. ElMo batter Monica Garcia's sacrifice fly scored McClosky to gain one run back for the East All-Stars.

Villa Park's Lira took the mound in the third inning for the East All-Stars, retiring the side. The East scored four runs on five hits to take the lead, 5-4, over the West. The West rallied for three runs in the fourth inning to take back the lead, 7-5.

With Jade Diaz from Canyon

on base, Lira from VPHS hit a double, scoring Diaz, for the East to trail by a run. Garcia led off with a single in the bottom of the sixth, and was left stranded.

The East rallied behind Mater Dei Sophia Rolon's lead-off double; Rolon scored on a fielder's choice to tie the game, 7-7. The 2025 game went into the record book as a tie.

The South All-Stars in the preceding game won, 4-0, over the North All-Stars.



29th Annual Handball Tourney

Orange High School was the site of the 29th annual Jeri Knox-Fred Barrera Handball Classic, pitting teams from Orange, El Modena, Richland and Villa Park High Schools, playing for singles and doubles championship titles. Over 40 students and 21 pairs of doubles participated in the tournament.

Eloy Velasquez earned the 2025 singles champion title, besting Peter Ramirez, both from Orange High, 15-13. In doubles play, Eloy Velasquez and Michael Herrera of Orange High took the win, 15-11, over Victor Castro and Jerry Herrera of Villa Park High.

The tournament, originally sponsored by Knox and Barrera, was initiated by Johnny Johnson, a former OUSD coach and teacher, who regularly visited middle schools to teach the game of handball, "as all you need is a

ball and a wall." The game fostered sportsmanship and teamwork, and a healthy rivalry, keeping youth busy and out of trouble.

Johnson has watched many of these players grow up with the sport, and has been instrumental in the sport becoming sanctioned by the district. The high schools now have over 50 students playing on five teams during the intradistrict season, with coaches and GPA requirements. Sponsors, including the Fullerton Elks and Joseph Petri, have stepped forward to support the Richland High team, and other teams are looking for sponsors. Calvary Chapel Old Towne and Youth Pastor Garrett Marin sponsored the tournament breakfast, where graduating seniors were recognized and one student-athlete from each school team was honored for their aca-



One student-athlete from each team was honored for the highest GPA; from left, Angel Vian, OHS-South, 3.2; Jerry Herrera, Villa Park, 3.1; Peter Ramirez, OHS-North, 3.2; Manny Moreno, RHS, 3.0; Axel Brown, ElMo, 3.2.



From left, Scott Klein, Evan Faccou and Jeff Nath won the 53rd Pro Angler Marlin Tournament in Baja last month.



Doubles champions Michael Herrera and Eloy Vasquez defeated Victor Castro and Jerry Herrera, here with Coach Johnny Johnson.



Singles runner-up Peter Ramirez, champion Eloy Velasquez and Coach Johnny Johnson.

