

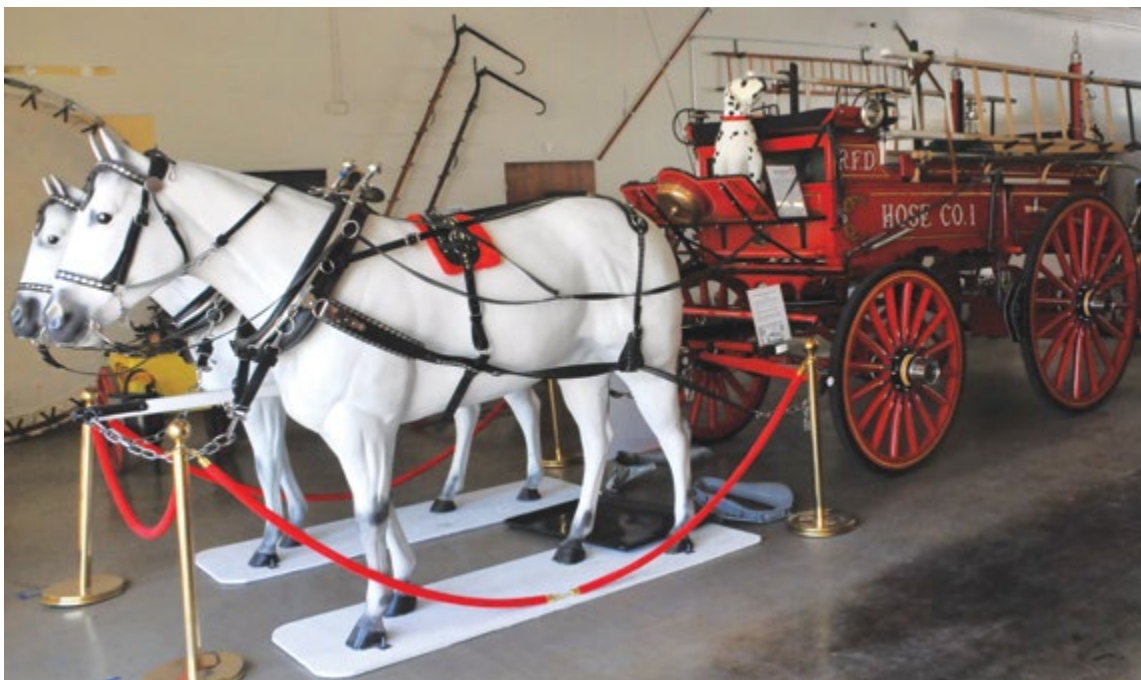
# FOOTHILLS SENTRY

The Best News In Town Since 1969

East Orange • Old Towne Orange • Orange Park Acres • Villa Park • Silverado/Modjeska Canyons • North Tustin

A Monthly Community Newspaper

FEBRUARY 2026



A vintage pumper is one of the artifacts on display at the Call to Adventure California Fire Museum and Safety Learning Center located in the former Orange Fire Department Headquarters building. See Call to Adventure, page 7.

## Dirt hauling routes for Mabury Ranch development approved

By Tina Richards

The Orange City Council approved two proposed routes, Jan. 13, needed to transport clean fill dirt to the property north of Santiago Creek, below Mabury Ranch to accommodate the development of 22 homes.

The property, part of the greater Sully-Miller site currently owned by Milan Capital, will be sold to developer D.R. Horton once all the entitlements and necessary permits are in place. While most of the needed permits are considered “administrative” and can be executed by city staff, the dirt hauling operation requires council approval because it involves

more than 130,000 cubic yards of dirt.

It is also a component of negotiations between Milan and the city regarding the ultimate fate of the Sully-Miller property. While the bulk of the acreage is not zoned for housing, the parcel adjacent to Mabury Ranch was zoned residential in 1993. The horse arena on the south side of Santiago Canyon Road is also zoned residential, as of now, for one-acre lots. If the city accommodates the 22-home project and rezones the horse arena for additional units, Milan is willing to clean up the former dumpsite and transfer the Sully-Miller property to the city.

Go-ahead, a given

Council approval of the haul routes, aside from their role in the negotiations, was foreordained in 2020 when the then-council approved the 22-home tentative tract map and set the stage for future permit approvals.

“You have to know our hands are tied,” Councilman Jon Dumitru explained. “None of us were on the council in 2020, but we have to abide by its decision.”

The preferred route is from the 55 Freeway to Katella, Villa Park Road and Santiago Canyon Road to the entrance of the Sully-

See “Dirt”  
continued on page 2

## Landowner donates 30 acres to City of Orange

The City of Orange has accepted 30.75 acres located between Santiago Creek and Mabury Ranch from property owner Milan Capital that will be placed in the city’s open space reserve.

The land dedication is part of ongoing negotiations between Milan and the city, wherein Milan will develop two parcels and divest itself of the Sully-Miller

site in East Orange. The parcels slated for housing are the horse arena site on Santiago Canyon Road and 12 acres adjacent to Mabury Ranch.

The 30.75 acres deeded to the city surround the Mabury Ranch project, 22 homes to be built by D.R. Horton. About 2.5 acres are already part of a conservation easement required to mitigate the

impacts of the development on the environment and native habitat. That easement will remain in place, managed by a third party and financed by an endowment from Milan.

The remaining acreage, accepted by the city as a “public benefit,” will likely be restored and managed by a third party at some point in the future.



Thirty acres of open space (yellow) in East Orange is being dedicated to the city by landowner Milan Capital.

## Residents file lawsuit against City of Orange

By Tina Richards

A lawsuit has been filed against the City of Orange by two residents challenging levies imposed by the city. Plaintiffs claim the fees are unlawful taxes and unfairly burden waste hauling and sanitation services ratepayers.

Filed Dec. 17, the lawsuit cites a “road mitigation reimbursement” the city charges waste hauler CR&R, but is passed along to consumers, and a “street tree maintenance” fee that appears on residents’ sanitation bills.

In January 2024, the city entered into a new agreement with CR&R for citywide trash pickup and street sweeping. The agreement was reached 18 months before CR&R’s then-contract was due to expire. At that time, CR&R agreed to pay the city a one-time \$6 million fee for retroactive road surface mitigation and an ongoing \$2.1 million annual fee for recurring maintenance. The \$2.1 million charge is adjusted annually based on the Consumer Price Index.

Consumers charged

The plaintiffs, longtime Orange residents John Nelson and Sammy Rodriguez, contend that those additional charges have been passed along to ratepayers since April 2024, when CR&R’s new rate structure was approved by the city. “This is illegal,” Nelson explains, “for two reasons.”

First, he says, the California Vehicle Code disallows charges for the “privilege of using city streets,” and second, Proposition 218 requires that customers are charged only for services and service-related costs. City street maintenance, Nelson and Rodriguez note, is not a waste-related service.

The lawsuit also challenges a tree maintenance fee Orange has charged residents since 2003. The fee appears on water bills under “sanitation charges” as “city-wide tree program.” This, too, is illegal, Nelson says, because the fee is assessed on parcels of property, but is considered a “general governmental service.” General services (police, fire, public works) are not subject to specific levies because they are available to all members of the public in substantially the same manner. The fee also violates code because the proportional charge to each parcel is higher than the service attributed to that parcel.

The plaintiffs are asking the court for a writ of mandate directing the city to stop imposing and collecting the road mitigation reimbursement from CR&R and the street tree charge from sanitation rate payers.

A court date is set for Feb. 27.

## NEWS INSIDE

### STREET SMARTS

Old Town Tustin is getting a makeover with parklets, signage and improved walkability.

See Street improvements, page 3

### HANGARS AND ASH

With one blimp hangar burned to the ground, the remaining one, a National Historic Landmark, should be preserved as a museum and innovation center.

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### A LITTLE GOES A LONG WAY

Modest grants presented to individual OUSD teachers enrich learning experiences for hundreds of students.

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### A DAY IN THE LIFE

From undiscovered history to boring beetles to fire prevention to political points to library liaisons, canyon calendar is full.

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### EQUINE EQUANIMITY

Rescued horses get new lease on life, serving as therapy animals for people.

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Miller site, across the street from Nicky Way. The remainder of the route crosses the former landfill, traverses Santiago Creek via a temporary landbridge, and then on to the acreage slated for development. The landbridge has been approved by the Army Corps of Engineers; the fill operation needed to construct the road has been approved by the Santa Ana Water Quality Control Board and the Local Enforcement Agency (LEA).

Mabury misgivings

The alternate route follows the same path from the 55, turns on Cannon to Serrano, then down Yellowstone through Mabury Ranch to the construction site. The builder estimates the hauling operation will take 240 truck trips (maximum) per day for up to six months. Trucks will work from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Despite the council's expected approval of the routes, the decision was not without stumbling blocks raised by the public. Residents of Mabury Ranch attended the council meeting and sent emails urging councilmembers to reject the route through their neighborhood.

"Our community will be drastically affected by this," Kelley Herbeck said. "There are health and safety issues and noise pollution. Please don't approve this."

"Our residential streets were never designed to handle 240 truck trips a day," Adam Howard pointed out. "There are insufficient safeguards for our neighborhood. There will be houses shaking and risks of collision."

Mabury HOA President Nathan Swanek advised council members that they should, as a priority, protect the residents of Orange.

A road not taken

Mayor Pro Tem Denis Bilodeau and Councilmembers Jon Dumitru and Ana Gutierrez separately

assured Mabury residents that they had read all of their emails and agreed with them. Dumitru advised that the Mabury Ranch scenario was the second option that would be triggered only by extreme circumstances. "The goal is not to go down Yellowstone," he said. "but there has to be an alternative."

D.R. Horton Vice President Daniel Boyd emphasized that having a Plan B is necessary for any project and that's what the Mabury route is. "We detest that route," he said. "I hope we never have to go there. I agree with the community 100 percent, but we need to get this thing done and built."

The primary route also had its critics. Villa Park Mayor Jordan Wu and Mayor Pro Tem Robert Frackelton reported that they had just learned about the route down Villa Park Road that morning, and asked the council for a continuance to give them time to speak to the builder and work out traffic and road damage issues for their city.

Be nice to your neighbors

"We have a number of concerns," Frackelton said. "Noise, traffic, road wear and tear. This haul route goes right through Villa Park; 240 trips per day is one truck every one to two minutes for six months. We have residents and an elementary school there. You have provisions for safety inspections, street sweeping, hot patch repair for your own roads, but nothing for Villa Park."

"In 2019, for a different development, we came up with a plan together, which included a crossing guard on Villa Park Road," Frackelton recalled. "Villa Park was part of the conversation. This time we weren't invited to the party. At the very least, we should be added to the indemnity agreement. But what we'd really like is to be part of the conversation."

Mayor Wu reiterated Frackelton's points. "Orange has developed this route going through Villa Park, and we were not invited



Preferred haul route from 55 Freeway to Sully-Miller property.



Alternate haul route goes through Mabury Ranch.

to discuss it. Please continue this item to allow Villa Park to be part of the conversation. Allow us to talk to the developer. "

Good will

Denis Bilodeau subsequently asked if the traffic, road clean-up and pothole concessions granted to Orange applied to Villa Park. The answer was no.

In that case, he said, we should ask the builder to extend that courtesy to our neighbors. Milan representative Christopher Nicholson was quick to advise the council and Villa Park officials that it would certainly extend the same conditions to that city. He exchanged handshakes with Wu and Frackelton, indicating the deal would be made.

Boyd went a step further. He assured the council and the audience that his company's priority is to do things right and be sensitive to the needs of the communi-

ty. "This is the first project we've had in Orange, and we want to be invited back," he said. "If we need a crossing guard at that location, we're there."

Contaminates considered

Dru Whitefeather took a second shot at the primary route. He is part of a group of East Orange residents who have stayed in touch with LEA and the Water Board to monitor contaminants in the mounds of debris that populate the Sully-Miller site. He expressed his concerns that portions of Stockpile H, which was found to contain some contaminants, was going to be used to build the haul road through the property. He advocated the Mabury Ranch route to avoid the risk of airborne particulates and impacts on Santiago Canyon Road and Salem School. He also noted that agencies have not finished testing the mounds on the site.

The Water Board did, however, approve moving the top portion of Stockpile H to other areas on the site. The lower 10 feet of the stockpile will not be disturbed because it contains asbestos. While the Water Board said it preferred clean fill to construct the earthen bridge, it will allow 1,275 cubic yards from the upper portion to be used to construct the on-site route.

The board requires that no visible dust is observed during grading and relocation, that material from Stockpile H is prevented from migrating offsite, and that "regardless of where the fill material is sourced from, the board may require sampling of the haul route fill area in the future."

With the council fully behind protections for Villa Park and assurances that the route through Mabury Ranch is a last resort, it gave its unanimous approval to both haul routes.

Orange seeking sponsors for nation's 250th birthday event

As America approaches its 250th anniversary, the City of Orange is planning a Semiquincentennial Celebration in the Park on July 3 at Hart Park. The celebration will feature live music, entertainment, family activities and a special commemorative ceremony.

The city invites businesses, organizations and individuals to

help make USA 250 Celebration in the Park successful by becoming a sponsor of this free community event. Sponsorship opportunities range from \$20,000 to \$500 and provide meaningful recognition while directly funding the celebration. Full sponsorship details, benefits and contact information are available at [cityoforange.org/250sponsor](http://cityoforange.org/250sponsor).

Alan Velasco named City of Orange Fire Chief



Chief Alan Velasco

Alan Velasco will serve as Fire Chief for the City of Orange, effective Jan. 30. He replaces Sean deMetropolis, who retired Jan. 29 after three decades of service.

Velasco previously served as a battalion chief and has been with the Orange City Fire Department for 25 years. As Fire Chief, Velasco will oversee eight fire stations providing all-hazards emergency response across 27 square miles. Each year, Orange City Fire responds to more than 18,000 incidents, including residential fires, traffic accidents and medical emergencies.

"It's a privilege to be selected to lead the department I've called home for nearly 25 years," said Velasco. "I'm committed to building on Chief deMetropolis's legacy and continuing our focus on readiness, professionalism, and service to the Orange community."

H2

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## TAWC college scholarship applications now available

Tustin Area Woman's Club (TAWC), an all-volunteer philanthropic community service organization, has announced that its college scholarship application forms are available on the club's website, [tustinareawomansclub.com](http://tustinareawomansclub.com), or via each TUSD high school on the school website.

For over 60 years, TAWC has given college scholarships to deserving Tustin Unified School

District students. This year TAWC will offer a \$1,000 collegiate scholarship to one or more graduating seniors from each of the five high schools in the Tustin Unified School District, which are: Beckman High School, Foothill High School, Hillview High School, Legacy Magnet Academy, and Tustin High School. The TAWC college scholarship application deadline is March 13.

## Street improvements coming to Old Town Tustin



*Artist rendering of El Camino Real*



*Artist rendering of Main Street, west of Newport*



*Artist rendering of Main Street*

**By Guy Ball**

The City of Tustin is working to enhance Old Town Tustin with a series of improvements to revitalize the downtown area while ensuring the historic character is preserved.

The updates and changes focus on Main Street from Newport Avenue to C Street, and on El Camino Real from First Street to Sixth Street. Demolition and construction has already started and continues through late summer 2026.

The project includes a number of approaches:

- Seven added “parklets” will create new community gathering areas
- Sidewalks will be rebuilt to take care of uneven surfaces; improving walkability
- Raised medians and signage will improve driver, biker, and pedestrian safety
- A new gateway sign will welcome people to Old Town; estab-

lishing a focal monument for the area

- Landscaping, including tree replacement, will be upgraded to help beautify the area

Parklets will include spots in front of American Grub/Swinging Door, El Camino Cafe, Tustin Garage, Storico, Morning Lavender, Chaak, and the former Rutabegorz.

While some parking spaces will be lost (particularly those where the parklets are added), the City is reminding residents of the three free parking areas in Old Town, including the open floor of the garage on C Street, south of Main, and the two areas adjacent to the Tustin Water Plant on Prospect, north of Main.

Such city events as the Chili Cookoff and the return of the Sunset Market will not be impacted by the construction.

For more information, call (714) 573-3150 or email [engineering@tustinca.org](mailto:engineering@tustinca.org).

## Kalista Brown crowned Miss Orange



*From left, Ava Mabraten, first runner-up; Miss Orange Kalista Brown; second runner-up Payden Thibodeau; and third runner-up Alyson Halbreich.*

Miss Orange 2026 is Kallista Brown, a 2024 graduate of Villa Park High School, crowned on Jan. 17. She will act as the official ambassador to the City of Orange and serve as the May Queen. She becomes part of the rich history of the pageant, spanning over 85 years.

She received a \$4,000 scholarship, and is currently attending Cal State Fullerton as a musical theater major.



*Kalista Brown is crowned by 2025 Miss Orange Kylie Seppala.*

2026

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Guest Commentaries

The spirit of the skies, why the Tustin hangar must fly again

By Joe Greco and Brian Delahaut

It towers above Orange County like a cathedral of wood — 17 stories high, 300 feet wide and longer than three football fields. Built in 1942 from Douglas fir, when steel was scarce during World War II, the Tustin Lighter-Than-Air South Hangar remains one of America’s last great timber aviation structures.

For more than 80 years, it has watched the region evolve — from orange groves to innovation hubs — a silent witness to California’s ingenuity and ambition. But after the tragic 2023 fire that destroyed its twin, the North Hangar, this last remaining structure stands at a crossroads. We can let it decay, or we can give it a second life — as a monument to service, innovation and the boundless spirit of flight.

A testament to ingenuity and service

The story of the Tustin Hangar began in 1942, when the U.S. Navy commissioned the Santa Ana Naval Air Station as a base for blimps patrolling the Pacific Coast for enemy submarines. These lighter-than-air ships safeguarded our shores, their crews embodying quiet courage and professionalism.

In the 1950s, the site became

the nation’s first Marine Corps Air Facility designed exclusively for helicopter operations. Thousands of Marines trained here before deploying to Korea and Vietnam. At its height, the base supported nearly 5,000 military and civilian personnel — a city within a city devoted to the defense of freedom.

In 1975, both hangars were declared National Historic Landmarks, recognized among the largest free-span wooden structures in the world — architectural marvels symbolizing American resilience and innovation.

From loss to leadership

The North Hangar’s destruction could have been the end of the story. Instead, it can mark a new beginning. The surviving South Hangar can, and should, become the Tustin Lighter-Than-Air Museum and Innovation Center — a space where history, technology and community meet under one awe-inspiring roof.

Imagine walking beneath its massive arches to explore exhibits on World War II airships, helicopter engineering, and the legacy of Navy and Marine Corps aviation. Picture students from UCI, Chapman University, and Cal State Fullerton studying STEM principles inspired by its wooden design. Envision veterans’ ceremonies, concerts and

film productions bringing new life to this masterpiece of American engineering.

This vision isn’t just nostalgic — it’s forward-looking. The hangar can become a catalyst for Orange County’s cultural and economic growth, a destination as meaningful as it is magnificent.

An economic engine for Southern California

Preserving the hangar isn’t a burden; it’s an investment. With a defined mission as a museum and civic landmark, it can attract hundreds of thousands of visitors each year — standing proudly alongside the USS Midway in San Diego and the Pearl Harbor Aviation Museum in Hawaii as a cornerstone of heritage tourism.

Every visitor brings dollars to Tustin’s restaurants, hotels and shops, generating millions in local tax revenue. The hangar’s restoration would spur redevelopment around the base, inviting business investments, educational partnerships, and new employment opportunities.

Preservation, in this case, is not about saving the past — it’s about fueling the future.

A call for partnership and patriotism

This endeavor requires vision and teamwork. The City of Tustin, the Navy League of Orange



A blimp parked outside the hangar, circa 1940s.

County, and the Tustin Area Historical Society have already laid the groundwork. But they can’t do it alone.

It’s time for Southern California’s great companies — Boeing, Northrop Grumman, SpaceX, Disney, Anduril and The Irvine Company — to join in. Their support would not only restore an icon of American ingenuity, but demonstrate corporate citizenship that reflects the very values that built their success: innovation, courage and community.

To join this effort, visit SaveTheHangars.com or contact the Tustin City Council at city-council@tustinca.org. Together, we can ensure that this towering monument once again serves the nation — not through defense,

but through education, inspiration and unity.

Every generation inherits a piece of history to protect. The South Hangar is ours.

If we act now, we can transform it into a living landmark — a place where students learn, veterans gather, and families are inspired by what vision and perseverance can achieve. If we wait, we risk losing a symbol that will never be rebuilt.

Joe Greco is the president of the Navy League of the United States – Orange County Council. Col. Brian E. Delahaut is retired from the U.S. Marine Corps. Both authors advocate for the preservation of military heritage in Southern California.

City of Orange’s end-run cash grab

By John Nelson

Have you noticed that your trash bill has increased nearly

30% since 2024? If you have a business in Orange, your trash bill has likely increased nearly 96% in the last two years.

While recent headlines highlighted the City of Orange’s financial woes and its failure to pass a sales tax increase, little attention has been paid to the city sneaking in a “tax” and performing an end-run around state laws designed to protect residents from taxation without representation.

Amended portions of California’s State Constitution, through the passage of Proposition 13, 26 and 218, plus many other laws, restrict the manner that taxes are imposed and force politicians to be transparent in the taxes and fees they charge.

In early 2024, the City of Orange ended its agreement with trash hauler CR&R a year-and-a-half early. The city did so, not for

the purposes of finding the best price with a new hauler to protect residents against rate increases, but instead, to sneak in a new tax, buried and bundled into our trash collection rates.

City staff do not monitor or enforce provisions in the contract that ensure the highest quality of service or provide stewardship and oversight of our tax dollars.

It is well known that frequent “going out to bid” ensures that competition with other contractors, protects ratepayers and rewards high quality service.

Instead, despite the poor trash and street-sweeping services that the hauler currently provides, the city rewarded CR&R with a new 15-year long contract (2024 to 2039), the longest in the history of the City of Orange.

Buried in the staff report covering the adoption of this competi-

tion-killing contract, CR&R paid the city a \$6 million initial “fee” to pay for street repair, and a \$2.1 million “fee” (that increases annually) to be paid every year for the next 15 years.

This is a \$41+ million tax which was not voted on by residents. It is easy to see that trash rates dramatically increased to cover the cost of this new “fee.” This fee is expressly prohibited by law.

As a former City of Orange employee for over 24 years, I witnessed, firsthand, poor promotional practices, poor leadership, poor business and management practices.

The current predicament in which the city finds itself is a sum total of these systemic problems. For over a decade, this author has brought attention to these issues to management, three city man-

agers, three mayors and multiple council members. I, and others, have asked for forensic audits and answers to our questions. While some progress was made, no substantial changes occurred to thwart the city’s fiscal woes.

Recently, we’ve been forced to file a lawsuit to prevent the City of Orange from over-charging all of us, and thus lowering all of our trash bills. More efforts are coming to lower the costs of city services to all residents in the near future.

Ask yourself: Why is Orange poorly run? Where is the oversight? Why does the City of Orange reward bad service, and why are you stuck paying for it?

John Nelson is an Orange resident and chairman of the Committee for a Transparent City of Orange.

Cold weather room program returns for second winter

By Vicente Sarmiento, 2nd District Supervisor

At our final meeting of 2025, the Orange County Board of Supervisors unanimously supported our effort to continue the Weather Activated Rooms for Families (WARM) program for a second winter as we go into 2026.

We initially launched WARM in January 2025 to ensure that unhoused families with children

have a safe, warm place to stay during severe storms or extreme cold. As we head into another winter, the need remains urgent, and we are committed to making sure families are not forced to endure dangerous weather in their cars or on the street.

The WARM program will operate from January through April 30 and will cover motel stays, food assistance and program administration. In addition, Pathways of

Hope will work with participating families to connect them to supportive services, helping families move toward greater stability beyond the winter months. We allocated \$150,000 in Second District funds to Pathways of Hope to support a second winter of operation of the WARM program.

The program partners with schools to identify unhoused families and invite them to opt into the program. When cold weather

is expected, the families can be placed in hotels or motels, in the city where the children attend school for a minimum of two nights. They will also be provided with transportation and food assistance.

I am grateful for the collaboration of our school districts and Pathways of Hope. Their partnership ensures we can reach families quickly and respond when it matters most.

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OUPSF awards over \$50,000 in grants

The Orange Unified Public Schools Foundation (OUPSF) proudly awarded its annual Teacher/School Grants on December 11. This year, OUPSF granted \$50,000 to support various classroom projects and learning materials across OUSD.

Each year, OUPSF board members travel to school sites to surprise the grant recipients and present the checks to help with their teaching goals. It is their favorite tradition, and a meaningful way to celebrate the creativity and dedication of our educators.

Building on our tradition of supporting educational excellence, OUPSF recognizes that our educators are true changemakers. We are honored to partner with them as they inspire and empower the students of OUSD. These grants continue to positively impact thousands of students by enriching their learning experiences.



OUPSF presents a \$50,000 check to OUSD for teacher grants. From left, Assistant Superintendent Ernie Gonzalez; Chief Business Officer Sulema Holguin; OUPSF Board Member David Scott; OUPSF Board Member Ron Esparza; OUPSF Board Member Kennedy Schaal; OUPSF President Frank Tucker; OUPSF Board Member Wendi Forrest; OUPSF Board Member Anne Truex; OUSD Superintendent Rachel Monárrez; OUPSF Board Member Nicol Jones; OUPSF Board Member Whitney Amsbury; OUPSF Board Member Rosei Goldsmith; OUPSF Board Member Christine Deihl; Assistant Superintendent Matthew Witmer; Assistant Superintendent Olga McCullough.

OUPSF Teacher Grant Winners are:

- **Anaheim Hills Elementary** - Clarissa Covarrubias, Jenny Win'E;
- **California iInspire Academy** - Jocelyn Diaz, Kimberly Johnson, Juliana Ramirez, Nicole Sanchez;
- **Canyon High School** - Eric Bies, Nira Chandrasekar, Matthew Derham, Alex Graham, Karen Uyematsu;
- **Canyon Rim Elementary** - Rochelle Chanin/Jillian Hendrickson, Kathy Kim, Heather Nevin;
- **Cerro Villa Middle School** - Stacy Baird, Liisa Buchness, Crystal Gore;
- **Chapman Hills Elementary** - Jamie Davis;
- **Crescent Elementary** - Sharon Cecchi, Joy Hernandez, Janis Mauldin;
- **El Modena High School** - Jessica Anderson, Stephanie Quihulz, Enedina Spanner;
- **Fairhaven Elementary** - Rebecca Smith;
- **Fletcher Academy** - Courtney Chidley, Jennifer Greenwalt, Ling Zhao;
- **Handy Elementary** - Izabela Lewis, Tracy McMillen;
- **Imperial Elementary** - Traci Labellarte;
- **Lampson Elementary** - Jordyn Adair, Kristen Aihara; Andrea Gudino;

- **Linda Vista Elementary** - Kim Papac;
- **McPherson Magnet** - Seddigheh Keiser;
- **Nohl Canyon Elementary** - Shannon Granieri;
- **Olive Elementary** - Shannon Catozza;
- **Orange High School** - Brooke Soto;
- **Palmyra GATE Magnet** - Paula Beckman, Adilene Delgado;
- **Panorama Elementary** - Aubree Bova;
- **Running Springs Academy** - Brandi Gower, Lynn Okamura, Lucia Perales;
- **Serrano Elementary** - Linda Walker;
- **Taft Elementary** - Jessica Anguiano, Samantha Mueller, Patty Ruiz;
- **Villa Park Elementary** - Mandy Ballesteros, Aekta Patel, Amanda Victor, Coria Yessenia, Jean Krever;
- **Villa Park High School** - Jeremy Bulrice, Jessica Kim;
- **West Orange Elementary** - Tami Lewis;
- **Yorba Middle School** - Hartley Klement.

LETTERS to the EDITOR

Parking pitfalls

**Dear Editor:**  
I see the Orange City Council is dead set on destroying the businesses in the Orange traffic circle area with the parking meters I've seen being installed there. I've lived in Orange for 50 years and I've seen the businesses change from antiques shops to, now, a thriving restaurant area. I've never seen it so busy. We never go there anymore because of the parking. Now, with the addition of meters, another additional expense, and the high cost the eating places now charge, it isn't worth the hassle and cost to go to the Circle anymore. That's my view, and I'm sure others will feel the same. I think it was Ojai a few years ago that tried the same thing, and it has never recovered. People said we will go to another place with no meters. Ojai took out the meters about a year later. But it has never returned to what it once was. I can see it now in a year a Craigslist ad for "slightly used parking meters."

Len Musgrave  
Orange

Good samaritan

**Dear Editor:**  
I wanted to thank the woman who was behind me in line at the

Ralph's in Villa Park. The card reader was not accepting my credit card, and I was getting flustered. That has never happened before, and I wasn't sure what to do. The woman behind me said not to worry about it and advised the cashier that she would pay for my groceries, which she did. I tried to get her name and address so I could mail her a check, but she waved me off. I am writing in hopes that she will see this and know how much her kindness is appreciated. We seldom hear much good news anymore, so this is certainly worthy of recognition.

Mary Lacey  
Orange

Land ho

**Dear Editor:**  
Re: 30-acres of land donated to Orange for open space  
Twelve years ago, serving on the planning commission, we reviewed a housing project called Rio Santiago. We all ultimately recommended denial. The lynchpin question was "open space." I became more aware as a planning commissioner, when reviewing the project's Environmental Impact Report and the General Plan, of an unacceptable deficiency in open space in Orange. At the time, the deficiency was approximately 245

acres. We have slowly chipped away at that since 2023. What really is the lead story of this land donation, is that it further chips away at loss of open space. We should have been doing this for decades. In fact, we committed to solve this deficit when we adopted the 2010 General Plan, but disregarded it when projects were later approved. I'm encouraged to see this donation move forward. I view it as a positive step. This property owner entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the city last year and wants to ultimately dedicate all the Sully-Miller land to the city. Not only is it a good decision from a planning policy standpoint, but also morally. It commits to our community to close the open space deficit. We can move through the hard emotions by staying focused on the end goal. This effort on the balance (66 acres) of the Sully-Miller site is going to be complicated. It won't be an easy path forward, but we must do it anyway. We have no other option but to chip away at the deficiency and acquire another 200-plus acres somewhere in Orange. That's the 2030 goal; by 2050, we will still need to add another 280 acres of publicly owned open space. If this work happens, it will be, in my opinion, a legacy accomplishment of our city council (and staff) that the generations ahead will never forget.

Adrienne Gladson, AICP  
Orange

REAL ESTATE

with David Silva

MARKET SNAPSHOT

ORANGE, CA

DECEMBER 2025

Single Family

\$1.17M

Avg. Sales Price

↑ 14%

\$1.47M

Avg. List Price

↓ 6%

53

No. of Prop. Sold

↑ 10%

51

Avg. Days on Market

↓ 4%

\$702

Avg. Sales Price per Sqft.

↑ 5%

DAVID SILVA

614.297.3822 | CMLA # 01327642

MARKET SNAPSHOT

TUSTIN, CA

DECEMBER 2025

Single Family

\$1.43M

Avg. Sales Price

↓ 2%

\$1.89M

Avg. List Price

— 0%

20

No. of Prop. Sold

↓ 6%

39

Avg. Days on Market

↑ 15%

\$753

Avg. Sales Price per Sqft.

↑ 3%

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MARKET SNAPSHOT

VILLA PARK, CA

DECEMBER 2025

Single Family

\$2.60M

Avg. Sales Price

↑ 9%

\$3.11M

Avg. List Price

↓ 6%

6

No. of Prop. Sold

↑ 50%

38

Avg. Days on Market

↓ 38%

\$671

Avg. Sales Price per Sqft.

↓ 7%

DAVID SILVA

614.297.3822 | CMLA # 01327642





# Past, present, pests, preparation and politics

## Historic Silverado

January’s Inter-Canyon League (ICL) meeting began with a multimedia time-travel History Committee hydrology-meets-memory report from Scott Breeden. His archival, photographic, and archeological interests also engage oral history and seem to involve forensic hiking. Breeden’s esoteric investigation, not to be confused with strolling up and down Silverado Canyon Road, resulted in discovery of remnants of a once-prominent elevated concrete pipeline, apparently connecting Holtze Ranch via Ladd Canyon to the creek nearly 100 years ago. Now broken and buried in pieces, it would once have been a defining feature of Silverado life, a local landmark now lost in hillside scrub but documented by Breeden in recovered images. Interviews with locals, vintage photos, and an AI-generated reconstruction of a long-ago local landmark delighted meeting attendees. Fans of Breeden and the work of the ICL History Committee hope to organize a public program featuring highlights from its archives.

In other ICL news, Friends of the Library announced a celebratory program featuring the life and work of a local legend. Titled “Leo Hetzel in Pictures and Words: How I Became a Photojournalist,” Modjeska resident and former Station 16 volunteer Hetzel will share a narrated survey highlighting his portfolio of images taken over 50 years. Hetzel’s award-winning work (often featured in galleries and books) includes photojournalism from his career at the Long Beach

Press-Telegram but also travel (South America and Africa) and surf photography, nature images, and, of course, many documenting canyon life.

Mary Schreiber of Fire Safe Council reminded attendees of the still-pending finalization of protocols around the newly adopted statewide Zero Zone. Implications for California rural homeowners are potentially both profound and weirdly quotidian, with the new law requiring removal of all combustibles within five feet of what the state calls a domicile, or what you call your home. Details, including definitions and specifications about potted plants, outbuildings, and temporary structures, are under discussion with actual enforcement a whole other can, or perhaps pot, of worms. Local realtors are already legally required to “disclose” an extensive list of relevant property details, this one now part of the new defensible space feature.

Katie Kirkland, hero of the recent Silverado Country Fair and new fair chairperson, announced an initial early organizing meeting for this year’s annual celebration and fundraiser, welcome news to the tireless, but likely very tired, ICL Chair Geoff Sarkissian, who has helmed the event with outgoing chair Jane Bove.

Mike Boeck offered little good news, but them’s the breaks when you are our canyons’ singular full-time GSOB activist. At least three newly identified areas of Silverado are now confirmed as infested, resulting in the removal of one very old and iconic oak. Meanwhile, what to do when the

bugs are discovered in a small grove on a property owned by an absentee owner who seems unwilling to take action?

## Word count/words count

From our Congressional representative in response to my modest online comment suggesting that she release a statement, provide a press announcement, or otherwise weigh in on the kidnapping of a head of state, almost universally identified as violating both U.S. and international law:

“While we may not see eye-to-eye on this issue, I believe those responsible for illicit drug trafficking that has claimed countless American lives should be held accountable to the fullest extent of the law, and I look forward to receiving additional information from the Administration as this matter proceeds.”

I called Rep. Young Kim’s office to ask exactly what that means, and to ask for comment on Venezuela, Iran, ICE raids, the Epstein files, and the murder of Renee Nicole Good. I also wondered why the Congressmember’s comment box limits long-winded constituents like me to 150 words. The youthful sounding phone staffer opined that this word limit policy was instituted to encourage more concise communication. And he indicated that Kim had indeed expressed her concern about the tragedy of Good’s death. Where, I asked, and to whom? To her staff, he said. Suddenly our conversation became concise indeed after I asked, identifying myself also as a columnist for a local independent community paper, if I could quote him or go on the record with this answer. No.

As a purely objective measure (and not ideological or political at all -- not much anyway) I contacted the office of Representative David Min of the nearby district. I checked. His staffer checked. You can check. His website offers a more generous allowance of 500 words.

## Good times

Cultural and political messaging in our canyons community (signs, flags, banners, leaflets) invites thoughtful engagement at its best and vandalism or disappearance at its less appealing. Symbolic discourse is part of a democratic conversation. Unadorned photos of murdered Minneapolis civil rights activist, legal observer, poet, and mother Renee Nicole Good (1988-2026) stapled to oak trees, signposts, and a community bulletin board were torn down or



Many canyonites paid tribute to Renee Good, while others disparaged the sentiment.

ripped up within hours of that effort to quietly memorialize her. Discouraging, yes, but wait: a day later somebody found pieces of her portrait and carefully reattached them, creating an instant art collage, a meditation on empathy, humanity, co-existence and peaceful resistance.

## Bibliophilia

Library of the Canyons staffer Marilyn reminds patrons of the branch’s new seed library: “Come in and look through our seed binder for options. Check out up to three seed varieties per month--yours to keep! No returns necessary, but let us know how it grows!”

Anticipate a program on local backyard gardening and landscaping best practices, with an eye toward native species, xeriscapic drought and fire-resistant species.

February’s book club is “Five Presidents: My Extraordinary Journey with Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, and Ford” by longtime Secret Service agent Clint Hill, whose assignment was the White House, where he served through war, assassination, and resignation. The following month’s selection offers fictional intrigue with Ellery Lloyd’s “The Final Act of Juliette Willoughby.”

Other reliably interesting programming for February includes the Thursday, Feb. 26 (11 a.m.) Irvine Ranch Conservancy (IRC) presentation on bats with an IRC docent leading a talk, a walk on the trail, and a craft project on the winged mammals.

On Saturday, Feb. 28 (11 a.m.) you can learn sloyd, a Swedish paper craft using simple geometric shapes to make handicrafts, perhaps even bat-shaped! It enhances manual dexterity, hand-eye coordination, and preps for woodwork and sewing so might be fun, not just for recommended

ages 5-12, but for parents and grandparents, too.

## Not horsin’ around

Joanne Hubble reports the approval of a new county-wide equine evacuation program: Orange County Animal Response Team (OCART). Introduced two years ago by intrepid horse owner/safety advocates Bill Klovstad and Dee Dee Friedrich, it was recently signed by Supervisor Wagner and facilitated by staffers Tara Campbell and Scott Voight. OCART is now a county-recognized official entity. Hubble and OCART invite canyon participation, including two types of trainings:

“The first option will be abbreviated for those who were members of San Juan Capistrano’s Large Animal Response Team (LART) or have other relevant experience in handling and transporting large animals to safety.

“Option two will be classes and training for those new to the program who may not yet feel comfortable in handling or transporting large animals.” Organizers want “our entire team to all be on the same page so that we can all work together to the best of our abilities.” Contact them to join that team and sign up for training. Bill Klovstad: billklovstad@gmail.com or Dee Dee Friedrich: d2brdn@aol.com.

## Steer Clear

Steve Kerrigan of Silverado Fire Station 14 reports rocks falling into the parking lot after early January’s big rains, requiring the attention of heavy equipment, including an OCFA skid-steer loader. That’s the good part. “Downside,” says Kerrigan, “we are not allowed to use the parking lot until Risk Management approves its use. So, no public access to the parking lot, which is coned off.” He hopes for full access in a month or so.

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The Call to Adventure Fire Museum and Learning Center soon to open

The Call to Adventure Fire Museum and Learning Center is slated for a soft opening at its Old Towne Orange location, Feb. 21. Featuring fire safety exhibits, personalized experiences, educational programs, rotating galleries, and vintage fire fighting equipment and trucks, the museum is set up, on a temporary basis, in the former Orange Fire Department headquarters on Grand and Almond. Call to Adventure is leasing the building from the City of Orange for \$1 a year until it moves into its planned permanent home in the Great Park.

“This is the proof of concept,”

Hiddo Horlings, Call to Adventure president, explains. “It’s not just displays, it’s what can we teach people about fire safety that they can use in their daily lives. We plan to offer learning experiences for adults and children. We hope to connect with the Orange Unified School District and bring students here to the learning center.”

Most of the displays and artifacts are from private collections. The museum is taking shape strictly through the efforts of volunteers. It will initially be open to the public with docent-led tours on Saturdays.



Photos by Tony Richards

Volunteers are setting up the museum and learning center. From left, Don Forsyth, Rose Argo, Ralph Wright, Steve Palmer, Roger Fitschen and Hiddo Horlings.



Call to Adventure President Hiddo Horlings stands with a 1945 C grade triple combination pumper built for the military and stationed in Guam. When it was being transported back to the states, it fell off the barge that was carrying it. No one remembers how it was recovered from the sea, but the Emerald Bay Fire Department bought it. The Orange County Fire Department refurbished it and “the drowned truck” served Emerald Bay until 1974.



Fire house dogs were originally kept to calm the station's horses.



A fire simulator trailer, on loan from the OC Fire Authority, features interactive experiences in at-home fire prevention. Visitors learn how to avoid or suppress stovetop or outdoor BBQ fires, identify indoor fire hazards and shut off the gas at the supply line.



Fire boxes used to grace the corners of city streets and intersections. If a person spotted smoke, he or she would pull on the box handle. Telegraphy would immediately send a message to every fire station, which had a person monitoring the telegraph 24/7. The telegraph would print out the number of the call box. If the box number indicated the fire was located in a particular station's area, the operator would dispatch the crew and equipment. If more than one station's response was needed, the telegraph would signal a “two,” or “three” (or higher) alarm fire, and additional fire crews would be alerted. Once the fire was extinguished, the chief would flip back the switch on the call box, indicating the incident was over. Volunteer Don Forsyth, seen here, reports that this system was used in San Diego until 1970.



Telegraph tape indicated the identifying number on the box where the fire alarm originated, allowing the operator to determine its location.



Vintage artwork is on display.



In the 18th and 19th centuries, fires were fought with a hand pump and bucket brigade. Every resident had a personalized bucket. When the alarm sounded (hand-carried clackers and bells), they raced to the scene to transport water from the nearest water source to the hand pump. Water was collected in the apparatus's reservoir and pumped by able-bodied volunteers (sometimes two or three on each end) through an attached hose to douse the flames.



An 1850 French hand pump was fashioned on skids because the ground was either muddy or snowy, and wheels wouldn't work. The pump could throw water 30 to 50 feet through a riveted leather fire hose.

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Assistance League supports student success



Members of the Assisteens Auxiliary of the Assistance League of Orange pack school supplies.

Students in the Orange Unified School District (OUSD) come to school each day with the promise of learning and growth. Ensuring that promise is fulfilled requires more than classroom instruction alone—it takes sustained community partnership, shared commitment, and targeted support to help students overcome challenges and reach their full potential.

For many years, Assistance League of Orange has served as a trusted partner to OUSD, working collaboratively with educators, families and district leadership to support students through practical, school-based programs. Through a volunteer-driven model, the organization focuses on meeting students' academic and personal needs with care, consistency and respect.

At the elementary level, the HALOS (Helping A Little One Succeed) program provides tutoring and mentoring that strengthens foundational skills and builds confidence. Operation 101 ensures every OUSD school receives essential classroom supplies —pencils, binders, notebook paper—so students are prepared to learn from the very first day of school. Operation School Bell® supports identified students with school uniforms,

hygiene kits, backpacks, supplies and age appropriate books, helping remove barriers to classroom participation.

Assistance League of Orange's support extends through high school and into post secondary opportunities. Scholarships are awarded to graduating seniors within OUSD boundaries. Through Links to Learning, teachers receive curriculum enrichment grants that enhance classroom instruction district-wide.

Assistance League also partners with the Orange Unified Public Schools Foundation (OUPSF), supporting initiatives and events that advance public education.

Central to these efforts is volunteer engagement. Individuals from the community contribute their time and talents in a variety of roles, creating meaningful connections while making a measurable difference in students' lives.

Through continued collaboration and service, Assistance League of Orange remains committed to strengthening educational opportunity and supporting the long-term success of OUSD students.

For information about volunteering with Assistance League of Orange, see [alorange.org](http://alorange.org).

OC Dems present best-selling author

Jeff Pearlman, New York Times best-selling author of 11 books and The Truth OC, the spicy Substack that covers Orange County politics, will speak at the Feb. 25 meeting of the Central Orange County Democratic Club.

Snacks and shmooze at 6:30 p.m., the general meeting is at 7 p.m. RSVP ([CentralOCDems@gmail.com](mailto:CentralOCDems@gmail.com)) is required to attend.

Central OC Dems includes Tustin, Tustin Hills, Orange, Villa Park and surrounding communities, however, Democrats from throughout Orange County are welcome to join. Meetings are held on the fourth Wednesday of each month in Tustin. Visit [CentralOCDems.com](http://CentralOCDems.com) for more information.

**2026 VAPA Showcase**  
The Best of OUSD's Visual & Performing Arts  
**March 24 & March 25**  
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[WWW.OUPSF.ORG](http://WWW.OUPSF.ORG)

OC introduces clerk-recorder on wheels

Orange County Clerk-Recorder Hugh Nguyen announced the launch of "Clerk-Recorder on Wheels," Jan. 9, a mobile van designed to bring essential clerk-recorder services directly to communities throughout the county.

"We're excited to be the first county clerk-recorder's office in California to offer mobile services," said Clerk-Recorder Hugh Nguyen. "It reflects our commitment to accessibility, innovation and public service by bringing essential services directly to the community. During our pilot testing phase, the mobile unit has already traveled more than 260 miles. It is also ready to provide critical records to residents across Orange County's 34 cities."

The Clerk-Recorder on Wheels will offer vital records (birth, death and marriage certificates), passport services and passport photos, marriage licenses and marriage ceremonies, fictitious business name registrations and official copies of property records.

The mobile van may travel to community events, schools, senior centers, and scenic locations suitable for wedding ceremonies within Orange County cities.

For more information, visit [OCRecorder.com](http://OCRecorder.com) or call (714) 834-2500.

Crescendo features space writer/editor/commentator



Rod Pyle

The Crescendo Guild of Segerstrom Center for the Arts presents "The Week in Space" by Rod Pyle, at its Thursday, March 19 Celebrity Series program.

Pyle is editor-in-chief of Ad Astra magazine. He is a space historian who has worked with NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory and the Johnson Space Center. He has authored 10 books on the history and technology of

space exploration and science, and produced documentary programming on spaceflight for the History Channel and Discovery Communications. He has spent a decade at the Griffith Observatory in Los Angeles. Pyle has been named one of the 100 most influential men working on space projects.

The program begins a 10 a.m. at the Bowers Museum, 2002 N. Main St. Tickets are \$45; Bowers' members may buy a ticket for \$35. Parking at the museum is \$7.

For information about tickets, contact Barbara Hagan at (714) 272-1134 or e-mail [crescendoticketsbowers@gmail.com](mailto:crescendoticketsbowers@gmail.com).

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

The Orange Emblem Club welcomed Doris MacDonald, President of the Supreme Emblem Club of the United States of America, at right, and her Marshal Marie Harvey to the Elks Lodge Jan. 11. The Supreme President visits as many Emblem Clubs across the USA as she can during her term of office. The Orange Emblem Club honored her with a luncheon.



Orange Elks give back to community partners

The Orange Elks #1475 recently donated money, gift cards and fundraised for the Orange Police Department, the Jasper Ray Foundation and the Orange City Fire Department.

The Elks donated \$500 to the Orange Police Department for its annual December "Shop with a Cop" program. Approximately 60 youngsters from Youth Centers of Orange received a "Shop with a Cop" T-shirt, a stocking, a Santa hat, dinner and a \$100 gift card for shopping with a policeman in Walmart.

The lodge held a Sunday Fun Day and raised over \$3,000 for the Jasper Ray Foundation. The foundation is named for a toddler who did not reach his second birthday due to a preventable drowning accident. Drowning is the number one cause of accidental death for children one to four



The Orange Elks presented a \$5,000 check to the Orange Fire Department for its Peer Support Program.

years old. More children in this age group die by drowning than by traffic accidents. The donation will go to the Youth Center of Orange for swim lessons at its summer swim camp.

Another lodge Sunday Fun Day raised \$5,000, donated to the Orange City Fire Department for its Peer Support Program.

Historic home relocated and restored

By Guy Ball

One of the oldest homes in Tustin was physically uprooted and moved in 1990 by a family who wanted to save this classic 1870s house from demolition. For the next decade or so, the building was lovingly restored by a Tustin couple and their children.

The history of the W. W. Martin-Thompson House will be shared by the owners who saved the historic home at the Night at the Museum meeting, Feb. 20. They will talk about the home's background, starting from the bare lot purchased from Columbus Tustin in 1874, to moving the house from First Street to Sixth Street 100 years later.

The move was only part of the work. The owners will also describe the tremendous amount of renovation over the years to bring back the building's original features (but including modern amenities of HVAC and utilities).



Photo by Guy Ball

The W.W. Martin-Thompson house

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 in Downtown Tustin. Tickets are \$20 per person, \$15 each for

members. Due to the limited seating area, tickets are expected to sell out quickly.

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



## Young Women of the Month named



Kira Rauland

The Tustin Area Woman’s Club named Kira Rauland and Lily Tran as its January Young Women of the Month.

Kira Rauland of Foothill High School is an exceptional student who has received straight A’s throughout her high school career. She participates in clubs at FHS including Ace Badminton, the Palette Project, Origami for Good and the Red Cross. Over the summer she interned at the Ocean Institute for Marine Biology in Dana Point. She will be attending Orange Coast College in the fall and plans to transfer to a four-year university to study marine biology.

Lily Tran of Tustin High School has served as president



Lily Tran

of the Key Club for two years, wherein she works with such philanthropic groups such as No Stray Left Behind and Kiwanis. She plans to carry the spirit of service with her as a college student. She has competed on the women’s tennis team for four years and helped the team improve from being winless to having an undefeated season this year. She has served as a mentor in the English Learners program and has learned many teaching skills. Lily plans to attend UC San Diego or Irvine to study neuroscience.

Also named were Perneet Kaur of Beckman High School and Farishta Islam from Legacy High School

## Sipping, snacking, shopping and strolling in Old Town Tustin



Sticks & Stones

By Guy Ball

Downtown Tustin once again features a family friendly afternoon filled with food tastings, wine, craft beer, live music, vendors, and a leisurely stroll among the historic buildings.

The Tustin Community Foundation and the City of Tustin present the 12th annual Sip & Stroll, a walking taste tour of Tustin on Saturday, Feb. 28 from 1 to 4 p.m.

The main street of El Camino Real will be closed off to traffic and open to pedestrians only. Over 30 local restaurants will offer food and beverage samples for those who purchase tickets. Those over 21 will be able to sample alcoholic drinks from the

various breweries and wine bars. Live music will be featured at three stages, including musicians Sticks & Stones, Tim Miller, and Bravo Whiskey. Tustin’s ImprovCity will feature live comedy shows during the event as well.

An accompanying Dreamers Market features a variety of crafts and products to view and purchase.

Tickets are \$50 and \$65, if purchased in advance. All proceeds go to the Tustin Community Foundation annual grant fund and Dollars for Tustin scholarship programs.

For more information, visit [tustincommunityfoundation.org](http://tustincommunityfoundation.org) or call (714) 393-8506.

## VPWL meeting focuses on health and wellness

Villa Park Women's League will hold its third General Meeting at a member’s residence in Villa Park on Thursday, Feb. 19, beginning at 6 p.m.

The program focus will be on women's health and wellness, and provide insights, current studies, and resources for members.

The speaker panel will include Margaret McLain, family nurse

practitioner at FemiHealth; Michelle Gonzalez, board-certified health and wellness coach and founder of MMG Health Coaching; Sangita Jayaraman, CEO of Kōkūn; and Dr. KumKum Sarkar Patel, double board-certified gastroenterologist.

For membership information, please visit [vpwl.org/membership](http://vpwl.org/membership).

## Orange Elks acronymizes



From the left, Elks Mike Jung, Brian Fitzpatrick, Tustin Village Chaplain Ray Johnson, Elk Lavern Johnson, Tustin Veteran Service Case Manager Matthew Twist and Elk Kevin Wagner.



From left to right are Elks Kelley Martinez, Julie Sutton, Executive Director of Breast Cancer Angels Lisa Erickson and Elk Janine Storm.

ENF can have two meanings. For the Elks, it is Elks National Foundation. The Foundation’s goal is to help build stronger communities by investing in the communities where Elks live and work.

At the Orange Lodge, ENF means Extra Nice Feeling!

During December, the lodge did just that, creating ENFs at the Tustin Village Outpost. After a visit there, Kevin Wagner learned the veterans could use gift cards. He asked lodge members to donate, and collected and delivered \$730 of gift cards.

A popular way the lodge raises

funds for donations is through Sunday Fun Day. Elks members can watch the Sunday NFL football game, enjoy great food and bid on gift baskets. As a result, the lodge delivered a \$1,700 check to the Breast Cancer Angels, which supports women during treatment.

# Leo Hetzel in Pictures & Words: How I Became a Photojournalist

## Saturday, March 7 2-3:30pm

Celebrate the career of acclaimed OC photojournalist and longtime canyon resident Leo Hetzel as he narrates his journey in images from five decades of newspaper, travel, nature, and surf photography. An award-winning Long Beach Press-Telegram photographer and volunteer firefighter in Modjeska Canyon, Hetzel chronicled his world travels as well as captured iconic images of the canyons.

**Free admission and parking. Reception to follow.**

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Milo and Margo

This adorable bonded pair prove that love knows no bounds — even between mother Margo and son Milo.

Margo is a gentle, petite calico with a heart as soft as her fur. She was a very young mom, and once her boy Milo no longer needed her constant care, she began to blossom and rediscover her playful kitten side. Now, she's full of energy and joy — loving ear scratches, cozy blankets, and long naps in sunny windowsills. When she's not relaxing, she's playing right alongside her son, chasing toys or pouncing around the room.

Milo, born around May 2025, is a bright orange tabby with fur as soft as a bunny's and a per-

sonality to match. He's adventurous, silly, and full of life — often found sleeping in the weirdest places and positions, from upside down on a chair to tucked inside a shopping bag. He loves spring toys, wand toys, and of course, cuddles with his mom.

Though they are mother and son, Margo and Milo play more like siblings, zooming around together before curling up in a warm cuddle pile. Their bond is unbreakable — and their future family will be endlessly entertained and showered in affection.

To meet this dynamic duo, or for more adoptable felines, contact MeeowzResQ, email office@meowzresq.org or call (714) 997-0868.

## Elks launch Bereavement Committee



These volunteers, from left, Mendy Vanson, Pam Jung, Barbara Keeler, Mike Jung, Kevin Wagner, Carol Walters and Ann Wells, take their time to help a fellow Elk brother or sister at their time of sorrow.

The Orange Elks Lodge 1475 has established a Bereavement Committee to assist Elk families who have suffered the loss of a loved one.

The committee, formed by Kevin Wagner, volunteers to help grieving families with the tasks and costs associated with receptions and get-togethers. Committee members will greet guests at the door, serve food, bus tables, and clean up.

The bereavement committee will also provide flowers to the family on behalf of the Lodge.

## Rescued equines rescue humans

By Andie Mills

The equine property in Orange Park Acres is named Whole Heart Ranch OC, not only because owner Kelley Chaplin, with husband Scott, put her whole heart into building the ranch, but because it is a place where hearts heal.

Individuals and groups, as young as age two and up to 83, come to mend their hearts after suffering grief and loss, trauma, substance abuse, PTSD, divorce, family troubles, mental health and autism spectrum challenges.

Clients work with the well-trained members of her herd: seven horses and one donkey, all carefully chosen rescues. The exercise and therapies they do are under the direction of an equine coach or therapist.

Clients do not usually ride, but work on the ground with such interactive exercises as grooming, leading, navigating obstacles. Horses mirror human emotions and body language, providing immediate and honest feedback that helps one gain self-awareness.

### Share the load

Because a horse's trust must be earned, participants learn to regulate themselves and establish a connection with the animal. The large, half-ton beasts are solid and sturdy enough to carry the burdens of grief, sadness and trauma, and hear the secrets of many. Even those who have never been near equines find safety and comfort in their presence.

Originally a teacher, Chaplin began working with at-risk youth. She quickly realized that including animals, particularly the horses she loved, augmented the healing process, and facilitated a profound shift in how the participants interact with the world around them, and fostered confidence and resilience.

It was her dream to open the ranch, to use her herd as co-coaches to help in recovery, utilizing their natural instincts to guide the sessions.

Her dream came together eight short years ago, when she and husband Scott sold their Villa Park home and bought the ranch. She had become certified as an equine coach and founded Equine Assisted Coaching OC. Now, with the herd she has rescued, she helps to rescue humans and help them heal their hearts.

For information about the experiential coaching, or about equine therapy training, see wholeheart-ranchoc.org.



Equine Coach Kelley Chaplin and Levi, one of the rescued horses.



A young client interacts with gentle Dutton.



Three of the Whole Heart herd, including Levi, are Navajo Mustang babies, rescued in 2023 as their mothers went to slaughter: As prey animals, it took Dutton, the sorrel, a few days to learn he was safe and settle into life at the ranch; it took Serenity, the bay, a few months; and Levi, almost a year to realize he was safe and to trust humans. Today, these three are an integral part of the equine therapy herd.



Neighbors spontaneously gathered to wish Shirley Johnson, center with flowers, a happy 90th birthday. Shirley and husband Merle are among the original owners in the Villa Woods tract. The friendly neighborhood regularly gathers for snow and sledding in December, a Halloween event and a 4th of July barbecue, all with great potlucks and camaraderie.

## Thomas-Miller engagement



Amanda Thomas and John Miller both from Orange will marry in Prescott, Arizona in March. Although both grew up in Orange and had mutual friends, their paths did not cross until later in life. Once they met, they were inseparable, knowing instantly that they had found their best friend forever. The couple live in Northern Arizona, where both are blessed to work remotely for their companies. They plan to have a small rustic wedding with immediate family and close friends.



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