

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

MARCH 2026

County pressing forward with housing development in canyon fire zone

By Tina Richards

The Orange County Planning Commission advanced the permitting process, Jan. 28, for a 181-unit housing development that has largely avoided public scrutiny. It will be built in a Very High Fire Risk Severity Zone on El Toro Road, just south of the Santiago Canyon Road and Live Oak Canyon Road intersection.

Development plans for that property have been on the books for decades, with each successive plan subject to intense citizen opposition, legal challenges and arbitration. An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for a 299-unit development was completed in 1998; in 2002, the EIR was revised for 283 units, which, due to ongoing litigation, was reduced to 266 in 2004. This latest version, Saddleback Meadows, was quietly introduced in 2022 and administratively approved without any public hearings.

Last to know

Canyon residents were unaware that Saddleback Meadows was working its way through the county planning department until it was presented to the Foothill/Trabuco Specific Plan (FTSP) Review Board as a “done deal” in October 2023. Since the FTSP was adopted in 1991 to protect the area’s natural resources and rural character, the review board has been tasked with conducting public meetings to consider subdivision maps, site plans, use and variance permits and specific plan amendments.

For this project, however, the board was told its purview was restricted to setbacks, that the development’s subdivision map and detailed area plan were already approved.

Canyon residents also learned that the original EIR had been amended several times, but because Saddleback Meadows was smaller in scope than its

predecessors, no new environmental impacts were identified. EIR amendments are typically available for public review and comment before they are adopted. The Saddleback Meadows amendments were adopted without any public notice.

The Planning Commission meeting was ostensibly the public’s “last chance” to raise concerns about the project. When the County Board of Supervisors gave final approval to the tract map in June 2024, residents at that hearing were told that the board’s “hands were tied,” that it had to approve it because a tentative tract map had been vested 20 years ago. Residents’ comments were, therefore, nothing the board could consider, but the public was assured that it would be heard when the planning commission considered the project’s use permit.

Not so fast

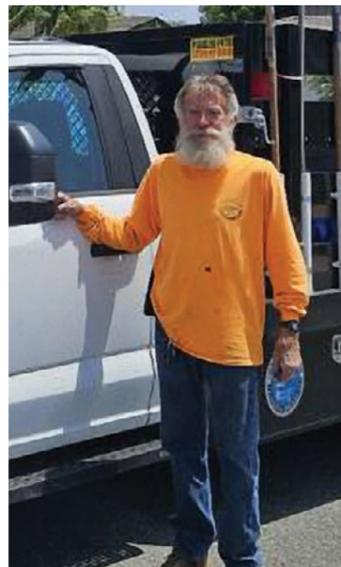
Some three dozen canyon residents attended the Jan. 28 meeting and were surprised to learn that the commission was asked to consider only setbacks and building height. Nothing more. Usual development standards are 40-foot setbacks in front, 10 percent of the building width on either side and 25 feet in the rear. Saddleback Meadows was seeking a 10-foot setback in front, five feet on either side and 10 feet in back.

While the three commissioners in attendance – Kevin Rice, David Bartlett and Mario Turner – held fast to the limits of their deliberations to setbacks, they did encourage testimony from the audience. Speakers stressed the inevitability of fire, inadequate evacuation routes, violations of the FTSP, the outdated EIR, a missing water storage tank, and that the project had been approved behind closed doors with

See “Canyon fire” continued on page 2

Villa Park maintenance maestro retires

Congratulations to Mike Knowles, Villa Park’s longtime maintenance supervisor, recently retired after over 38 years of keeping the streets and neighborhoods beautiful. Mike was celebrated at a reception at city hall, where the residents turned out to shake his hand and thank him for his many years of above-and-beyond service at all hours of the day or night. He was named 2025 Volunteer of the Year by the VP Community Services Foundation; the city’s only park was named Villa Park Knowles in his honor in 2022.



Mike Knowles

Duke of Orange crowned



Photo by Tony Richards

Cameron Pate, raising funds for The HUB OC, was named the fourth Duke of Orange, Feb. 21, besting 10 opponents in the contest hosted by the Orange Chamber of Commerce Foundation. See photos, page 8

Orange council OKs additional safety measures at the Plaza

By Tina Richards

After lengthy discussions regarding safety improvements at the Orange Plaza, the Orange City Council opted for additional crash-rated bollards and lighting modifications.

The bollards are intended to protect people from errant drivers who careen into Plaza Park, and turning off park lights should reduce the likelihood that someone will speed straight down Chapman instead of following the roundabout.

The city has already placed barriers on Chapman to force drivers to turn at the Plaza rather than go straight, and installed bollards around the park for pedestrian safety. It hasn’t been enough. An incursion last August impelled the council to revisit the issue.

City staff worked with the Orange Police Traffic Bureau to plot and analyze all reported Plaza incursions between 2018 and 2025. There have been 43, with the majority originating on either side of Chapman Avenue. A photo taken at night indicated that the Plaza lighting made it look like Chapman could actually continue on a straight path.

Harden Plaza Park

Based on that data, staff recommended four improvements: install 11 additional enhanced bollards on Chapman Avenue approaches; install raised median “splitter” islands at all approaches; turn off Plaza Park lighting during late night hours to reduce the appearance of a

through street; evaluate the feasibility of raised crosswalks at Plaza entry points and on the Chapman Avenue corridor. The modifications could be added separately or in combination.

Councilwoman Arianna Barrios acknowledged that the Plaza lighting did make it look like a throughway, and that turning them off at night might actually work. “It’s helpful to see the analysis and recommendations,” she said. “Now we know what we are dealing with.”

Kathy Tavoularis noted that the bollards could be dangerous. “You hit one, you die. Is the city liable if a driver hits a bollard and gets injured, or worse?” City Traffic Engineer Larry Tay reported that any traffic control device could be dangerous and that it was a risk assessment. Do you protect the driver or the pedestrian? City Attorney Nathalie advised that city liability would depend on the facts of the case.

“I don’t see how additional bollards would solve anything,” Tavoularis said. “It’s just more of the same.”

Safe passage

Jon Dumitru observed that the data indicated the problem was Chapman-focused, and he would like to see additional bollards on the east and west sides of that street. “That’s a first step,” he said, “followed with a splitter island and raised crosswalks on the west side.” His concern, however,

See “Safety” continued on page 5

NEWS INSIDE

STOP THE PRESSES!

This is the last print edition of the *Foothills Sentry*. After providing the Best Local News every month for 57 years, we are transitioning to a digital-only format. We already have a robust digital presence with our website, Facebook and Instagram, and look forward to building on that strength. We will continue to cover local issues, and will now send the paper directly to your email address.

To continue to receive the *Foothills Sentry* each month, please send your email address to officemanager@FoothillsSentry.com or click on the link on our website FoothillsSentry.com.

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"Canyon fire"
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little public notice.

Several speakers from Hidden Ridge, a nearby neighborhood, reported that the only reason the 2024 Airport Fire spared the development site was because the wind blew in the other direction. They noted the difficulty of evacuating in a one-way in, one-way out scenario, and that additional developments in the area had already added to congestion.

Plans have problems

"Ask the people in the Palisades how long it took them to get out," one speaker said. "I hope you are listening to common sense and the community."

"Why are we building in a high-risk fire area," another asked. "I thought we had learned something."

Others focused on the project's disconnect with county planning. "All plans should go through the FTSP review board," Ray Chandos, a Trabuco resident who was instrumental in getting the FTSP written and adopted by the county, said. "This project has been administratively approved, not processed as usual. It's all been back room. You have the discretion to deny this by finding it a threat to public safety."

Mike Wellborn, president of Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks, emphasized the density and intensity of the project that will be on the edge of the Cleveland National Forest. "There are huge contradictions with the specific plan," he said. "You don't have to approve this."

Canyon Conservancy founder Gloria Sefton referred to a letter written to the commission by law firm Shute, Mihaly and Weinberger that detailed the problems and potential legal challenges to the development. She also men-

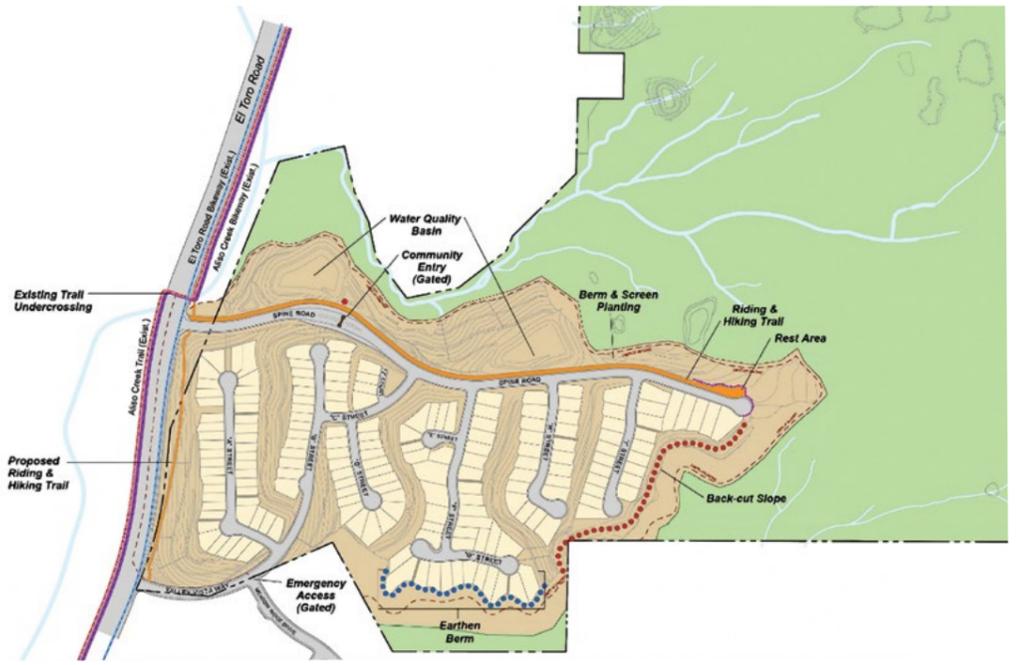
tioned the one-million-gallon water tank that had disappeared from the project footprint and was apparently out of sight, out of mind. The commissioners were under the impression that the local water district had OK'd the development; Sefton advised that the district's "will serve" permit was "conditional," based on the construction of the water tank somewhere in the canyon. Its location has yet to be determined.

Business as usual

Other speakers called out the lax public notice for the hearing, reporting that they had learned of it through the grapevine and not county outreach. The board was advised by County Council Nicole Walsh that 42 notices had been sent out to residents within 300 feet of the project site, and that satisfied the requirement for public notice.

The decades-old EIR was also challenged, with commenters noting how much had changed in the ensuing years: endangered species, fire zones, traffic patterns, carbon footprints. Walsh advised that "there is no such thing as a too-old EIR under the law. You only have to do it once. You do supplements and addenda to evaluate additional impacts, but in this case, there were no severe additional impacts." She also dismissed the letter from the law firm, noting that its concerns were addressed with the EIR addendums from 2004 and 2022.

The commissioners appeared satisfied that the issues raised by the public had been addressed. They advised that the OC Fire Authority "has already done something, with more to come regarding buffers, firebreaks and fuel modifications." The million-gallon water tank was "not necessary to this project." The OC Transportation Authority would "ensure that area roads meet



The proposed Saddleback Meadows project will place 181 units on small lots adjacent to El Toro Road.

new circulation needs, including evacuation routes."

Last chance lost?

Mario Turner, recently appointed by Supervisor Vicente Sarmiento, was attending his first commission meeting. He observed that the public noticing process "didn't reach a lot of homes," and wanted confirmation that the final land use requirement was setbacks. "There are no further hearings after this?" he asked. "This is final?"

Indeed. Additional permits would be approved "ministerially," by the Board of Supervisors.

"This has been going on for a long, long time," Commission Chair Kevin Rice summarized. "We all live in houses that used to be hills and orchards. We have demands for development." Commissioner Bartlett added that he, too, lives in a high fire zone, "it's just something we have to live with."

The vote was 3-0 to approve.

The Saddleback Canyons Conservancy and Rural Canyons Conservation Fund have appealed.



The project site was threatened by the Airport Fire in 2024.

Book sales coming to Orange library

The Friends of the Orange Public Library is holding a Children's Book Sale in the Tannas Family's Children's Garden at the Main Library, Saturday March 14, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Books are priced at 25 cents and 50 cents.

The Spring Bag of Books sale will be held Saturday, April 25, in the Community Room at the Main Library. Sale hours are from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.; FOPL members only from 10 to 11 a.m. The library is located at 407 E. Chapman Ave.

OUSD to invest \$40 million in campus improvements

The Orange Unified School District Board of Education voted to advance a \$40 million Campus Improvement Program focused on improving safety and learning environments at its elementary and middle schools, using funds previously set aside for campus improvements.

This investment in elementary and middle schools comes from the district's general fund balance and does not involve any new taxes. Instead, it reflects a deliberate and responsible reinvestment of existing resources into the campuses.

Many schools are experiencing the effects of aging and deferred maintenance. The Campus Improvement Program is designed to address routine, visible needs that impact daily school operations and the overall campus ex-

perience. Planned improvements include safer, more welcoming campus entrances; enhanced lighting and walkways; shaded structures for outdoor learning and play; refreshed interior spaces; and updated campus signage.

Safety and technology enhancements are also central. Planned upgrades include improved front-door access control systems, updated network infrastructure at elementary schools and upgraded audiovisual equipment to strengthen campus communication.

Rather than large-scale construction projects, the program emphasizes phased improvements that address long-standing wear. Projects will be scheduled to minimize disruption during the instructional day and prioritize efficiency, safety, and results.

K9 Nash retires

In November of 2019, the Orange Elks helped the Orange Police Department purchase K9 Nash. The lodge raises funds through generous donations from members and holds a Police Dog Dinner during the year. When the dog retires, the Lodge has an account for veterinary bills, should the K9 need medical attention. K9 Nash recently retired, Jan. 23, and will receive veterinary services for his lifetime, in addition to a soft bed and many thanks from a grateful community.



K9 Nash and Officer Logan Shryock.

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Old Towne Preservation Association marks 40 Years

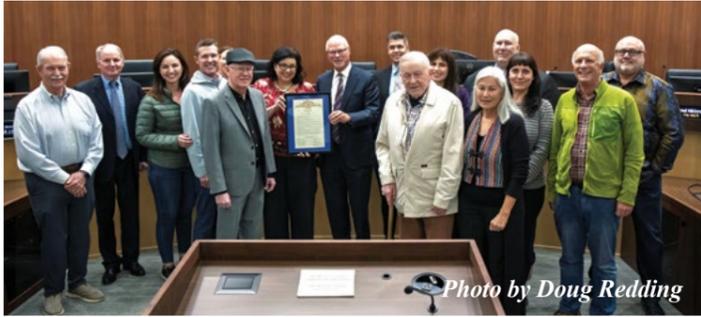


Photo by Doug Redding

Left to right: Tom Loughrey, Councilman Denis Bilodeau, Brandy Romero, Guy Hinrichs, Rob Boice, Councilwoman Arianna Barrios, Mayor Dan Slater, Councilman John Gyllenhammer, Sandy Quinn, Councilwoman Kathy Tavoularis, Diana Zdenek, Councilman Jon Dumitru, Shandra Wilson, Mark Wallace, Donnie DeWees.

By Diana Zdenek

Old Towne Preservation Association (OTPA) is celebrating 40 years of dedicated service to preserving Old Towne Orange—its historic homes, architectural character, and distinctive sense of place.

This anniversary year is especially meaningful as Rob Boice, OTPA's current president and one of its founders, was honored alongside the organization when the City of Orange presented a proclamation recognizing OTPA's 40 years of service at the Feb. 10 city council meeting.

Founded in 1986 by concerned residents determined to stop the demolition of historic properties, OTPA has grown into a volunteer-led nonprofit that continues to advocate for thoughtful preservation and responsible change. One of its most significant achievements came in 1997, when OTPA successfully petitioned for Old Towne Orange to

be listed on the National Register of Historic Places, making it the largest contiguous residential historic district in California.

Over the years, OTPA has played an active role in shaping preservation policy, supporting design standards, participating in city processes and promoting education through workshops, service projects, historic plaques and long-standing preservation awards.

To celebrate the milestone, OTPA will host a 40th Anniversary Gala on Sunday, May 17, at the historic Woman's Club. The event will bring together longtime supporters, community leaders and preservation advocates to honor four decades of stewardship—and to look ahead to the work still to come.

OTPA remains committed to protecting the history that makes the neighborhood unique. For more information about the anniversary celebration or OTPA's work, visit otpa.org.

City of Orange considering zone change from commercial to residential



Commercial property between Tustin Street and the 55 Freeway may be rezoned for dwelling units.

The site of the former Best Buy at 2375 N. Tustin Street has been purchased by a developer who is asking the city for a zone change and general plan amendment to enable the construction of 71 single-family homes.

The city's general plan currently describes the property as "general commercial" and the zoning is designated "limited business." Media Homes is asking the city to change the General Plan land use designation to medium density residential and the zoning to residential multiple family (r-3).

The proposed development would consist of three-story small lot homes, with roof decks on the units that do not abut existing residences. In addition to the General Plan and zoning changes, the city must adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration (exempting

the project from environmental review), approve a tentative tract map, conduct an administrative design review and provide ministerial approvals for all necessary permits.

The project's MND is currently in review. Public hearings will be scheduled at a later date.

Meanwhile, across the street at the former Village of Orange site, property owners are asking the city to change that commercially zoned property to mixed use. That alteration is part of the "Meats to Heim Specific Plan," designed to revitalize the mall site and set a framework for future development. That land use change was presented to the public at an open house, Feb. 26. Residents have been asked to complete a survey at myinput.com/meat-heim-sp.

Antlers donate to the Purple Pig



From left, Elk Jeff Cruikshank, Antler Tyler Collins, Elks Kelley Martinez, Brian Lawrence, Linda Lawrence, Christine Grosso, Adrian Ober, Antler Seth Lawrence, John Mesdea, Antler Nick Mesdea, Garrett Hamblin, Antler Victoria Vega, Gary Doebereiner and Antler Neilani Ito.

The Elks' Purple Pig is the fundraising arm of the California-Hawaii Elks Association Major Project, Inc. (CHEMPI). Since 1950, the California-Hawaii Elks have raised over \$140 million to address the needs of children with disabilities by developing a

program of supporting services to aid these children at no cost to their families. Every donation to the Purple Pig helps the children "Walk, Talk, See and Play."

The Orange Elks Antlers, a group of youth between 12 – 20, combined leadership, fun and

friends in organizing a Pinewood Derby Race Night as a fund raiser to benefit the Purple Pig.

The Antlers presented Adrian Ober, Purple Pig Chairman, a check for \$1,180. Orange Elks member Jeff Cruikshank added to the fund.



Emblem Club President Laurie Padilla, standing left, welcomes volunteers to the club's Appreciation Luncheon. The luncheon is held for the volunteers who have helped the club over the last year. This year's menu was homemade tomato bisque soup and grilled cheese sandwiches, made by member Gary Doebereiner.

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Guest Commentaries

Commercial zoning protects a city's financial health

By Doug Hamilton

"One of the greatest privileges that a councilmember has is zoning." This statement was burned into my brain and has stuck with me for years. I would like to explain why that statement is so profoundly important for each and every one of us to understand.

It was about four years ago that I was making the rounds to meet with each of the Orange city councilmembers. I was laying out a set of ideas to make the Village at Orange viable and Orange a better place to live. On this particular occasion, I met with two councilmembers at the same time.

The conversation started off with resident concerns about the Orange mall area and the North Tustin Street corridor; namely, blight, and the proposed Orange mall redevelopment plans. A major concern was the economic impact that would occur if the city council changed zoning

from commercial to residential or mixed use. This zoning change would have profound impacts on land use, the General Fund and the city's budget. Please note: giving up commercial zoning that produces critically important sales tax revenue should concern everyone.

The North Tustin Street Preservation Group had been formed to tackle these issues and provide input and alternate solutions to the city. Group concerns are focused on land use, proposed mixed use rezoning, the resulting elimination of sales tax revenue and much needed infrastructure improvements. It was rezoning that would replace commercial zoning with mixed use zoning that might include thousands of residential dwellings (up to 4,200 units). It was at that point in the meeting that a councilmember explained with "great passion" the privilege and voting responsibility of councilmembers as it

relates to zoning and land use. I recognized before the meeting that councilmembers voted on zoning and land use issues, and that's why I had requested the meeting. However, his "passion" put the zoning issue in a whole new light.

Sales tax revenue is one of the largest streams of revenue in the City of Orange's budget (44% in the 2024-25). It is one of the city council's greatest responsibilities to carefully preserve and manage zoning, and thereby protect the city's primary source of tax revenue, as well as its budget and fiscal health. By doing so, they can then provide very important city services, namely, code enforcement, police, fire, street maintenance and infrastructure improvements.

All of these services are completely dependent upon a robust budget, and the budget is dependent upon a healthy stream of sales tax revenue. To summarize:

sales tax revenue is completely dependent upon commercial zoning, and zoning is one of the greatest responsibilities of each and every one of the City of Orange's councilmembers. The first sentence in this set of thoughts has a whole new meaning when you understand the cascading set of negative consequences that can occur when councilmembers change zoning for the wrong reasons.

Orange residents must get involved in this effort to protect both commercial zoning and the financial health of our city. The recent Grant Thornton Report to the city council includes a dire warning that the City of Orange could potentially go bankrupt in a little more than three years without a healthy stream of sales tax revenue and a one percent sales tax increase on everyone that shops in Orange.

The issue currently at hand is two large parcels of commer-

cially zoned properties with proposals that will come before city planning and the city council in the near future, both having the potential of a council vote that could change zoning to residential and/or mixed use and allow the loss of large portions of property currently zoned commercial. This is zoning that the City of Orange can't afford to lose and, most likely, will never be replaced.

The outline above is one very important aspect of a very complicated series of problems. Please get involved, learn more and help stop this from happening to our city. Join the conversation; you can find our group on nextdoor.com/g/96fvu6scq.

Doug Hamilton is a 39-year resident of Orange and actively involved in land use issues throughout the city. His main focus continues to be the North Tustin Avenue corridor.

OUSD is focused on student achievement, safe campuses and fiscal stability

By Dr. Stephen Glass

As the newly elected president of the Orange Unified School District (OUSD) Board of Education, I want to begin by expressing my gratitude to this community for its continued trust in our public schools. OUSD has a long history of excellence, and it is both an honor and a responsibility to help steward that legacy during a pivotal time.

In recent months, community members may have noticed an increase in board study sessions, governance discussions and public engagement. That is intentional. If we are asking our teachers, principals and staff to pursue excellence for our students, we as a governing board must hold

ourselves to the same standard. Strong governance is not performative. It requires preparation, reflection and disciplined oversight. Our focus is clear: student achievement, safe campuses and long-term fiscal stability.

For several years, this district has maintained healthy financial reserves. That decision required restraint and careful planning. Those reserves were not accumulated without purpose. They were held in anticipation of the moment when we could responsibly reinvest in our schools. That moment is now.

We are moving forward with approximately \$40 million in facilities investments across the district, with a particular focus on our elementary and middle schools. These investments include such critical infrastructure improvements as roofing repairs, HVAC upgrades, safety and security enhancements, modernization of classrooms, and campus maintenance projects that have

been deferred for too long. Safe, functional and modern learning environments are not luxuries. They are foundational to student success.

These decisions are aligned with what Superintendent Dr. Rachel Monárrez heard during her listening tour and with our Local Control Funding Formula priorities. Families told us they want safe schools, strong academics and responsible leadership. This investment reflects that input, and demonstrates that fiscal discipline and reinvestment can coexist.

At the same time, we must be honest about the challenges facing public education across California. Declining enrollment is a reality in many districts, including our own. Uncertain economic conditions and state funding volatility require careful long-term planning. Our responsibility is to address potential challenges before they become crises.

To that end, the board is forming committees and engaging in

forward-looking planning processes focused on enrollment trends, financial sustainability and the long-term viability of our schools. These committees are designed to ensure parent, staff and community input from the outset so that planning is transparent and collaborative, rather than reactive. These conversations are not about panic. They are about prudence. They are about ensuring that every decision we make protects instructional quality and preserves opportunity for students across all neighborhoods.

If difficult conversations become necessary in the future, including conversations about the long-term configuration of our schools, they will be guided by data, transparency and meaningful community input. Our promise is simple: we will confront issues directly and early, not after options have narrowed. Leadership requires courage, but it also requires openness and trust.

I remain deeply grateful to our

educators, classified staff, administrators and families. I visit our campuses regularly and continue to be inspired by the dedication I see in classrooms and offices across this district. Our students deserve adults who are focused on solutions rather than division.

Public education is one of our most important civic institutions. It reflects both who we are and who we hope to become. As board president, I am committed to thoughtful governance, strategic investment and transparent engagement with the community we serve. Together, we can ensure that Orange USD remains not only a district of excellence in name, but in action and in outcomes for every child.

Dr. Stephen Glass has served on the OUSD Board of Education since 2024. He was elected president in December 2025. He is a Distinguished Faculty in Residence at California State University, Long Beach.

FOOTHILLS SENTRY
The Best News In Town

Circulation ... 39,000

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1969-2013

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

Printing by Advantage, Inc.

714-532-4406
foothillsentry.com

1107 E. Chapman Ave., #207
Orange, CA 92866
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LETTERS to the EDITOR



Students' rights

Dear Editor:

If you've read a paper, been on social media, or been to the Circle in the past month, you've heard about the walk-outs and protests students have staged in regards to ICE. It has been disappointing to see comments wanting students "locked-up" both by OPD and OUSD.

We should not entertain conversations like this. I find it interesting that people with no experience in crowd control think that a few administrators

or officers can stop hundreds of students, even if they wanted to. OUSD and OPD must follow the law. The Supreme Court ruled in 1969 that students do not "shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate." Students are marked absent if they leave campus, but cannot face additional punishment for the sentiment of the protest.

In California, students' civic protections go even further. SB955, passed in 2022, allows for secondary students, with parent permission, one excused absence

to participate in civic or political activities. Instead of learning about history, they can participate in it.

This is a pivotal moment in history, but also for local families. Regardless of where parents stand on the current federal administration or ICE enforcement, they have been given the opportunity to have real, meaningful conversations with their children about things happening right now in their community. It isn't history, it isn't abstract, it's current and tangible. I urge parents to have meaningful conversations with their children, whatever their viewpoint.

Darshan Smaaladen
Orange

Candid Canyon

Dear Editor:

Thank you for the expansion of the Canyon Beat. We look forward to the canyon areas news each month, and it was a delight to see the column was expanded. While we have grown accustomed to seeing area tidbits in an abbreviated space, we appreciated the longer, more thorough items. Especially interesting was Tonkovich's experience with Rep. Young Kim's lack of communication. I have had the same problem with her office. Again, thank you so much for expanding the Canyon Beat.

Rusty and Keith Morris
Silverado

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Assistance League to honor David Wilson



David Wilson

Assistance League of Orange invites the community to honor the 2026 Community Circle Award recipient, David Wilson.

Join Assistance League on Sunday, April 12 at the Balboa Bay Resort in Newport Beach, as members come together to “Embrace Orange — Driven by Purpose, Fueled by You.”

David Wilson, of Wilson Automotive, is a longtime community champion whose influence has been felt throughout Orange County since his start at Toyota of Orange in 1982. His dedication to philanthropy has shaped countless lives, and Assistance League is proud to celebrate his legacy of generosity, leadership and service.

Proceeds from the event directly fuel the organization’s numerous volunteer-driven programs that aid students and teachers, infants, vulnerable women, seniors and veterans.

For ticket reservations, underwriting/sponsorship opportunities, and information about membership, see assistanceleague.org/orange.

Central Dems host campaign consultant

The Central Orange County Democratic Club will host Campaign Consultant Andre Charles on Wednesday, March 25, who will explain OC voter demographics and the path to a blue wave in November. The meeting will also be preceded by a sign-making soiree for the No Kings rallies the following weekend. Sign-making starts at 6 p.m., snacks and shmooze at 6:30 p.m., general meeting at 7 p.m. RSVP at CentralOCDems@gmail.com is required to attend.

All are welcome at Central OC Dems meetings, held on the fourth Wednesday of each month in Tustin.

Art club features gouache artist

Andrew Cortez will demonstrate how a gouache (wash) is done at Orange Art Association’s Monday, March 9 meeting at the Community of Christ Church, 395 So. Tustin Street in Orange. Member competition signups are at 7 p.m. Demo at 7:30. Further info, call Pat at (714) 538-8069.

“Safety” continued from page 1

was that raised walks could delay fire trucks and first responders.

Tay said that they had tested the concept with a firetruck and it had no difficulties with raised walks. “Our recommendation considered impacts to emergency response.”

Would there be an advantage to raised walks further from the Plaza?, Dumitru inquired. Yes, Tay said. Doing it at upstream intersections could provide a step-down.

Mayor Dan Slater wanted to know how high the raised walks would be (eight inches) and at what speed splitter islands would be effective. He also confirmed that when driving down Chapman at night, the lighting made it look like the street continued on straight. He also noted that there were people in the Plaza at midnight. “We have to stop cars,” he stressed. We don’t want innocents plowed down.”

Narrowing the field

Islands, the council was told, are not speed prevention devices. They are a channelizer to make a vehicle move in a given direction. If you hit it, you might hit the brakes, it might wake you up, but it is not a speed control recommendation.

Ana Gutierrez acknowledged her concerns with “so many bollards,” and potential loss of life.

She advocated for islands and raised crosswalks. She also sided with traffic calming methods placed upstream of the Plaza entry, about a block back or so. “I think putting them at the Plaza is too late.”

John Gyllenhammer supported bollards and turning off the Plaza park lights. “A person might hit the bollards, but it is the right thing to do to save innocent life,” he said.

“I want to close the loop on bollards,” Denis Bilodeau underlined. “There are concerns about liability, but I’m supporting them because a reputable engineering firm is recommending them.”

The price is tight

The bollards are estimated to cost \$300,000, as is the installation of splitter islands. The cost of raised walkways has not yet been explored. Where, council members wondered, are we going to get the money?

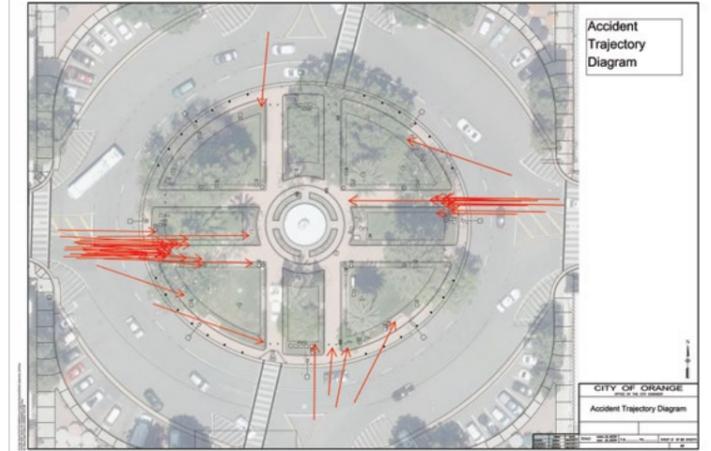
Likely sources, City Manager Jarad Hildenbrand explained, are gas taxes and grants. Gutierrez suggested reaching out to county supervisors. “They might allocate money for safety improvements,” she noted. “They did help us out with the fountain restoration.”

“We don’t have the money,” Barrios said. “Grants take a long time to get. I think bollards and lighting is the answer for now.”

The council voted 6-1 to proceed with bollards and turning off Plaza lighting at night. Tavoularis was the lone dissenter.



Plaza lights could make it appear to a speeding, impaired driver that Chapman Avenue continues in a straight line.



Red lines indicate incursions into Plaza Park between 2018 and 2025.

Gardener protects endangered species on his home turf

Orange resident Steve Tyler has turned his garden into a Certified Wildlife Habitat, recognized by the National Wildlife Federation

(NWF), America’s largest wildlife conservation and education organization.

Part of the federation’s Garden for Wildlife movement, home gardeners are encouraged to create spaces that support birds, butterflies, bees, frogs and other local wildlife. Every Certified Wildlife Habitat provides natural sources of food, water, cover and places to raise young, and is sustainably maintained by incorporating native plants, conserves water and doesn’t rely on pesticides.

Tyler says he joined the movement because he thought it was important due to the increasing numbers of endangered species, especially monarch butterflies and native honey bees. He started his pursuit of a wildlife friendly environment by removing his lawns in 2000.

“At that time I was scorned by the neighbors,” he says, “But now others have followed suit.”



He initially put in 35 native plants and has been adding to their numbers ever since. His landscaping is now visited by monarchs, swallowtails and bees. His bluebird nesting box has hosted several clutches, which fledged. Bluebirds, he notes, are off the endangered list because people set up nesting boxes.

Started in 1973, the Garden for Wildlife movement is the nation’s oldest and largest native plant/habitat program, recognizing over 300,000 Certified Wildlife Habitat gardens. Tyler was given a personalized certificate with a unique habitat number and the right to post a Certified Wildlife Habitat yard sign.



The Freemasons Orange Grove Lodge 295 installed its news officers for 2026. They are, front row, from left, Karl Sandhoff, past master, tiler; David Solven, senior deacon; Keith Jones, senior warden; Don Leon Ancheta (seated), worshipful master; Scott Holland, junior warden; James Segerstrom, past master, junior steward; Gabriel Davis, senior steward. Second row, from left, Erick Alvarado, past master, chaplain; Brett Fisher, historian; Keoni Kamura, marshal; Shawn McCuen, junior deacon. Third row, from left, David Shaffer, musician; Dennis Rootes Jr., past master, treasurer; James Berry, past master, secretary. Back center, Jonathan Tierney, assistant secretary. The Orange Grove Lodge was chartered in 1888 and has been located in the same building in the Orange Circle since 1922.



Woman's Club of Orange honors members

The Woman’s Club of Orange presented its Heart Award for this year to Sharee Fox and Joan Starr-Panther. Both recipients were recognized for their dedication and service behind the scenes. Fox has been a member since 2021 and serves on the Fundraising Committee. Starr-Panther works full-time and serves as a leader in the newly formed evening Social Section. Seen here from left above, Joan Starr-Panther, Sharee Fox and WCO President Carol Allen.



The club also celebrated past presidents at its February general meeting. From left, Irene Serna, Carol Allen, Anna Fairchild and Suzanne Vaugine.

CANYON BEAT *by Andrew Tonkovich*



Another roadside attraction

Expect delays

Ace ex-reporter and all-around civic watchdog Scott Breeden reports attending the recent OC Public Works (OCPW) public outreach meeting (held in public), where they described plans for the much-anticipated if long-delayed "Canyon Bridges Replacement Project," and solicited resident opinions on what the bridges might look like, including the Ladd Canyon bridge. IRWD recently re-routed its water pipe

that was attached to the bridge, but OCPW is significantly behind schedule, likely due to mudslides and other safety projects and emergency responses. (Recent storms had crews out pumping storm drains.) Some residents will recall successful community engagement with design of the gorgeous rust-colored and, yes, rustic bridge west of Silverado and the Christmas tree lot, a campaign led a decade ago by Silverado resident Linda May.

The county offers an online

map and describes the not-so-current project: "Public Works will remove and replace four bridges, with three located in Silverado Canyon and one in Modjeska Canyon. The bridges planned for replacement are two-lane steel bridges built in the 1930s and 1940s. The new bridges are designed to enhance safety and access for residents and area motorists by bringing the structures up to current design standards. Funding and implementation are now planned for this year and next."

Visit the OCPW website at ocip.ocpublicworks.com to sign up for project email updates, view documents, and take a survey on what you think the new Ladd bridge should look like. Choices offered (with accompanying mock-up photos) include the poetically titled "Concrete Railing," "Metal Railing," or "Concrete and Wood Railing." You can't choose the vehicle in the photo or add roadside vendors, cyclists or hikers.

El frutero

It's been busy on busy Santiago Canyon Road, with arrival some months back of a popular cut-fruit stand vendor doing especially good business in late weekday afternoons when the once-sleepy county road becomes a major (and dangerous) cross-county transportation artery, speedway and/or motorcycle racetrack. For a few weeks, a friendly mother and son team from Temecula sold their excellent Lalo honey, organic and raw, near the site of the old dump. Over the decades, that spot has seen beef jerky sales and a combat vet who set up his drum kit and performed his pop-up music therapy for everybody to see. Lately, mountain lion advocates have erected memorials cum advisories in an attempt to protect the cougars from vehicles, responsible for deaths of the animals.

A poem lovely as a tree

Apologies to Joyce Kilmer, but I hope that I shall never see a Gold Spotted Oak Borer eating my trees, or yours. So far, no bugs have been detected by licensed arborist and treatment expert Chris Burke of RPW Services in my block of our woods or, more

correctly, Southern California oak woodlands. First, I had to count the actual number of oaks on or near my small property, which I walked with Burke and my tape measure. Recent rains actually required postponement of the prophylactic spraying I opted for, despite the lack of borers, but my surveying also established the distance of plants, shrubs, trees and my firewood stack from the house, this toward anticipating their possible removal to at least slightly further than the five feet soon-to-be-mandated by the new state Zone Zero for rural communities.

Friends of Hetzel!

Leo Hetzel, longtime Modjeska resident and long-serving volunteer firefighter, is no doubt still busy doing last-minute sorting through thousands of images, choosing which he'll share and talk about at the Friends of the Library celebration of his life and work on Saturday, March 7, 2-3:30 p.m. at the Community Room at the Library of the Canyons. Introduced by Branch Manager Laura Blasingham and Inter-Canyon League President (and sometime troubadour) Geoff Sarkissian, the free, all-ages program will likely bring out Friends of Leo, whose photographs chart both a personal passion and professional expertise, with images and accompanying stories from many continents, as well as surf photography, photojournalism from his career at the Long Beach Press-Telegram, and canyon pics, including snow-topped local peaks, flora and fauna, and roadside memorials to those killed in accidents on you-know-where.

Meet the candidates

Nobody is officially certified quite yet, but most assume that 71st AD Assemblymember Kate Sanchez (R-Murrieta) is running for reelection, unopposed in the June primary by fellow Republicans. The filing deadline

is March 6 but Silverado resident J.J. Galvez, currently serving on the Silverado Modjeska Parks and Recreation Board (SMRPD), submitted nearly twice the number of required registered voter qualifying signatures, and received an overwhelming endorsement vote at a recent Democratic convention. Thus far, no primary challengers have emerged from either party. Since redistricting, most of this Assembly District has gone east and MAGA conservative. Previous Democratic challengers ran mostly as placeholders, not campaigning at all. Galvez has already produced campaign materials and assembled a volunteer crew.

Park goes recreation

Laurie T. Park, founding owner of Plantenders on Santiago Canyon Road, is retiring. His wholesale nursery, in recent years specializing in drought-tolerant plants, has served canyon residents and their landscapers and gardeners since 1977. Contacted while on a much-needed pre-retirement vacation, Park reports that he and his wife have been canyonites since 1973, originally settling in Trabuco. They plan to stay local after selling the business, an area landmark and much-appreciated resource.

Memento mori!

Local resident Karen Hunt, a certified end-of-life teacher or "doula" and registered nurse, is founder of the Doula of the Sacred Canyons, a resource for end-of-life education and support. Among SMRPD's programming is her monthly class on "The Good Death," helpful for current and potential caregivers. By 2030, there will be more people over the age of 65 in the U.S. than under, with the canyons already vigorously represented in seniors. See the SMRPD online calendar for details about the second Wednesday, 2- 3 p.m. programs, held at the Silverado Community Center.



Spring into Health 5K
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Tax ID # 16-1626931

May 16, 2026 8:00am
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- Overall awards
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All levels are welcome — walk, jog, or sprint — then stay to enjoy the 2nd Annual Health & Wellness Fair happening 7:30am-12:30pm at the finish line in front of City Hall!

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The Orange Public Library Foundation presented a check for \$28,450 to the Orange City Council at its Jan. 26 meeting. Most of the donation was generated from a "Raise Your Paddle" fundraiser held during the foundation's Mystery Authors Luncheon in October. The remaining \$5,000 came from a grant the Foundation secured from ProLiteracy. The funds are earmarked for new computers accessible to patrons of the Orange Public Library system.



From left are Elks Kelley Martinez, Cameron Pate, Julie Sutton, Jennifer Weerheim, Alex Pate, Julie Brown and Lynne Butler.

The Orange Elks Lodge received the Elks National Foundation Impact Grant and used it to support The HUB OC. The HUB is a nonprofit resource center serving the unhoused and individuals experiencing hardship. The grant will help provide essential hygiene products, personal care items, protein snacks, limited pet supplies, blankets, gloves, wool socks, dental-care products, deodorants, basic skincare items and grab-and-go protein snacks.

Why CalOptima Matters to Every Orange County Resident

By Vicente Sarmiento, 2nd District Supervisor

CalOptima Health is the largest health insurer in Orange County, and a cornerstone of our overall healthcare system, with nearly one out of every three county residents relying on it for access to healthcare.

For low-income families, seniors and people with disabilities, CalOptima is often the only way to see a doctor, fill a prescription or receive life-saving care. When coverage is lost, care is delayed, emergency rooms become overcrowded, costs rise and the burden shifts to hospitals and taxpayers. When CalOptima is strong, families are more stable, workers are healthier and our healthcare safety net is more resilient.

This year, I have the honor of serving as Chair of the CalOptima Health Board. One of my top priorities is ensuring that members can maintain their coverage. That means proactively advising members and providers and making sure no one loses coverage due to administrative barriers created by shifting federal policies.

I am also committed to advancing a whole-person approach to health. We know that health outcomes are shaped not only by medical care, but by housing stability, food security and access to behavioral health services. CalOptima has invested in such initiatives as affordable housing, mobile healthcare for unhoused residents, and expanded behavioral health access.

Strong governance is also essential. I am committed to ensuring that CalOptima operates with the highest ethical standards, transparency and accountability. As a public entity entrusted with public dollars and public health, earning and maintaining the community's trust is fundamental.

CalOptima, with \$4 billion in annual revenue, plays a role in sustaining our healthcare economy. As the primary payer for Medi-Cal services, it provides a significant source of funding for hospitals, clinics, physician and community health centers. These dollars help keep hospital doors open, support tens of thousands of jobs, and ensure providers can serve both Medi-Cal patients and the broader public.

But our healthcare system is under real pressure. Deep federal cuts and reductions to Affordable Care Act subsidies could make healthcare more expensive for thousands of OC families. Other federal policy changes are increasing the risk that residents will lose or face disruptions in coverage. Rapid eligibility shifts, the rollout of twice-yearly renewals, and increasingly complex application requirements are making it harder for people to stay enrolled, even when they qualify.

OC residents deserve a public health plan that delivers care with dignity, cultural responsiveness and measurable results. As chair, I am committed to closing coverage gaps, strengthening our provider network and ensuring CalOptima remains the kind of health plan we all want.

Orange Park Association meets, greets and treats

The Orange Park Association annual meeting, Jan. 31, featured community highlights and status reports, talks by Supervisor Don Wagner and Orange City Manager Jarad Hildenbrand, a video message from Mayor Dan Slater, presentation of the Gary Bandy Award, community partner displays, election of officers for 2026 and coffee and donuts all around.



The 2026 OPA Board remains the same as the members whose terms expired – Cindy Reina, David Clemson and Nancy Flathers – were unopposed and duly reelected. Board members, from left, are Kelley Chaplin, Mary Nori Forester, David Hillman, Nancy Flathers, David Clemson, Laurel Maldonado, Sherry Panttaja, Laura Thomas and Cindy Reina.



Martha Wetzer won the raffle for an OPA sweatshirt.



Orange City Manager Jarad Hildenbrand, attending his first OPA general meeting, greets the audience and promises that he is "here to help."

Public invited to Cowboy Easter services

The annual Cowboy Easter Sunrise Service will be held April 5 at 7 a.m. at the Circle S Ranch, 16211 Jackson Ranch Road, Silverado.

This year's Easter message will be delivered by Cowboy Preacher Larry Day and Mark Wimberly.

The Wimberlys Blue Grass Band will present uplifting music and song.

Free Bibles, coffee and donuts available to all attendees. Contact Larry Day at (714) 552-2483 or Laura Thomas at (714) 264-4242 for information.

TAWC names Young Women of the Month

The Tustin Area Woman's Club announced its Young Women of the Month honorees for February. They are Leah Green from Foothill High School and Penelope Vu from Tustin High School.

Leah Green has been involved in leadership on the Foothill campus as a prior club president, a member of National Honor Society, California Scholarship Federation and has been an Associated Student Body officer all four years of her high school career. Outside of school, she has worked to grow her leadership skills serving her community through interfaith work and advocacy. Green plans to pursue her bachelor's in science degree at a four-year uni-

versity. She is currently awaiting admissions notifications.

Penelope Vu has explored many interests at Tustin High, including lacrosse, dance team, theater and starting two on-campus clubs. She developed leadership skills serving as Vice President and now President of the Bored Games Club and Treasurer of the AAPI Club. Her experience on the dance team has inspired her to major in dance in college. She hopes to guide future generations of dancers as a teacher.

Also named are Anita Campagnola of Beckman High and Destiny Vivianna Perez from Legacy High School.



The Orange Acres Back Breakers 4-H Club offered a review of its activities.



Julie Shaw, right, was named the 2025 Gary Bandy Award winner. The award recognizes individuals for outstanding dedication to the preservation and maintenance of OPA's trails and equestrian facilities. Shaw is joined by OPA President Sherry Panttaja, left, and board member Laura Thomas.



President Sherry Panttaja gives an overview of the association's 2025 activities.



Leah Green



Penelope Vu

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Duke of Orange contest highlights a few good men

The Duke of Orange was crowned following a close contest highlighting talking points, talent and titanic tomfoolery. Competitors strutted their stuff on behalf of a nonprofit organization that they chose to represent.

Contestants participated in a one-question interview, a talent exhibition and air-band performance.

Photos by Kristin Smetona, courtesy the Orange Chamber of Commerce Foundation.



Photo by Tony Richards

Contestants in the fourth Duke of Orange competition wait to hear the results. From left, Anthony Trejo, Rich Guerrero, John Maher, Juan Carlos Yaquez, Vincent Torres, Cameron Pate, Kent French, Schad Gibbons, Eugene Haik, Monte Fieldstein and Jackson Wells.



Eugene Haik reinvented Elvis.



Photo by Tony Richards

Rich Guerrero, aka Prince, was the People's Choice winner and first runner-up.



The audience sang along to "Sweet Caroline," led by John Maher.



Monte Fieldstein took on the Jackson Five – all of them.



Schad Gibbons chose AC/DC for his air-band reenactment. He pointed out that he has vied for the Duke of Orange crown every year and has come in second two times. "I'm not so much a contestant, but part of the infrastructure."



Maniac Vincent Torres performed "Flashdance" complete with a flash splash.



The judges voted Kent French, seen here with Miss Orange Kalista Brown, second runner-up. When asked what decade he'd like to live in, he said the 50s for its music, dress and energy.

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Ceremony marks Tustin Western Little League opening day



Some 650 players attended the Tustin Western Little League (TWLL) Opening Day Ceremonies, Feb. 21. The event featured a player parade, team introductions, and remarks from Tustin Mayor Austin Lumbard and Al Tello, Field Representative Office of Supervisor Donald P. Wagner. The event is a longstanding tradition of TWLL, which was established in 1960.

Woman's Club salutes inspirational young women



Kayden Manivong from Richland High School, Chloe Jaimes Chavez from Orange High School and Adria Eickhoff from Canyon High School

The Woman's Club of Orange presented Kayden Manivong, Chloe Jaimes Chavez and Adria Eickhoff with its Inspirational Young Woman Award for the fall semester.

The award recognizes the accomplishments of exceptional young women graduating from high schools in the Orange Unified School District. Students are selected by their teachers and counselors. Each honoree receives a commemorative pin, a certificate of recognition and a gift of \$250.

Kayden Manivong from Richland High School has demonstrated resilience, growth and determination in overcoming personal tragedies and challenges. During her junior year, she fell behind in her studies and feared that she would not be able to graduate. Instead of giving up, she committed

herself to improving her attendance, work habits and academic performance. She not only made up all required credits, but graduated early and completed her first college course.

Chloe Jaimes Chavez from Orange High School is a scholar athlete with a passion for chemistry. She has consistently achieved the Principal's Honor Roll with a GPA of over 4.0 while competing in varsity track and field, cross country and water polo.

Adria Eickhoff from Canyon High School is an outstanding student participating in the International Baccalaureate Diploma program. She maintains a 4.8 GPA while participating in numerous extracurricular activities including tennis team, Key Club, Girl Scouts and Assisteens, an auxiliary of Assistance League of Orange.

Tustin celebrates its founder's birthday

By Guy Ball

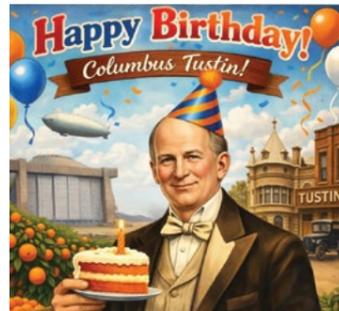
The public is invited to celebrate the 199th birthday of Columbus Tustin, the founder of the City of Tustin, on Tuesday, March 17, from 6 to 9 p.m. at the Tustin Area Museum. Cake will be served.

Tustin was an 1800s entrepreneur who purchased about 840 acres of vacant rancho land in Southern California, hoping to develop it and make his fortune by selling the real estate to others.

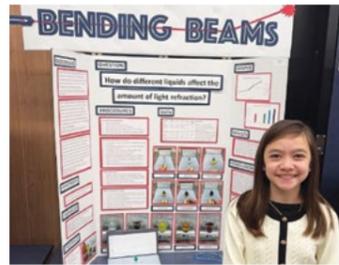
He created a central townsite of 100 acres and sold lots to settlers coming west after the Civil War. At the time, he was competing with similar developers in Orange and Santa Ana, though with less sales success. At times, he gave smaller lots away if people promised to build a home.

Columbus Tustin sadly never saw his city become one of the area's garden spots.

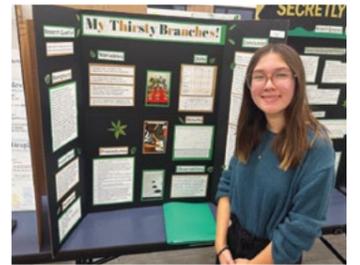
The museum is located in historic Old Town Tustin at 395 El Camino Real.



McPherson students to compete at OCSEF



Kayla Gordon, a sixth grader, addresses the effect of liquids on light through her project, Bending Beams.



Seventh grader Clara Army's My Thirsty Branches! compares transpiration rates among plants.

Students from McPherson Magnet School will take their science projects to compete against students throughout the county at the Orange County Science and Engineering Fair (OCSEF), to be held April 11-12.

The students won top honors at the annual McPherson Science Fair, presenting their hypotheses, data and findings to judges.

The sixth-grade students moving forward are Kayla Gordon, Matthew Lew and Jason Lopez; seventh grade competitors are Giuliana Torres, Jaylah Armijo, Emmy Valdez, Sierra Clayton and Clara Army; eighth graders going to OCSEF are Danielle Fottler, Cameron Hunt, Graysen Gowen, Lilly Wagner, Lauren Minaya and Oliver Mendoza.

McPherson students take Olympiad honors

Students from McPherson Magnet School spent weeks working with coaches and their teams to perfect their robots and devices for the UCI/Dept. of Education Regionals Science Olympiad competition, Feb. 14.

McPherson racked up points in its events to score ninth place, overall, going against top national teams. The McPherson teachers are Kayee Conrad and Lauren

Nguyen. The Olympiad is called "a STEM academic meet" with teams from throughout the area competing in various events: Hovercraft, where teams design, construct and calibrate a self-propelled air-levitated vehicle that moves down a track; Scrambler, where teams design, build and test a mechanical device that uses the energy from a falling mass to

transport an egg as quickly and stop as close as possible to a barrier, without breaking the egg. Other categories include Codebusters, Meteorology, Remote Sensing and more.

Sixth grade student Emmelene Lee and seventh grade student Vincent Esqueda placed eighth in Scrambler. Eight graders Ellie Imboden and Mira Yoo placed sixth in their Mission Possible event.



The McPherson Mission Possible team, coached by David Imboden, placed sixth and included, SP and JJ Sanchez, Lauren Minaya, Emmelene Lee, Vincent Esqueda, Mira Yoo, Ellie Imboden and Delaney Schmidt. Hovercraft Coach Robert Simmering's team, seventh grader SP and sixth grader Delaney Schmidt, took first place honors. Eighth grade students JJ Sanchez, left, and Lauren Minaya, coached by Karen and Bob Ashford, placed second in Scrambler.

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Two decades of 'l' amour et le mariage



Bride Sadie Clemmons and groom Tyler Rallison walk beneath the sword arch at the annual Villa Park High French wedding.

It has been 20 years since Madame Fatima Pazargadi first held a wedding in her Villa Park High School AP French class, a spontaneous activity that has become a beloved annual tradition. The full-scale event brings culture, theatrics, ceremony and enrichment to the student body and beyond, with Cerro Villa Middle School French students, school officials, OUSD trustees, Villa Park councilmen and others in attendance.

The ceremony is conducted entirely in French, with Madame's top scholars selected to participate in the ensemble that includes garland holders, readers, bridesmaids in pink holding spring flower bouquets, and groomsmen in vests and bow ties. This year, Sadie Clemmons was selected as the bride, and Tyler Rallison as the officiant. Sadie was escorted down the aisle by Principal Dennis McCuiston, acting as Father of the Bride; Kathy Moffat, former OUSD Trustee, was the Mother of the Groom. Adding a special international touch, the

Maid of Honor, Sophia Masciana, is a foreign exchange student from Belgium. The Best Man was Donald McCarral III. The Orange High School JROTC Color Guard added pageantry, with its arch of swords for the bridal couple.

The event is planned and coordinated by students, French Club Co-Presidents Ivy Lloyd, Alia Erkelens and Lexi McCarral, teaching skills such as leadership, teamwork and problem-solving. Each year, the wedding gown, dresses, colors and themes are new. The theme for the 20th French wedding was "The Royal Wedding," with tablescapes featuring delicate pink and white florals, a two-tier wedding cake, and a reception featuring sweet crepes.

The impact has been long-lasting. Past planners, club presidents, and participants — including former brides and grooms — have gone on to receive leadership scholarships from prestigious universities such as UC Berkeley. And many return each year to celebrate the French Wedding with Madame.



Father of the Bride Principal Dennis McCuiston and French teacher Madame Pazargadi

Museum talk features Tustin Civil War veterans

By Guy Ball

The Tustin Museum's March "Night at the Museum" features local historian Tim Zierer. He will share information about some of the 33 Civil War veterans profiled in his just-published book, "Civil War Veterans of Tustin, California," who fought on many of the major battlefields of the war.

Several participated in Sherman's March to the Sea, and a number were on hand for Lee's surrender at Appomattox. All were young; 14 of the 33 were teenagers. After the war, they became part of a great westward migration that eventually brought them to the small southern California town of Tustin.

Tim Zierer has spent several years researching the residents through military records, news articles, family stories, cemetery lists and old documents. He will have copies of his book available for purchase and to sign.

This Night at the Museum meeting will be Thursday, March 26, from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at 395 El Camino Real. Tickets are \$20 per person and \$15 for members.

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

Elks honor police and fire



Miss Orange, Kalista Brown, left, and emcee Connie Benson



Former KCAL/CBS reporter Dave Lopez was the featured speaker.

The Orange Elks annually honor law enforcement officers and firefighters at a dinner event that reflects the Elks' appreciation for those who risk their lives to protect the City of Orange.

The co-chairmen of the event were Jennifer Weerheim and Janine Storm, with Connie Benson as the emcee. Miss Orange Kalista Brown, sang the national anthem and helped present the awards. Dave Lopez, a retired TV reporter from CBS/KCAL9, was the guest speaker, sharing many stories from his reporting days.

Fire Chief Alan Velasco presented awards to Cooper Adams, Fire Cadet of the Year; Battalion Chief Casey Fieldhouse, Manager of the Year; Captain Stephan Fan, Firefighter of the Year. Unable to attend were Alik Amoranto, Fire Reserve of the Year, and Lucy Echavarria, Clerical/Non-Sworn

Employee of the Year.

Orange Police Chief Adam Jevic presented awards for Meritorious Service to Sergeant Trevor Nelson, Officer Logan Shryock, and Police Service Officer Megan Parent.

The Elks Drug Awareness Co-Chairmen Julie and Jimmy Brown introduced Detective Nykolo Gonzalez as the lodge's entry for consideration for the Enrique Camarena Award, which will be awarded at the Elks Grand Lodge Convention in July.

Camarena was an 11-year DEA agent who was kidnapped, brutally tortured, and then murdered in Mexico in 1985.

The award is given to a law enforcement officer who has made a significant contribution in drug prevention and who personified Camarena's belief that one person can make a difference.



From left, co-chair Jennifer Weerheim; Miss Orange Kalista Brown; Cooper Adams, Fire Cadet of the Year; Battalion Chief Casey Fieldhouse, Manager of the Year; Fire Captain Stephan Fan, Firefighter of the Year; Fire Chief Alan Velasco and co-chair Janine Storm.



From left, co-chair Jennifer Weerheim, Orange Police Chief Adam Jevic, Police Service Officer Megan Parent; Sergeant Trevor Nelson; Officer Logan Shryock; Detective Nykolo Gonzalez, Miss Orange Kalista Brown; Jimmy and Julie Brown; and co-chair Janine Storm.

Orange finances made public via website portal

The City of Orange has launched its new Open Finance portal, reinforcing the city's ongoing commitment to transparency and fiscal accountability. The interactive platform gives residents an accessible, easy-to-understand view of how city revenue is collected and how public funds are allocated.

Open Finance features dynamic charts, graphs, and tables that allow users to explore both high-level financial summaries

and detailed data related to the city's operating funds and capital projects. The portal is designed to make complex financial information more approachable, helping the community better understand how public resources support city services and priorities.

Financial data is updated weekly, and includes both current and historical information from recent years, providing valuable context and insight into the city's financial trends over time.

The Woman's Club of Orange Presents:

FESTIVAL OF FLOWERS

87th Annual Spring Flower Show
Saturday, April 11, 2026
12 Noon to 4 PM

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or call 714-836-5919

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