

# 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 2025



Photos by Tony Richards

Nine contestants competed for the 2025 Duke of Orange crown, Feb. 15, at the Orange Woman's Club Event Center. Adrian Olmos, left photo, sponsored by the Community Foundation of Orange, prevailed and settled into the throne with his wife Jorri. The event was sponsored by Marsha Moeller and hosted by the Chamber of Commerce. Above, the past and present dukes align. From left, JC Cortez, 2023; Adrian Olmos, 2025; and Treavor Saunders, 2024. See more photos, page 10.

## NEWS INSIDE

### SPARKS FLY

Orange council approves more permits for fireworks sales; residents voice concerns.

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### MIX BUSINESS WITH PLEASURE

Orange Park Acres Association meeting combines community camaraderie with organizational updates and operational procedures.

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### SERVICE WITH A SMILE

Orange Elks community support is wide-ranging, from kids, to seniors to first responders and everyone in between.

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### BEAT THE BUSHES

The Orange Fire Department inspects and assesses properties in high fire zones to reduce ignition risks.

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### STUDENT QUERIES PROVE THEORIES

Student scientists advance theories through research and experiments to vie in middle school competitions.

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## Paid parking coming to Old Towne Orange commercial district

By Tina Richards

The Orange City Council deferred a vote to finalize an ordinance establishing paid parking in the commercial portion of Old Towne to the Feb. 25 council meeting.

The ordinance, originally approved at the council's Jan. 28 meeting, was agendized for final consent, Feb. 11. That night, Councilwoman Arianna Barrios recused herself due to a conflict of interest; Ana Gutierrez was absent. Advised by the city attorney that the ordinance needed four votes (a majority of total council members) to pass, Mayor Slater motioned to postpone the vote until the next meeting when Gutierrez could be there. She, along with John Gyllenhammer, Kathy Tavoularis and Slater had approved the original ordinance. Denis Bilodeau and Jon Dumitru had voted no. Without her vote, it appeared the second reading of the ordinance would not pass. The continuance passed, 5-0.

Too far to walk

The city is considering paid and time-limited parking in the Old Towne commercial district to alleviate the parking imbalance in that area. Studies have found that there is adequate downtown parking, but much of the available spaces are several blocks away. The parking structure on Lemon Street, for example, remains open while visitors scramble for spots closer to their destinations around the Plaza. The result is congestion, frustration and negative economic impacts on the Old Towne commercial center.

In October 2023, the city hired Dixon Resources to develop parking management strategies for paid parking in and around the Plaza. Downtown merchants and the Chamber of Commerce were consulted during the planning process and generally approved of a paid parking policy that encourages parking turnover along

See "Parking" continued on page 4

## OUSD Board explores goals to enhance student/parent/teacher experience

By Tina Richards

Advising that it is "important to move forward fiscally and provide support for our students," OUSD Interim Superintendent Mike Christensen presented his suggestions for district goals at the Jan. 23 school board meeting.

The goals, which he identified simply as "topics for study," included possible school consolidation, employee workloads, facilities needs and a standardized parent/teacher communications tool.

Potential consolidation of elementary schools will create the most angst, Christensen said, "But we need to take a look at this." He noted that declining enrollment, a trend occurring in districts statewide, has resulted in smaller school populations and, therefore, less funding for services and programs. He reported that district enrollment was 29,658 in 2014. Ten years later, it is 25,134. Most OUSD elementary schools have less than 400 students, and several have less than 300.

Sometimes less is less

While small classroom sizes can be good, he said, too small can impact learning. Some campuses have created combination classes, wherein two grade levels are combined into one classroom. For example, a school might have a stand-alone second grade, a combined second and third grade, combined third and fourth grade and stand-alone fourth grade. There is no stand-alone third grade in that scenario.

"That concerns me," he said. Board members and students alike agreed that small schools and combo classes create challenges for teachers and students. Trustee Sara Pelly, a former elementary school principal, advised that opportunities are limited in smaller schools, that teachers have an increased workload and staff has multiple duties.

Student board member Ximena Quijano Espinoza from El

See "OUSD" continued on page 4

## Water pressure in Orange sufficient to fight fires

Responding to calls to Orange Public Works and the Fire Department regarding fire hydrant capacity (in the aftermath of the blaze that overwhelmed Pacific Palisades and Altadena), the city assured residents that its hydrants are capable of meeting the demands of firefighters battling a multi-front blaze, were one to engulf the area.

Orange Public Works Director Chris Cash, speaking at the Jan. 23 Orange City Council meeting, reported that his department pays

attention to fire protection and takes proactive steps to maintain capacity and pressure in the city's water system.

He noted that the problems encountered by firefighters in Los Angeles were due to water pressure, not supply.

Orange's water system is monitored remotely 24 hours a day to confirm pressure and supply, and issues with either can be corrected immediately.

During red flag events, city reservoirs are filled to capacity.

Every pump station has an emergency generator for backup power. Those generators are inspected weekly; but during fire warnings, inspections are conducted daily.

The City also has emergency water interconnections with Anaheim and the Irvine Ranch Water District, which supplies Orange Park Acres. If that is still not enough, water can be imported via the Metropolitan Water District.

City fire hydrants are inspected annually to ensure they meet state

pressure and flow standards. That is, they must be able to supply 250 gallons per minute for two hours, at a pressure of 20 psi. If they don't meet that requirement, they are replaced. Cash reports that the city replaces some 70 hydrants a year.

Fire hydrants are supplied by the same water mains that serve all of Orange.

"If you have water in your home when you turn on the tap," Cash advises, "there is water in the hydrants."

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### Early Orange on display via vintage postcards at Orange Library



A library patron spots family members pictured on a vintage postcard.



Postcard collector Tom Pulley and daughter Jackie Neff

By Guy Ball

An exhibit of vintage postcards showing early scenes and life in Orange is now on display at the Orange Public Library.

"From Orange with Love" is an assortment of City of Orange-related postcards from the large collection of Tom Pulley, an avid postcard collector, whose passion for postcards started in 1968. Most of Pulley's collection consists of postcards relating to Orange County, but also includes some from Fresno County, where he went to college. Pulley allowed the library's history center to scan over 500 Orange postcards for its archives.

The display was curated and assembled by Aida Cuevas, archivist/local history librarian, and Erika Aguilar, local history assistant.

Cuevas noted that, "We wanted to include a little bit of everything: history of postcards, first-hand accounts of City of Orange events, our own Orange Public Library, restaurants, accommodations and lodging, businesses, and quips. We are pretty proud of the exhibit."

#### Familiar faces

"Soon after the exhibit was up," Cuevas added, "there was a serendipitous event. A patron was dropping off a donation, and I was helping her with some research. As we were delving into her family history, we came across an image of a flyer for a play that Orange Union High School had put on.

The image was also made into a postcard that happens to be part of the exhibit. When she looked at the display, she realized that two of her family members were on that postcard."

The exhibit is located on the first floor, across from the lending services desk at the Orange Public Library and History Center, 407 E. Chapman Avenue. Hours are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Saturday; on Tuesday and Wednesday, it is open until 8 p.m. From Orange with Love runs through April.

To learn more, make an appointment to visit the History Center or enjoy the Digital Collection on the Library's website.

### Orange Council boosts fireworks sales permits

By Tina Richards

A resolution increasing the number of permits available to nonprofits to sell safe and sane fireworks in Orange and give preference to high schools, was finalized by the city council, Feb. 11.

The new resolution replaces the one approved last month that allowed only eight permits to be issued. With several council members suggesting that eight wasn't enough, it was agreed to revisit the allotment at the following meeting. Twelve was the magic number.

Fireworks sales are now legal in Orange following voter approval of a ballot measure last November. Voters chose to ban fireworks sales in the 1990s, but this election cycle, 61% of voters opted to reinstate them. There are, however, restrictions. Sales and use of fireworks remain illegal east of Hewes Street and east of Cannon, due to high fire danger.

Councilman Denis Bilodeau began the discussion by suggesting the number of permits be increased to 12. At previous meetings he had advocated for more,

noting that in the 1990s, the city had authorized up to 30. For now, he conceded that 12 is a number the council could agree on. And it did. The vote was five in favor, with Arianna Barrios dissenting and Ana Gutierrez absent.

Permits will be available to nonprofits via a lottery system. Applications will be posted on the city website in March. The drawing will be conducted by the city manager at a subsequent council meeting.

Bilodeau noted that, in his view, the main drivers of fireworks sales are high school booster clubs, and that those groups should be given permits if they wanted them. He recommended that El Modena, Orange, Richland and Orange Lutheran High School volunteer groups be offered permits ahead of the lottery. If any of them decline, that permit would be assigned via the lottery system, along with the other eight available.

Mayor Dan Slater agreed that high schools should have permits, but he was reluctant to take opportunities away from other nonprofits by excluding a third of the permits from the lottery. He

joined Barrios in voting no on the preferential treatment of high schools. Bilodeau, Jon Dumitru, Kathy Tavoularis and John Gyllenhammer said yes.

Despite voter approval of fireworks sales, many residents oppose the idea altogether or ask that the exclusion zone be expanded. Public speakers at several council meetings asked that Old Towne be excluded because those wood framed houses will burn. Others noted that much of Orange, west of Hewes, is identified by Edison as a high fire zone.

Residents also pointed out that using illegal fireworks in the city is not enforced and that legalizing some of them will only make things worse. "War veterans (with PTSD) and dogs can't opt out," one speaker stressed. "This is disrespectful and shameful."

"What maps are you using to set fireworks boundaries?" a resident asked at the Feb. 11 meeting. "Will the city be liable if fires start in areas not excluded?"

Bilodeau assured residents that Jon Dumitru (who has fire department experience) spent a lot of time looking at fire maps to "make sure we get it right."

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# OPA Association annual meeting brings neighbors together



Laurel Maldonado (left) was the recipient of the Gary Bandy Award for 2024. The award is presented annually to a person who has contributed to the betterment of Orange Park Acres and its trail network. Maldonado is credited with saving residents hundreds of dollars for trash and manure collection by her thorough read of the contract with Waste Management that revealed errors in its fee structure. She, left, is congratulated by President Sherry Panttaja.



OPAA board member Laura Thomas introduced the community partners that attended the meeting to share information and answer questions. Those partners included OC Parks, Supervisor Don Wagner, Orange City Manager Tom Kisela, Waste Management, Orange City Fire and Police Departments.

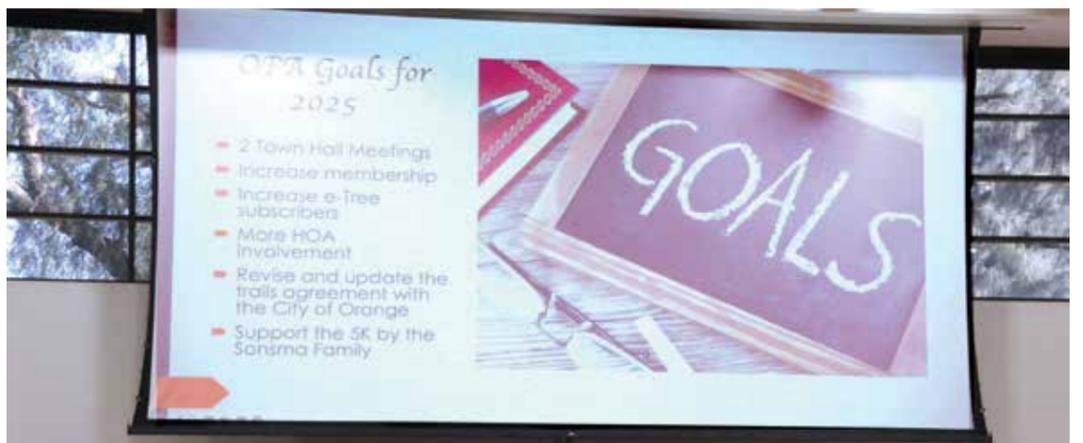


Photos by Tony Richards

The membership reelected three OPA Association board members whose three-year terms were up this year. Laura Thomas, Sherry Panttaja and Mary Nori Forrester were renewed with no opposition. The 2025 Board of Directors, from left, are David Clemson, Nancy Flathers, Kelley Chaplin, Laura Thomas, Laurel Maldonado, Sherry Panttaja, Mary Nori Forrester, David Hillman and Cindy Reina.



OPA Association members, from left, Michael Schmidt, Peter Maimone, Russ Garcia and Michelle Schmidt engage in post-meeting conversation.



## Another local mountain lion killed

By Joel Robinson

An older female mountain lion (F421) without a tracking collar was hit by a car along Santiago Canyon Road, between the northbound exit of the 241 Toll Road and Irvine Lake, immediately southeast of the proposed Orange Heights development site.

The Jan. 21 fatality occurred between 6:30 and 7 p.m. I received a text from a canyon resident advising that she had just passed an animal control truck parked next to a dead mountain lion on Santiago Canyon Road. Real close to the toll road.

It took me 22 days of phone calls, emails and public records requests to obtain the following information. The driver who hit the lion called it in and waited for the California Highway Patrol (CHP) to arrive. The lion died shortly after CHP and OC Animal Care responded to the incident. The driver left the scene with minimal damage to the vehicle.

The California Department of Fish & Wildlife (CDFW) environmental scientist Connor Basile arrived after the body had been relocated from the road to the OC Animal Care truck. Basile took photos and advised that someone from UC Davis would come to OC Animal Care for a more detailed examination.

UC Davis wildlife biologist Lina Vu examined the lion, and told me that she planned to take the body to the lab in order to take blood samples and conduct a necropsy.

Based on the time and location of the incident, it is surprising that the lion miscalculated the road crossing and got hit. Was the driver speeding, driving erratically or was the lion's judge-

ment compromised by illness, injury, old age or some other distraction? Was she related to M317, the young male lion whose movements were tracked through the Orange Heights proposed development site, Irvine, Lake Mission Viejo and Newport Beach? After speaking with CHP and OC Animal Control, it does not appear that there was any effort to investigate the circumstances that led to this lion's death before the lion was removed from the scene of the incident.

### Down for the count

A population viability analysis for the Santa Ana Mountains lion population found that there is a 11-21% risk of extirpation (local extinction) in the next 50 years due to demographic, stochastic, and environmental factors, and a near certain likelihood of extirpation within a median time of 12 years if inbreeding depression should occur.

The California Fish and Game Commission is currently reviewing a petition to list the Southern California/Central Coast Evolutionarily Significant Unit (ESU) of Mountain Lions as "threatened" under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA). As a result, mountain lions in this proposed ESU are CESA-protected during the review period.

The outdated 2005 Environmental Impact Report for the East Orange development project did not take into account the declining population of lions in the Santa Ana Mountains due to habitat fragmentation. CDFW recommended that the Irvine Company submit an application for an incidental take permit (ITP) for the mountain lion, but The Irvine Company declined.



Orange Park Acres Association's annual meeting, Jan. 25 at Salem Lutheran Church, offered updates on area trails, protected open spaces, and ongoing positive relationships with the county and city. Association President Sherry Panttaja led the meeting and presented the community's goals for the coming year.



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Learn more at [eocwd.com](http://eocwd.com)

## LETTERS to the EDITOR



## Fired up

## Dear Editor:

On January 28, I addressed the Orange City Council about the dangers of selling fireworks in the City of Orange. I don't believe many of the people in the city are aware of the dangers that we face in the East Orange communities. The disappointment of dealing with this council, and more to the point, our representative in District 6, John Gyllenhammer, is that he said nothing at all. I shouldn't have to remind him (again) that his first responsibility is to protect the citizens in his district.

It was also apparent that councilmembers Denis Bilodeau and Jon Dumitru were more interested in debating how many more organizations could be included in the lottery for permits to sell fireworks. Bilodeau's only interest was in adding MORE to the lottery. Did this council learn NOTHING from the Palisades tragedy?

I know that the city council put this to a citywide vote. However, when the city attorney was asked if a moratorium on the sale of fireworks could be implemented until researching the legality and safety of a measure would allow it to be overturned, our city attorney didn't waste a moment looking

into this legitimate question. It took him about two seconds to reply that the only recourse was a referendum. The business of crashing headlong into the sale of fireworks continued from that moment, without any regard to the very real dangers that this presents.

I offered the council the opportunity to set up a committee to develop an evacuation plan, as there currently is NO plan for the evacuation of people and animals in the City of Orange. The council just went ahead with its self-serving plans to add more organizations to the lottery.

John Reina  
Orange Park Acres

## Dear Editor:

I read your article about fireworks for this 4th of July in Orange.

We live between Chapman, Jamboree, Canyon View and Newport Blvd., very close to Peters Canyon. Every year before, during and after the 4th, someone who backs up to Canyon View fires illegal fireworks. They usually do it later in the night. We do not know who is doing this. I know this is a restricted area for fireworks that are now legal in Orange, but is there a way to notify the authorities to be on the

lookout for this illegal activity. I know our neighborhood worries so much about fires in this area, and this behavior is so very risky.

Thank you so much for your reporting.

Carol Ann  
Orange

## Good fences

## Dear Editor:

I am writing to express my concern about the alarming situation regarding the Sully-Miller property, located adjacent to our community, The Reserve, on Santiago Canyon Road. This area has now become a site for criminal activities, including burglaries and illegal encampments, that are negatively impacting our neighborhood. As this property falls within the City of Orange, I urge city officials to take immediate action to secure and fence off the land to prevent further incidents.

Recently, one of my neighbors experienced a break-in at their home. This robbery marked the sixth burglary in our area over the past five years, with all incidents linked to this property. It has become increasingly clear that criminals are using the Sully-Miller property to access our backyards. A more robust fence at the base of the hill would serve as a critical deterrent.

What is particularly troubling is that the burglars operated undetected for over two hours, ransacking my neighbor's home,

using makeshift tools such as barbells, kitchen knives, and even shower door handles to break into their wall safe. The aftermath left their home in complete disarray, much as my home was when I was robbed four years ago.

Additionally, we have faced incidents of unauthorized individuals camping on the property, which has led to thefts, including another neighbor's experience with poachers tapping into their electricity two years ago. In these cases, the Orange HEART unit successfully relocated individuals who had set up encampments near the creek on the property's northeast corner. Unfortunately, access to this property remains shockingly easy for these individuals, with one even driving a minivan onto the site for their encampment.

As concerned residents, we have taken various precautions to protect our homes, but we cannot do it alone. It is crucial for the safety and security of our community that this property is properly secured.

Building a strong fence to enclose the Sully-Miller land would be an essential first step in preventing further criminal activities.

Mark Moore  
Orange

## Wildlife losing

## Dear Editor:

I run a website called Orange County Outdoors and I specialize

in photographing and educating people about the wildlife we are fortunate to have here in Orange County, specifically mountain lions.

I track a lot of the mountain lions here. I know their travels and where they go. I know which mountain lion is which.

The Orange Heights development is going to have a major impact on the mountain lions traveling the outskirts of the Santa Ana Mountains. A mountain lion was hit and killed because of the fences put up around the development site.

The mountain lions of OC are expected to be extinct in less than 50 years. If this project moves forward it's going to accelerate that to 20 or 30 years.

The mountain lions will be gone.

The people that move into these communities do not want animals around. They may likely put out rodenticide. Not only does that kill mice, it kills all the animals that eat the mice: the hawks, the owls, the foxes, the bobcats, the coyotes, mountain lions. This is going to impact animals for miles around.

I'm here to give a voice to those without a voice. All the animals that are here that we just forget about because they can't speak.

Before developing the Orange Heights Project, I would ask that a thought and some consideration be given to those without a voice.

Mark Girardeau  
Mission Viejo

"OUSD"  
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Modena High reported that she had attended combo classes and

felt shortchanged. Teachers must split their time between two grade levels and rely heavily on aides to ensure the work is getting done. "I didn't feel like I was getting any attention," she said. "Learning was harder."

## Community input a must

The board agreed that consolidation should be studied, but that it should be transparent and involve the community. "It's going to be painful, and there will be political costs," Christensen admitted. "Closing schools is a hard thing to do. It has to be deliberate and done for the right reasons. Some people won't like it, and I get it."

"We are looking for positive outcomes over the next five, 10, 20 years," Board President Kris Erickson said. "Difficult topics are our job."

In line with potential school consolidation is the long list of facilities improvements noted in the district's Facilities Master Plan. Every elementary school needs modernization, but the budget is limited. Christensen recommended that the board reach a consensus on the first elementary schools to be modernized, in concert with consolidation. "We need a demographic study," he suggested. "We also need to look at interdistrict enrollment. Are we bringing in students from other districts, or just other OUSD schools?"

Trustee Andrea Yamasaki noted that the district had, some time ago, initiated an attract and retain program, and asked Christensen

if it had worked. Without having that information before him, the superintendent suggested that it had helped, but the numbers needed to be compared with other county and state districts. That, he said, will be part of the study.

## Spread the load

Christensen also recommended a management workload study. He noted that OUSD now has 114 management positions, up from 91 in 2014. The increase is due, in part, to state programs that provide funding, but with "strings attached." The programs are good for students, but they require staff time to manage them and meet accountability requirements. And, he explained, the staff work continues after the funding is spent. "We're still completing programmatic accountability requirements for COVID," he said.

Noting that nine programs will expire in the next five years, he stressed that managing these programs drives the need for employees who are not necessarily at school sites. Workloads are not adjusted appropriately. "I don't know what the right number is," he said. "We may be right on, but we need to look at it."

The suggestion that received the most support from board members, and deemed the easiest to satisfy, was standardized parent/teacher communications software.

## Closing the app gap

Apparently, there is no single district-supported portal for parents and teachers to share infor-

mation. Teachers have set them up on their own, resulting in multiple communications apps for a single student.

Reporting that he had heard from a large number of parents regarding the app overload, Christensen recommended the district "take control of this" to improve functionality and security. It will cost money, he said, but we need to do it.

Trustees Sierra Vane and Ana Page both reported that they were multi-app parents, with two or three different portals for a single student. "I have to look in five different places just to see what's going on," said Page, "and my students are still in elementary school."

There was board consensus that a standardized app be a priority, that parents and teachers already support the idea. "It's a no-brainer," Erickson summarized.

Asked by Trustee Stephen Glass what these studies would look like, Christensen explained that they would be ongoing. "Staff won't come back a year from now and say 'this is it,'" he said. Regular reports would be brought to the board, detailing who participated, what they found, and assurances that the solutions would work.

Timing-wise, the communications app is first, workload studies a constant exercise, and school improvements identified with some urgency, as construction costs continue to rise.

Any school consolidation should be determined by September 2026.

"Parking"  
continued from page 1

storefronts, enforces time-limited parking and provides long-term parking around the commercial periphery.

The ordinance under consideration indicates that parking sessions would be paid for through a mobile payment system of pay stations placed throughout the area. Visitors would enter their license plate number, along with their payment. License plate numbers would be tracked by license plate readers used by parking enforcement officers.

## No free ride

Paid parking within the Old Towne commercial core would be enforced Monday through Sunday, from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. The cost would be \$1.25 per hour in city parking lots; \$1.50 per hour on city streets; and \$2 per hour in marked parking spaces around the Plaza. Paid parking will be supplemented with time limits of either two or three hours to encourage turnover. Revenue is expected to be \$1.2 million per year.

The commercial core is bounded by Maple Avenue to the north; Almond Avenue to the south; Lemon Street to the west; and Grand Street to the east. This area includes eight city parking lots. Free parking will remain on portions of Cypress Street, Center Street, Glassell Street, Maple Avenue, the Main Library, the Metrolink parking lot and the Lemon Street parking structure.

Surrounding residential areas will be able to procure parking permits at no cost. Long-term parking permits in paid parking zones will be available on a discretionary basis for an administrative fee.

Vendor selection, procurement, installation, programming and field integration is expected to take seven to nine months.

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## Turtles and tortoises steal the show

The Annual Turtle & Tortoise Show, sponsored by the Orange County Chapter of the California Turtle and Tortoise Club will be held, Saturday, May 3, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the First Chris-

tian Church of Orange, 1130 E. Walnut Avenue.

Visitors may meet live turtles and tortoises, receive husbandry and adoption information, enjoy snacks, raffles and shop for turtle

related goods. This fundraiser helps support the reptiles awaiting adoption.

For information about the Orange County club chapter, see tortoise.org.

# Orange Elks provide "full coverage" community service



Left to right are Janine Weerheim, Micah Carter, Richard Cantu, Miss Orange Kylie Seppala, Anthony Gutierrez, Michael Diersing, Dale Eggleston and Janine Storm.



Left to right are, Janine Weerheim, Priyesh Patel, Miguel Zamora, Miss Orange Kylie Seppala, David Pasino, Police Chief Dan Adams and Janine Storm.



The Orange Elks worked with GRIP (Gang Reduction Intervention Partnership) and the Orange Scholarship Associations to support youth in the community. The Elks Drug Awareness committee hosted provided food for the GRIP Mentor Luncheon at Yorba Middle School. From left, Elks Dede McNally, Bill Neessen, Chris Gray and Vicki Long.



The Orange Scholarship Association held a workshop for the Miss Orange Little Cuties Program at the lodge. The program is for 1st - 6th grade girls; 12 girls attended. The girls spent a day with Miss Orange 2024 Elizabeth Raburn, met the contestants for the Miss Orange Scholarship Pageant, received a crown and T-shirt, enjoyed crafts, and learned a dance.

By Bill Neesen

Each year the Orange Elks honor law enforcement and firefighters at its annual Appreciation Night dinner.

This event demonstrates the lodge's appreciation for those heroes who risk their lives every day protecting the City of Orange and making Orange a better and safer place to live. These are men and women who run toward danger to protect residents.

The co-chairmen of the event, Elks Jennifer Weerheim and Janine Storm, welcomed everyone to the program.

Boy Scout Troop 1475 presented the Colors, lead the Pledge of Allegiance, and helped serve the dinner.

Gaddi Vasquez was the guest speaker. Vasquez is an Orange native and talked about his experiences growing up in the city. Miss Orange 2025, Kylie Seppala, helped present the awards.

Fire Chief Sean deMetropolis presented the fire department's awards to Micah Carter, Fire Cadet of the Year; Richard Cantu, Fire Reserve of the Year; Dale Eggleston, Non-Sworn Employee of the Year; Battalion Chief Michael Diersing, Manager of the Year; and Captain Anthony Gutierrez, Firefighter of the Year.

Orange Police Chief Dan Adams presented awards for Meritorious Service to Corporal Priyesh Patel, Detective Miguel Zamora and Sergeant David Pasino



The Orange Lodge donates over \$8,000 a year to fund its scholarship fund for students. This year, the Elks received a \$2,500 grant from Stater Bros. Charities via the Collins Avenue market. The grant gives the lodge more funding for scholarships. Pictured is Chris de Santos of Stater Bros. presenting the scholarship check.



The Orange Elks Lodge #1475 hosted the Down Syndrome Association of OC mixer. There was music, dancing, games, food and new friends to meet. Volunteers broke out the roulette table and wheel of fortune to make the night a success.



The Santiago Creek Greenway Alliance (SCGA), created in 1991, organizes cleanups of the creek. The group of volunteers is dedicated to improving public use of the Santiago Creek, which begins in the mountains above Irvine Regional Park and flows through Villa Park and Santa Ana to the Santa Ana River. The SCGA provides trash bags, pick-up claws, gloves, water, and welcomes Elks and other volunteers to help.



Janine Storm presented the pin to Dan Bradford for 45 years of Elkdom.

## Old Timers Pin Night honors long time members

Every year, the Orange Elks Lodge hold an Old Timers Pin Night, wherein members who have been an Elk for a long, long, long time are honored.

The Lodge Room was packed with Orange Elks, family members and friends for this year's Old Timer Pin Night where we recognize and thank members for their many years of service.

Past Exalted Rulers presented the pins to members celebrating 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35 and 40 years.

This year Dan Bradford was the standout, receiving his pin for being a member of the Lodge for 45 years.

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## Fair future?

After overseeing the Silverado Country Fair for much of its 50-plus-year history, Jane Bove is stepping aside. Unless others take over for her, there will be no fair this fall.

But Jane is willing to show newcomers the ropes. Help is especially needed for (1) signing up vendors; (2) organizing children's activities; (3) promotion and advertising; and (4) managing the saloon.

For more information, contact Geoffrey Sarkissian at (714) 269-6939, or send an email to silveradofair@gmail.com.

## Sink saga summary

A few years ago, when the Silverado-Modjeska Recreation and Park District (SMRPD) determined that Silverado's playground equipment needed replacement, one suggestion was to add a water feature. That didn't happen, but as it turns out, there

already was a water feature that no one knew about.

Digging up the park for the current playground uncovered what looked like an abandoned septic tank. So workers filled that with concrete.

Last year, though, someone noticed that the community center's kitchen sink seemed clogged. The reason? Its drainpipe ran to the "abandoned" septic tank. SMRPD began investigating installation of a separate gray water system for the sink.

## Lions, dragons and crows—oh, my!

The Southern California Youth Lion and Dragon Dance Team helped the Library of the Canyons celebrate Lunar New Year on Saturday, Jan. 25.

Little costumed one-person lions, older two-person lions, and a dragon requiring at least nine operators moved quickly to the beat of two very large and very loud drums. Branch manager Laura Blasingham bravely petted the

dragon's nose.

On Thursday, Jan. 30, children's librarian Amber Ray read a book about a crow to preschoolers. Then, Irvine Ranch Conservancy volunteer Ross Gough shared a few crow facts and led a short hike to look for (replicas of) things that crows might eat.

Since a group of crows is called a "murder," Miss Amber was asked later whether two crows spotted on the hike constituted a murder. Her reply: "That's attempted murder."

The library will feature mountain lions on Thursday, March 27. No murders are anticipated.

## Raffles

California classifies raffles as gambling, which is regulated. Only certain tax-exempt organizations are allowed to hold fundraising raffles, which generally require registration at least 60 days beforehand and submission of a financial form afterward.

Anything requiring purchase of a ticket to win a prize is a raffle, even if it is called something else like "opportunity drawing." To be exempt from regulation, all tickets must be free. If there is a charge for attending an event where everyone buying an admission ticket has an equal chance of winning a prize, then that is exempt. But not if any additional

"donation" increases the chance of winning the prize.

Silent auctions are not raffles since they don't involve chance—whoever bids the highest wins. For more information, see [oag.ca.gov/charities/raffles](http://oag.ca.gov/charities/raffles).

Note: The above does not constitute legal advice since it was not written by Canyon Beat Legal Department lawyers. It came from the Finance Department, whose motto is "Why pay those guys \$500 an hour to tell you what you can read on the internet for free?"

## Remembering Thelma

Beginning in 1974, former schoolteacher Thelma Hufford wrote the "Orick News" column for the weekly Arcata Union newspaper.

Like the *Foothills Sentry*, the Union focused on events in the city where it was published, but it also included dispatches from elsewhere in Humboldt County, like the tiny coastal town of Orick.

Thelma Hufford faithfully reported news about Orick's elementary school, volunteer fire department, Chamber of Commerce, churches, annual rodeo, and who was visiting who that week.

But sometimes there was room for Thelma, a local history buff,

to add tales from Orick's past about gold mining, logging, fishing, dairy farming and ranching. In 1900, Frank Hufford hauled 40,000 pounds of wool from one ranch to Arcata by horse and wagon.

Thelma ended every column with a few short observations like these from May 19, 1983:

*Now ... warm summer fog stays along the coast; two week's temperature was from 36 to 63 degrees; swallows fly low above the fields; a redheaded woodpecker climbs a power pole; cucumber vines creep along the fences; the old brown car sits farther down the beach; and two stroll barefooted in the sand at Orick Beach.*

Thelma Hufford probably never set foot in Orange County before dying in 2004. But perhaps something sprouted here from seed she'd scattered behind the Redwood Curtain decades earlier.

Now ... late winter rain pauses for some sunshine; recent temperature was from 38 to 71 degrees; people follow their dogs around the Riviera; a few vultures circle high above the hills; hawks screaming at dawn are like flying alarm clocks; yellow-rumped warblers twitter as they harvest seeds from a laurel sumac bush; and splashing water echoes under the Kitterman bridge as Silverado Creek flows out of town.

## OUSD renews commitment to equal education for all students

OUSD Interim Superintendent Mike Christensen reported at the Feb. 12 school board meeting that the district intended to follow the law, as declared by past Supreme Court rulings, regarding equal education opportunities for all public school students. He referred to a message he had posted on the district website, which is reprinted here:

*"Orange Unified is committed to providing safe, secure, and peaceful schools where our students and staff have the opportunity to learn and grow. Recent changes in federal policy and ongoing discussions about possible immigration enforcement at schools are creating anxiety for many of our mixed-status families and those who care about them. We want to assure our community that we are committed to protecting the legal rights of all students and ensuring that our campuses remain the welcoming and inclu-*

*sive places our students are entitled to.*

*"In alignment with established law, Board Policies 5145.13 and 5145.3, and guidance from the California State Attorney General, we have developed clear protocols for our school leaders and staff to follow should immigration authorities request access to our schools or student records. Please reach out to your school's principal if you have any questions or concerns about these protocols.*

*"We want to take this opportunity to provide reassurance to all our families that changes in the federal administration's policy do not take away students' federal or state constitutional rights and protections to education. All students have a well-established legal right to education regardless of their family's immigration status. Our charge is to educate students, and it is a duty we fulfill with honor and empathy, creating*

*the leaders of tomorrow."*

Board President Kris Erickson elaborated on Christensen's message, noting the 1982 Supreme Court case, *Plyler vs. Doe*, that ruled the government cannot deny public education to undocumented children.

Acknowledging that she had read the entire court case, she said it reminded her of the importance of what public schools do, and read aloud a passage from the ruling for the record, "Public schools are the most vital civic institutions for the preservation of the democratic system of government, and primary vehicle for transmitting the values on which our society rests."

Education is an important function of state and local government, Erickson emphasized. "It is a profound honor and obligation that this board takes with humility, and staff undertakes with passion and dedication."

## Pancake fundraiser supports Villa Park High School



The Villa Park High School Pancake Breakfast is back. The community event and major fundraiser for the school will be held on Saturday, April 12, from 7 to 11 a.m. Tickets are \$10 each, and may be purchased at the door, from any VPHS Booster Club, or the PFSO website. Proceeds will support academic, athletic and cultural student programs.

## Villa Park celebrates Lunar New Year 2025



The Lion Dance was performed by the VPHS Vietnamese Students Club.

For the fifth year, Villa Park Community Services Foundation and North OC Chinese School co-hosted the Lunar New Year Celebration in Villa Park, Feb. 8.

Students from the Chinese School participated in five performances during the event. Varied styles of martial arts were demonstrated by OC Shao Lin Kong Fu and Zhao Bao Tai Chi.

The Villa Park High School Vietnamese Students Club per-

formed the colorful and highly-anticipated Lion Dance.

The Cultural Center of T.E.C.O., Sunny Maid and the Villa Park branch of the Bank of America sponsored special snacks, red envelopes and lanterns. Formosa Association of Student Cultural Ambassadors-OC Chapter, Orange Mandarin Community Booster Club and the VP High Mandarin class students provided crafts for the attendees.

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# Orange Fire Department's prevention efforts stop fires before they start

By Carrie Graham

When most people think of a firefighter's day-to-day routine, they likely imagine putting out burning buildings, arriving to 911 calls or rescuing cats from trees. But another key component of the Orange Fire Department is its proactive efforts.

Fire Safety Specialist Robert DeSimone is one of the department's staff members dedicated to a number of preventative programs aimed at identifying and removing fire risks before they become fires. DeSimone is one of seven Safety Specialists, two Hazardous Materials Inspectors, and two Plans Inspectors.

An additional 15 volunteers are largely responsible for inspecting the city's roughly 950 apartment complexes, as well as providing floating assistance to the seven inspectors.

In DeSimone's case, that is currently vegetation management, or weed abatement, a major concern in areas like East Orange where larger parcels of land can be easily overtaken by dry, flammable brush. CAL Fire considers it a Very High Fire Hazard Risk Zone, meaning it's at substantial risk for wildfires.

### Three-pronged attack

"I usually look at vacant parcels or slopes on the back of a home so it's a lot of HOA communities and some private properties. But we aren't looking in



Orange Fire Department Safety Specialist Robert DeSimone inspects some 330 properties annually for combustible conditions.

people's backyards or anything, it's more the slopes behind their yards," says DeSimone.

DeSimone is responsible for three inspection programs. The first is the complaint-based weed abatement program, which currently has about 200 enrolled parcels. If a parcel receives multiple complaints for things like trash, dead vegetation and dry brush, that are substantiated by the inspector, the property owner will be sent notice and enrolled in the program.

The property is then inspected once every fire season. If a property passes for two continuous years, it is removed from the program.

The second enforcement program DeSimone handles is fuel modification. The "fuel mod" is similar to the weed abatement

program, but more strict as it applies only to parcels located in very high risk zones. It sets guidelines for new homes built, including things like property design and what can be planted.

### Prohibited plants

Many trees, including cypress, fir, bamboo, several species of sagebrush and almost every species of palm, as well as a number of other plant types are prohibited from being added to new properties, with exception of those who seek a special permit. These inspections are dependent on new home construction in the impacted areas and currently include about 130 parcels.

Any infractions are documented during the buying process inspection, and homeowners are typically given six months to a

year to comply.

Third is the AB 38 program, which deals with defensible space on properties. Defensible space is essentially the open area on a large parcel of land that can be used as a barrier between property and fire. These inspections are random and can vary in number but DeSimone says he receives an average of about 35 annually.

"When you have 100 feet or more of open vegetation, it's called defensible space, where firefighters can go to fight back the fires," he explains. "We had a community with about 150 to 170 feet of defensible space; a fire ran right through there but didn't touch any of the houses. That was nice for me to see as an inspector, because it shows what we're doing works."

Though properties are given

repeated opportunities to address issues themselves, the fire department has the ability to impose fines, liens on property and, in extreme situations, can remove the offending items itself.

"Dead vegetation is fuel for the fire, and the home ignition zone is zero to five feet around the house," DeSimone says. "People tend to have a lot of combustible stuff or dead plants around in that zone. They'll put their trash cans under the eaves and if something inside catches fire, the heat will collect under the eaves and that's how a fire starts."

In addition to inspecting wildfire risks in the hills of Orange, DeSimone is also responsible for around 100 annual institutional inspections of facilities like the jail, psychiatric hospitals and elderly care facilities.

## OUSD teams with search firm to find permanent superintendent

The Orange Unified School District Board hired Leadership Associates to conduct a search for a permanent district superintendent. Interim Superintendent Mike Christensen's contract is up in June. The board plans to hire a superintendent in May, with a July 1 start date.

While Leadership Associates will oversee the search and vetting process, it will do so based on input from district stakeholders. A survey requesting community input has been posted on the OUSD website. The firm will also hold public meetings on the topic via Zoom and in person.

During a board discussion on the search, Jan. 23, trustees identified the qualities they are seeking in a superintendent. They include an understanding of the community, an ability to inspire others, good business sense, leading with empathy and accountability, supporting equality and inclusion, ability to navigate the political

landscape and experience with the issues and challenges facing districts today.

It was also noted that district staff and teachers are still experiencing repercussions from the actions of the previous board of trustees, and that there had been a mass exodus, with talented personnel leaving OUSD. Therefore, team building and attracting talent to benefit student outcomes are essential qualifications for the next district superintendent.

OUSD has used the services of Leadership Associates in the past, and trustees are confident that the search will be successful. The company boasts state and national connections, partnerships with education-focused organizations, a focus on diversity and a willingness to "talk to everyone."

The contract is not to exceed \$36,500. The firm expects to present candidates to the board in late March, with interviews commencing in April.

## Annual Easter Sunrise service planned

The annual Cowboy Easter Sunrise Service conducted by Pastor Larry Day will be held Sunday, April 20 at 7 a.m. The community is invited to attend the service at

the Mara Brandman Arena, 6422 E. Santiago Canyon Road. Call Pastor Day at (714) 552-2483, or Laura Thomas at (714) 264-4242, for additional information.

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## Young Women of the month named



Fatima Rivadeneira

The Tustin Area Woman's Club named Fatima Rivadeneira of Tustin High School and Gabriela Afable of Foothill High the Young Women of the Month for February.

Fatima Rivadeneira loves sports and is on the soccer and track and field teams at Tustin High. She is a FC Barcelona fan. She has been involved in the AVID program during her high school years and is currently serving as a peer mental health ambassador. Rivadeneira is the vice president of her school's National Honor Society chapter. She aspires to become a nurse so that she can continue helping others in the community.

Gabriela Afable is a scholar, writer and artist with a passion for storytelling, design and global



Gabriela Afable

engagement. She is an International Baccalaureate Diploma candidate and a National Merit semifinalist. She pursued study abroad in Spain and attended the Young Writer's Workshop at Bard College as a Fellow. She is the Editor-In-Chief of Knight Life, Foothill's newspaper, and Knightwriter, the school's literary and arts magazine.

Beyond academics, Afable competes in soccer, track and cross country. She is fluent in Spanish and is in the process of earning the Seal of Biliteracy. She plans to major in English and pursue a career in the publishing industry.

Also honored in February were Cynthia Yimdjo of Beckman High and Melanie Villalobos of Legacy High.



The Orange Grove Freemason Lodge #293 installed its officers for 2025. They are, back row from left: Karl Sandhoff, tiler; Shawn McCuen, marshal; Jim Berry, secretary; Dennis Rootes, treasurer; David Shaffer, organist; Paul Overton, junior steward; and David Soliven, chaplain; middle row, from left: Leon Lowe, assistant secretary; Jerry Torres, senior steward; Keith Jones, junior warden; Don Ancheta, senior warden; James McCallion, senior deacon; Scott Holland, junior deacon; and in front, Cesar Bustos, worshipful master. Freemasonry is the world's first and largest fraternal organization. It is guided by the belief that everyone has a responsibility to make the world a better place. For 300 years, Freemasonry has enhanced and strengthened the character of individual men by providing opportunities for fellowship, charity, and the search for truth – within ourselves and the larger world. Orange Grove Lodge was chartered in 1888, and has been located at the historic traffic circle since 1922. See OGL293.org for further information.



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The Rancho Arroyo Ladies (the OC Polo Club's winter home in the desert) shined in the Susan Stovall Women's Challenge, and were crowned champions for a second consecutive year. The ladies were cheered on by a large contingent of the OC Polo family who ventured out to Indio to show their support. Also at Rancho Arroyo, the club's interscholastic team and some of its youngest players geared up for the Margery Magill Memorial Tournament. These young ladies played their hearts out and grew as players, competing against top talent nationwide.



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## Tustin Museum to feature the powerhouse female rancher in Orange County: Nellie Gail Moulton

By Guy Ball

Author and Historian Scott Barnes will share his story of Nellie Gail Moulton, family matriarch of South County's Moulton Ranch, during a special Night at the Museum meeting on Friday, March 28 at the Tustin Area Museum.

Nellie Gail was born in Irving, Kansas in 1878. Seven months later, she was plucked from her mother's arms by a cyclone. This harrowing event and the miracle of her survival is just the beginning of her amazing life story.

Her family crossed Kansas in a covered wagon and lived in a sod house. In the wake of losing her mother and sister to illness, Nellie supported her family while her father tackled one occupation af-

ter another, always just one step ahead of disaster. She moved to California in 1903.

Here she found a great love with rancher Lewis Moulton, and eventually started a family of her own once they married—her two daughters growing into great cattle women. Once Lewis died in 1938, Nellie did not just inherit their prospering Moulton Ranch, she operated it.

Scott Barnes is Nellie's great-grandson and has written a book about the family matriarch. His presentation will be from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at 345 El Camino Real in Downtown Tustin. Tickets are \$20 per person, \$15 each for members.

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



Nellie Gail Moulton

### McPherson science students advance to next level

Each year, McPherson Magnet School students delve into science projects, working weeks to create a hypothesis, research and experiment to prove or disprove their idea, and prepare a presentation for judges.

The high scorers from McPherson move up to compete against students from throughout the county for medals and awards at the 70th Orange County Science and Engineering Fair, to be held March 12-23.



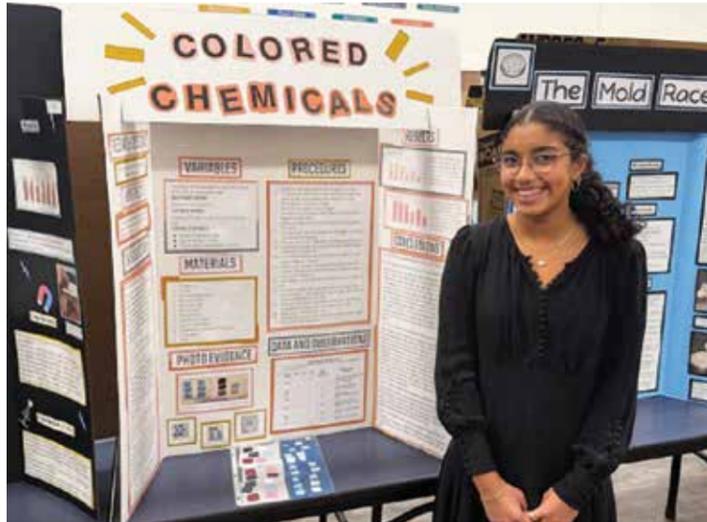
Colin Crispi, right, is shown with Judge Arnold Shugarman before his project, Sound and Fire.



Theo Ok, with his project Hot Stuff, will compete at the county level.



Alyssa Mastroianni will take her project, Powering Up or Sugaring Down, to OCSEF.



Sanaiya Hall will compete with her project, Colored Chemicals.

### Scholarship applications available to high school seniors

Assistance League of Orange invites graduating high school seniors to apply for its Scholarship Awards Program, which will distribute \$60,000 in scholarships this year. Awards range from \$500 to \$5,000 and are available for students pursuing college, career, technical or trade school programs.

General scholarships are open to students of all majors, while specialized awards include: the Eugenia Love Scholarship for students specializing in the arts; the Alfreda Niewig Scholarship, for those entering the nursing/medical field; the AL Orange Memorial Scholarship, for special education students or students planning a career in special education; and Richland High School Scholarship, for Richland students.

Eligible applicants must be graduating from an Orange Unified School District (OUSD) high school or reside within the district while attending another school.

The deadline to apply is Monday, April 7, 2025, at 11:59 p.m. For details and to apply, visit [assistanceleague.org/orange](http://assistanceleague.org/orange) and click on Application Information.

The Assistance League is dedicated to supporting education and empowering local students through scholarships and community programs. To learn more, support the League's mission, or get involved, visit [assistanceleague.org/orange](http://assistanceleague.org/orange).

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Look for D-shaped holes 2-4 mm wide in the bark.

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The larvae are in the bark. They are 2 cm long, white and legless.

Adults are 1 cm in length, bullet shaped with gold spots.

#### Treat.

Contact a certified arborist who specializes in treating GSOB infestations.



### Duke of Orange contestants rock; Adrian Olmos takes the crown



Photos by Tony Richards

Adrian Olmos, introduced by emcee Connie Benson, gets ready for his saxophone solo.



Rich Guerrero, sponsored by Elks Lodge #1475, dons the iconic white glove for a performance of Michael Jackson's "Billie Jean."



Dr. Ronald Pham, DDS, sponsored by Restoration Dental, was named People's Choice following a riveting dance with his very pregnant wife Tracy.



Joseph Puccio, sponsored by APM Manufacturing, was named second runner-up.



Francisco Gomez did an air-guitar rendition of "Don't Stop Believing." He was sponsored by Providence St. Joseph Hospital.



Juan Carlos Vazquez was voted first runner-up. Sponsored by Café Zocalo, he will serve as standby Olmos in the event Olmos is unavailable for an engagement.



Kevin Temmer, sponsored by I Heart Old Towne, performed a vigorous exercise routine.



Max McCarthy, sponsored by TMC Windows & Doors, danced the night away.



Doubling as Elton John performing "Benny and the Jets," Jackson Wells, sponsored by Modern Woodmen of America, steps away from the piano.

OBITUARIES



**Nadine Almazán**  
1928-2025

Nadine Annie Almazán, a beacon of selfless love and boundless passion, graced this world with her presence on July 11, 1928, in Westminster, California. Her journey through life was a tapestry of heartfelt connections and enduring love, woven with the threads of family, faith, and creativity. Nadine's final day, Feb. 10, in Orange, was as serene as her life was vibrant, surrounded by the warmth of her loving family as she peacefully passed away.

From the streets of Westminster, where she attended local schools, to the fateful bus stop where she met her soulmate, Cliff Almazán, Nadine's early years were chapters of a love story that



would span seven decades. The spark of friendship with Cliff kindled into a flame, and after a whirlwind romance, they married on Sept. 30, 1951, at Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church in their hometown. Together, they celebrated 71 years of marriage, a testament to their unwavering commitment and adoration for one another until Cliff's passing in 2022.

Nadine's professional life was marked by her extraordinary talent as a silk finisher, a role she dedicated over 40 years to perfecting. Her meticulous touch transformed the simplest of fabrics into garments of elegance, earning her the reputation of an artisan whose work was synonymous with quality. Her children, always impeccably dressed, were a walking showcase of her exceptional skills, as every crease and fold fell perfectly into place.

Beyond her professional accomplishments, Nadine was a true artist with needle and thread. Her ability to crochet and embroider without the guidance of patterns was nothing short of miraculous, as she conjured up beautiful quilts and blankets that became cherished keepsakes. Her culinary prowess was legendary, especially her Thanksgiving feasts, which she single-handedly prepared with love and finesse. Her homemade tortillas, a family favorite, were devoured as quickly as they left the stove, a testament to their irresistible taste.

Nadine's home was the heart of family gatherings, where she played the role of matriarch with grace and joy. The harmonious blend of Cliff's guitar with his

brothers' music, Nadine's delectable cooking, and the laughter of loved ones created an ambiance of unity and celebration that will be fondly remembered by all who were part of it.

A woman of profound faith, Nadine's devotion to God, Jesus, and the Blessed Mother Mary was unwavering. Her daily recitation of the Rosary was a source of strength and comfort, not only to her but to those she prayed for. Her love was a free-flowing river, touching lives without expecting anything in return. Her heart, an endless ocean of love, offered warmth and solace to everyone who knew her.

Nadine's legacy of love lives on through her three daughters, Sylvia Almazán, Deborah Tejadilla (George) and Susan Wertz (Chris); her three grandchildren Nadine Tejadilla, Cory Wertz (Denya), and Colleen Nelson (Matt); and her two great-grandchildren Kieran Nelson and Daphne Wertz. Not to be forgotten are her grandpuppies, BooBoo, Bentley, and Gabbie, who brought additional joy and companionship to her life.

Nadine Annie Almazán was the embodiment of unconditional love, a passionate spirit and selflessness. Her life was a masterclass in giving, loving and creat-

ing beauty in the world. As we reflect on the remarkable journey Nadine shared with us, let us carry forward her legacy by embracing love without limits, nurturing our passions, and selflessly contributing to the tapestry of humanity. Her memory will forever inspire us to live with the same fervor and generosity that she so effortlessly displayed throughout her 96 years of a life well-lived.

**Gardeners invited to enter Flower Show**

The Woman's Club of Orange invites local gardeners to enter their prized plants, flowers or flower arrangements in its Annual Spring Garden Show.

"Music in the Garden" is the 86th annual flower show hosted by the club. There is no entry fee. For additional information and entry forms, call (714) 836-5919 or visit womanscluboforange.org.

The show will be held on April 26, from noon to 4 p.m. at the clubhouse, 121 S. Center St. The event will also feature vendors' booths, a sweet shoppe, lunch and opportunity drawings.

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## Tustin Community Foundation spreads donor dollars

By Guy Ball

You may have seen their name on many of the event posters in town. If you wander over to the [tustincommunityfoundation.org](http://tustincommunityfoundation.org) website, you see icons of almost 15 organizations or events that the Tustin Community Foundation (TCF) works with to help raise funds, mobilize resources and provide leadership to solve community challenges.

By partnering with the City of Tustin, local schools and non-profits serving Tustin, it focuses on where charitable support can make the greatest impact.

The Tustin Community Foundation was founded in 1994 and reorganized in 2008 with an executive director responsible for implementation of policies set by the executive board, as well as goals and objectives, and financial, programs and administrative management.

The secret sauce to TCF is that it works with others to host events for residents, while raising funds for other nonprofit organizations.

"Over the past decade," according to Executive Director Erin Nielsen, "TCF has made a significant impact in our community by distributing over \$148,000 through the Paper Football Challenge, providing nearly 15,000 pajamas through Project Pajamas, and donating 8,718 books to TUSD libraries. And we have also awarded over \$1.5 million in grants to nonprofit organizations and schools."

One of the foundation's most heartfelt projects, Project Pajamas, raises donations of close to 2,500 new pajamas per year for newborns to XL teens.

And just recently, the Old Town Tustin Sip & Stroll was held. It's an afternoon of sipping, snacking, shopping, and strolling through Old Town, with proceeds donated to local charities, as well as scholarship programs for Tustin area students. Not to mention, it helps support local businesses while locals are enjoying meandering through Old Town.

Through the Friends Feeding Seniors Program, TCF served more than 10,000 meals to homebound seniors. It has honored 439 outstanding community volunteers as Superheroes of Tustin and, since 2013, has recognized over 100 homes and businesses for their festive holiday displays each December.

The Foundation is a 501(c)3 nonprofit supported 100% by fundraising events, as well as donations by individuals and corporations. TCF is not funded by the City of Tustin and does not receive CDBG funds or taxpayer dollars.

For more information to volunteer or donate, visit the website at [tustincommunityfoundation.org](http://tustincommunityfoundation.org), call (714) 393-8506, or email [info@tustincommunityfoundation.org](mailto:info@tustincommunityfoundation.org).

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**Get ready for kindergarten**

In celebration of Kindergarten Readiness Month, the Villa Park Library presents Kindergarten Camp on Saturday, March 15 from 10-11 a.m. Join in for this special hour-long event featuring a variety of activities that will help soon-to-be kindergartners build the skills they need to succeed.

The Villa Park Library is located at 17865 Santiago Blvd, in the Villa Park Towne Center; phone (714) 998-0861 for info.

## Mountain bike team invites riders to sign up



Ben Thom, a senior at El Modena, races the course.



Robert Goodman of Orange Lutheran is ready to roll.

The El Modena High School Mountain Bike Team is accepting student athletes, in 6th -12th grade from local elementary and middle schools and El Modena and Orange Lutheran High Schools.

The team is part of the SoCal Cycling League and participates in races on weekends from February to May. Middle schoolers compete on Saturdays, and high schoolers on Sundays. Races are held at trail venues throughout Southern California; the team trains locally several times a week.

Students do not "try out" for the team, but they must be able to ride a bike. If a rider does not have a bike, the team will provide one. Assistant coaches, such as a parent or adult over age 18, are also being sought.

High school riders who do not attend El Modena or Orange Lutheran may compete as independents.

Those interested in joining the mountain bike team as a rider or assistant coach may send their name, school, grade and contact information to [elmomtmb@gmail.com](mailto:elmomtmb@gmail.com).



The Woman's Club of Orange donated 500 books to the "Reach out and Read" program at CHOC. The books were collected by the club's membership. President Carol Allen and board members Rebecca Martinez and Dorinda von Tersch presented the books to program Director Madeline Hall (second from left).

## Covenant presents eclectic musical performance

Covenant Women's Fellowship will feature "Grand-Gal" Linda Vernier in a lively musical performance at its luncheon on Thursday, March 20.

Vernier learned all the big band tunes and standards from "Doc" Kaufmann, who taught Leo Fender, of the Fender Guitar Company, how to make guitars. She joined Kaufmann to perform as Grandpa and his Grand-gal, a musical duo that continued until his passing.

She now performs as Grand-Gal and the Boys, playing music ranging from oldies, to jazz, rock, country, Spanish and French

tunes. Manuel Ng, one of the boys, will join her. The audience is invited to sing along, or even dance, if so inspired. Lyrics and chords will be provided. Just listening is fine, too.

The lunch is open to men and women in the community, and will be held in St. Andrew's Hall on the church campus, 1855 N. Orange-Olive Road. Doors open at 11 a.m.; the program begins at 11:30 a.m.

A catered lunch is \$15 per person payable in advance. Reservations are required by Monday, March 17, by calling Linda D. at (951) 237-9888. Reservations are



Linda Vernier also required to attend the program only at 12:30 p.m.; the cost is \$5, payable at the door.



# COMMUNITY SPORTS

BY CLIFF ROBBINS AND CHAD CLINE

## Canyon High School holds NCAA signing event

Canyon High School held the NCAA Letters of Intent signing party for six athletes.

Abby Foley, water polo, was a 4-year scholar-athlete and will be attending Concordia University in Irvine. Samantha Gresham, softball, was a 4-year scholar-athlete and All-CIF; Gresham will be attending Dartmouth College.

Blake Helsper was a 4-year scholar-athlete and will be attending Hawaii Pacific University to play baseball.

Noah Kim was a 4-year scholar-athlete at Canyon. Kim will be playing basketball and attending Oberlin College.

Victoria Oropeza was All-County and will attend Augusta University on a athletic scholarship for softball.

Jordan Simmons was All-League and earned the Orange County Athletic Directors' scholar-athlete award. Simmons will be attending Brown University where she will play softball.



E.J. Sickles (77) from Villa Park High School pulls and leads the run for the North All-Stars.



E.J. Sickles (77) on the North All-Star roster, blocks out the South pass rusher.



Gino Marchetti, from Foothill High, looks for a receiver down field in the North-South Prep All-Star Football Game held Feb. 2.



Nate Lewis from Villa Park High started for the North All-Stars as quarterback.



El Modena's Samantha Simmons takes a shot on goal in the first round of CIF-SS water polo playoffs against Valencia.



Gino Marchetti (12), from Foothill High School was named All-CIF in Division 5 football.



Zulema Andrade (12) fights for possession in the Valencia game. Andrade scored three goals in the first half. El Modena won, 4-2.



Samantha Simmons (5) from El Modena High School gets the pass off with precision fingertip control.

# COMMUNITY SPORTS

BY CLIFF ROBBINS AND CHAD CLINE

## SCC basketball

The Santiago Canyon College basketball team, 23-5, wraps up the OEC Conference Tournament to determine seeding in the CCCAA Championship.

Santiago posted a 62-51 win over Riverside in the first round of the conference tournament. On the last game of the regular season, Santiago came away with a victory over Riverside to secure a co-league title with Fullerton.



Mark Hernandez-Chino (32) scores from the top of the key in the first round of playoffs. Orange beat Duarte, 49-26, to advance to the second round.

## Mojab named head coach for women's beach volleyball



Santiago Canyon College announced Niloofar Mojab will guide the Hawks in beach volleyball. Mojab brings prep and collegiate experience to the program. She initially began competing in the high jump, and, at age 14, became the youngest athlete in the history of Iran's Track and Field to qualify for the national team. She was ranked among the top five high jumpers in the Asian Indoor Athletics Championship and No. 2 in the Middle East by age 15. Mojab transitioned to volleyball at age 17, and immigrated to the U.S., but returned to Iran to play on its national team for two years. Upon returning to the United States, she became certified to officiate club, prep and college Division I conferences.



Vic Ceja from Orange High School steps in to block the pass in the playoff game.



Mark Hernandez-Chino takes the inbound pass in the key against Duarte.



Mark Hernandez-Chino out-hustles the Duarte player for the rebound.



Ivan Kim from Orange High School blocks the Duarte player in the CIF-SS boys basketball game.



# COMMUNITY SPORTS

BY CLIFF ROBBINS AND CHAD CLINE

### SCC hosts Hawk's Flight Run

Santiago Canyon College will hold its first-ever Hawk's Flight 5K Run/Fun Run/Walk on campus on Saturday, Mar. 22.

To register for the 7 a.m. Hawk's Flight 5K or Kid's (Hatchling Trot), see SCCHawks.com.

All Hatchling Trotters will receive a medal, and all runners will receive a Hawk's Flight T-shirt. Proceeds from the event will be donated for a scholarship for one female and one male from a local high school.

### SCC puts softball season on hold

Santiago Canyon College announced it will not field a team this season. The head coach and

the assistant coach have both resigned, and the athletes have transferred to other programs.



Zachery Berg from Santiago Canyon College gets under the ball.



Lucas Bates, a freshman at SCC from Villa Park High School, spikes the ball.



Josiah Saldana from Santiago Canyon College plays the backfield, setting up the return.



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