

POMONA BULLETIN

**WHAT ARE WE
DOING FOR
OUR VETERANS?**

**GUESS WHO
IS MOVING TO
POMONA?**

**FREE OIL
CHANGES FOR
POMONA RESIDENTS**

**POMONA'S
BEST HIGH SCHOOL
STUDENTS**

**THE POOLS
ARE OPEN!**



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HONORING ALL STORIES: WHY EVERY CELEBRATION MATTERS

May is Military Appreciation Month.

It's a time when we honor and recognize the sacrifices and service of our military members. It's a time for gratitude, for stories of bravery, and for celebrating those who have served this country with courage and dedication.

Coming from a proud military family, May has always meant something personal to me. My grandfathers served—one in the Navy and one in the Marines. My uncle was in the Navy, my brother-in-law a Marine, my niece is retired from the Navy, my mother-in-law served in the Army, and now, my new son-in-law is actively serving in the Air Force. Service runs deep in my bloodline, and I grew up with a deep respect for sacrifice and patriotism. (Just painted my house Red, White, and Blue.)

Yet, despite that legacy, growing up as a gay man wasn't easy. I was bullied as a kid, and despite dreaming of joining the military, I was told no. Even during the era of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," being honest about who I was meant the door to serving my country was slammed shut. That rejection hit hard. Serving felt like a birthright in my family, but for me, it was a door forever closed. That reality shaped my understanding of pride, sacrifice, and the need for recognition.

Every June, as we celebrate **Gay Pride Month**, I see the frustration from some people. I hear, "Why do the gays get a whole month? What about the military?" It's a question that stings, not because I don't respect the military—I deeply do—but because there's a misunderstanding.



The military does have a month—actually, it has two:

- **Military Appreciation Month** – Every May, we honor and appreciate the sacrifices of our military members.
- **Veterans Day** – Celebrated in November, it recognizes those who served in the U.S. Armed Forces.

And yet, every June during Pride Month, I hear the same complaints. The irony? Military Appreciation Month is literally the month before Pride, and many of those who are the loudest critics didn't acknowledge it at all in May.

So here's my challenge to you, Pomona:

If you believe our military deserves more public recognition—you're absolutely right. So let's do something about it. Let's dream bigger than just Facebook posts and flags. Let's throw events. Let's plan parades. Let's host barbecues and fundraisers for veterans.

Let's make Military Appreciation Month LOUD in Pomona.

I will help you.

If you have an idea, even just a rough sketch of one, I'll sit with you. We'll bring together local leaders, nonprofits, and businesses. We'll raise money. We'll find a space. We'll make the flyers and call the press. You don't have to do it alone.

Because these national months are about more than banners and hashtags. They're about visibility, education, and honoring the struggles and victories of different communities. They remind us of stories that shaped America—of people who fought, whether on the battlefield or for the right to live openly.

I agree with one thing: we should have big celebrations for every group. Huge ones. Parades, parties, fundraisers, all of it. Because these communities deserve to be seen and celebrated. Honestly, maybe Pride is just bigger because, well... we throw better parties. (It's not a competition, but if it were, the gays might just have it in the bag.)

But jokes aside, it's about joy. Joy that was denied for so long. Joy that was fought for. And yes, every group deserves their own joy-filled, grand celebration.



Let's Celebrate Every Story

I believe in celebrating all communities. Not just because it's the right thing to do, but because it makes us better—stronger, more connected, and more compassionate. Every community deserves to feel seen, heard, and valued.

So—what are your ideas to celebrate Veterans and Active Duty Military in Pomona? Let's work together to get started now, so by next May, we have the biggest celebration in the valley.

I hope it inspires more connection, more joy, and more appreciation for the diverse stories that make Pomona such a vibrant place to live.

Let's honor all stories. Let's celebrate all communities. And let's make sure everyone's sacrifice, service, and joy are recognized—in May, in June, and every month of the year.

Because we all deserve a party.



Mitchell Stein

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Driven by Community: How Tire Pros Pomona Keeps Pomona Rolling

Jose Barajas has proudly called Pomona home for 25 years. A Ganesha High graduate, he's now the friendly face behind **Tire Pros Pomona**, a family-owned and operated business that's been serving the community since 2010. Unlike big chains, Jose and his team don't see customers as dollar signs—they see **people**. That commitment to care extends beyond the shop, with Tire Pros regularly donating to causes like **breast cancer awareness** and **veterans' support**.



While they're known for tires, the shop is a full-service automotive center offering **brakes, suspension work, tune-ups, oil changes, and routine 30/60/90 mile maintenance**. Supporting local businesses like Tire Pros Pomona helps keep jobs, services, and heart right here in the community.



As a gift to show how much they care, Tire Pros is offering **free oil changes**—but only to those who download the **FREE Pomona Rewards App**. It's their way of giving back to the city that's supported them for over a decade.



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Honoring Excellence: Daniela Rodriguez Receives Kiwanis Scholarship



Pomona High School senior Daniela Rodriguez was honored with the Kiwanis Club of Pomona's Academic Excellence and Community Leadership Scholarship on March 21.

The scholarship reflects Kiwanis' mission of improving the world one child and one community at a time.

Daniela has shown extraordinary academic and civic commitment throughout her four years of high school. Graduating with a 4.4 GPA, she was accepted to multiple public and private universities and has chosen to attend UC Riverside, where she will double major in Business Economics and Data Science.



**"COMMUNITY SERVICE IS MORE THAN
A REQUIREMENT I'VE FULFILLED -
IT'S A VALUE I'VE EMBRACED AND A
RESPONSIBILITY I'VE CHOSEN TO
CARRY FORWARD."**

She served as secretary of the **Key Club**, volunteered at the **Hope Esperanza food pantry**, wrote **letters of encouragement** to veterans and seniors, participated in campus beautification projects, and joined community beach cleanups—logging over 200 hours of service.



Congratulations, Daniela! The best is yet to come.



Mitch Stein, founder of The Pomona Bulletin, and the Kiwanis Club of Pomona are now working toward raising \$50,000 to launch a permanent scholarship trust. This fund will ensure that students like Daniela continue to be recognized and supported for years to come.

Help us make this dream a reality. Donate today at the link below and invest in Pomona's future leaders.



<https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/help-bring-back-scholarships-to-pomona-join-the-5050-scholarship-party>

Donate or Apply Today
at my Fundraiser for
Scholarship Foundation

Plant, Grow, Connect: The Best Community Gardens in Pomona

Growing Roots Garden

A space for food, education, and community! Established in 2020, Growing Roots Garden partners with local schools to provide fresh produce, workshops, and events for all ages. Volunteer with us and make a difference! 192 E Center St, Pomona, CA 91767

- 635 Lincoln Ave, Pomona, CA 91767



Sarvodaya Institute & Ananda Community Garden

Nurturing the earth, cultivating connection! Ananda Community Garden is more than just a garden—it's a space where people come together to grow fresh, organic food, share wisdom, and build a thriving community. Rooted in regenerative living and sustainability, we're working toward a healthier, more harmonious world. Come grow with us and be part of the change!

- 995 W. Holt Ave, Pomona, CA 91768



Gente Community Garden

More than just a garden—Gente Community Garden is a space for unity, sustainability, and empowerment. Managed by Gente Organizada, we nurture both plants and people, fostering a greener, stronger community. Join us in growing change!

- 1191 Buena Vista Ave, Pomona, CA 91766



Semillas Community Garden

Planting seeds, growing community! Semillas Community Garden is a space where neighbors come together to cultivate fresh produce, share knowledge, and build connections. Through sustainable gardening and community-driven initiatives, we're creating a greener, healthier Pomona—one seed at a time. Join us and grow with purpose!

- 810 S White Ave, Pomona, CA 91766



Center Street Community Garden

Grow, connect, and cultivate change at Center Street Community Garden! Since 2011, we've provided local residents with affordable garden plots, tools, and resources to grow fresh produce while building a stronger community. Join us and plant the seeds for a healthier future!

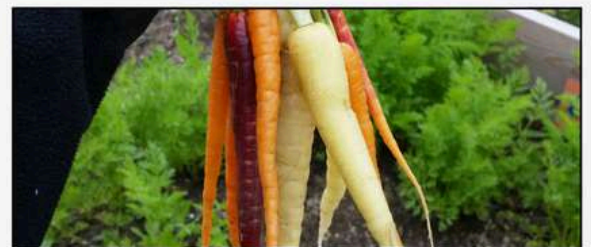
- 192 E Center St, Pomona, CA 91767



Tri-City Therapeutic Community Garden

Healing through nature! The Tri-City Therapeutic Community Garden offers a peaceful space for mental wellness, featuring community plots, a meditation labyrinth, and a fruit orchard. Cultivate well-being with us today!

- 2008 N. Garey Ave, Pomona, CA 91767



Making Friends in Pomona: A Local's Guide to Community, Connection, and a Little Laughter

In today's world, making friends as an adult can feel more awkward than a middle school dance. Whether it's political tension, digital overload, or just the fact that most of us are too tired after work to do anything besides collapse with takeout, it's no surprise that so many adults feel lonely. But here in Pomona, there are plenty of spaces where you can build friendships that go deeper than a double tap on Instagram. You just need to know where to look.

Because here's the truth: we're not meant to go through life alone. In a climate that often feels divisive, isolating, or downright overwhelming, having a few good people to laugh with, create with, or just take a walk with can make all the difference. Community doesn't solve every problem—but it can make them easier to face. And in Pomona, it's not hard to find that community. You just have to take the first (sometimes slightly nervous) step.

Below is your no-pressure, low-cost guide to meeting people, getting involved, and maybe even laughing your way into a new social circle.



Pedal Pomona

Casual, themed bike rides around Pomona. Friendly, fun, no Lycra required. Rides are designed to be inclusive and community-oriented, often stopping at local landmarks or small businesses. Perfect for all levels, Pedal Pomona events give you the chance to see the city from a new angle and meet great people along the way.



Community Garden Volunteering

Get your hands dirty, grow some veggies, and grow your community. Pomona's gardens are more than just places to plant—they're full of laughter, life, and shared purpose. If you want to meet people who care about food justice, health, and community collaboration, this is your spot.



Khaos Crafts Crochet Lab

Free crochet group at the Pomona Library. Come for the yarn, stay for the people. No experience required. Materials are provided, and the space is welcoming, creative, and full of relaxed conversation. It's as much about community as it is about crochet.



All Wheels Pomona

Skaters, cyclists, and rollerbladers unite! This intergenerational group hosts fun, inclusive ride-outs and events for folks on any kind of wheels—no experience needed.





*linktr.cc/kiwanispomona

Kiwanis Club of Pomona

A community-focused service club that's been supporting Pomona for over 100 years. From pancake breakfasts and youth scholarships to park clean-ups and civic engagement, Kiwanis members build friendships while making a real impact—one project at a time.



Scan the QR code to join.

Pomona Optimist Club

Focused on youth development and community optimism, this service club hosts events, fundraisers, and outreach programs that make a lasting impact. Expect uplifting energy, practical service, and a chance to bond with fellow doers who want to keep Pomona thriving.



Tips to Get Started

- **Start small and go once.** Don't overthink it. Just show up. The first visit is the hardest—and the most important. You're not committing your life, just giving something a try.
- **Go solo, but be open.** You don't need a buddy to join a group, but once you're there, make eye contact. Smile. Say hello. Ask someone how long they've been involved. Most people are more welcoming than we expect—they just need a little signal you're open too.
- **Let it be awkward.** Seriously, awkward is normal. Everyone feels weird the first time. You might forget someone's name (twice), show up in the wrong shoes, or get there early and stand around looking lost. That's okay. Embrace it. People appreciate real over polished.
- **Repeat yourself.** Relationships grow with repetition. Go back to the same group a couple times, even if it feels a little uncomfortable at first. Familiarity builds comfort—and friendships.
- **Talk to organizers.** The person running the show usually wants new people to feel welcome. Introduce yourself. Say you're new. Ask questions. They'll usually connect you with someone else, and suddenly you're not the new person anymore.
- **Be the inviter.** Once you're comfortable, invite someone else—a coworker, neighbor, or friend—to join next time. It helps grow the community and builds confidence for both of you.
- **Follow up.** If you connect with someone, follow up! Send a message, comment on their social post, or suggest meeting up again. Adults need nudges to maintain connection—be the person who reaches out.
- **Look for signals of welcome.** Notice if a group posts things like “all levels welcome” or “no experience necessary.” Those are your green lights. Pomona has lots of inclusive, come-as-you-are events.
- **Create your own rhythm.** Not every group will be your vibe—and that's okay. Try a few. Drop in and see what fits. Build a mix of weekly routines and occasional surprises to keep socializing fun, not forced.
- **Celebrate your courage.** Showing up takes guts. Trying something new is a big deal. Be proud of yourself for making the effort. Even if the first time isn't perfect, you've opened a door.

Final Thoughts from Mitch

Friendship in Pomona isn't something you have to search the ends of the internet for. It's growing in gardens, strolling through parks, stitching itself together in crochet circles, and jogging down our city streets. Sure, showing up the first time might feel a little awkward. But that's okay. Everyone's a beginner at some point, and Pomona has a knack for turning strangers into neighbors and neighbors into friends.

So take that first step. Or pedal. Or stitch. Your new people are out there—and they're saving you a seat.

Looking for more?

Follow @thepomonabulletin for community events, local spotlights, and new ways to plug in.

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The Mindful Advocate

Mindfulness with a Purpose



My parents both passed away in late 2023, due to challenges with dementia. It was a very difficult time for my siblings and me. No one tells you that your parents are often your first community, for better or for worse. Losing them both so close to each other threw us into being the elders in our immediate family. Thankfully, I had a wonderful community of faith surrounding me, and family in Arizona, Texas and Orange County, CA supporting me.

Simultaneously I was going through a divorce and ended up selling the home in which I raised my children in a neighboring city. Needless to say, it was not a good time for me. Having a few really good friends hold me tightly during this time was important for me. Not a day goes by that I don't think fondly of them. Everywhere to which I travel or move I seek out ways to become part of that community. Several friends came out of my work with the church. One friend in particular supported me as a gay man, a person of faith, but mostly as someone struggling with deep loss and grief. Mitch Stein became one of my best friends.

Mitch and his fiancée showed up to my mother's memorial service simply to be present with me. And he then was there to help me sell my home. Throughout those moments we all became so much closer. Mitch invited me to volunteer with the Pomona Lions, attend Second Saturdays on 2nd Street, connect with the Pomona Valley Pride, and meet so many really good people in Pomona. And then two pivotal opportunities presented themselves. One, to be a contributing writer for The Pomona Bulletin, launching me into the community in impactful ways, and two, I found a property I absolutely fell in love with and so I made an offer and closed at the end of April.



Hello Neighbor!

I still have close ties to my previous community of course, being that I still live so close, and yet I look forward to Pomona quickly becoming my home. My kids and I are excited to be woven into the beautiful tapestry that is Pomona, CA. I look forward to the strongly knit community along my street and the progressive dinners, waving to neighbors, the peacocks (hint hint to my neighborhood), the many city events, community biking adventures, visiting the urban farms, and becoming more involved in the civic life of the city.



I'm a father, a friend, a pastor, and an extrovert. I also love to meet new people, try new foods, and laugh over cocktails or beers. Did I mention that I'm single? I'm ready to take the next adventure and write the next chapter of my life, right here in Pomona, CA. I'm home.

Serving Together,
Brian S. Symonds, M.Div.



I continue healing from the losses in my life over these last couple of years, and now I am glad to be welcomed into this city. With its transplants and those who have long ancestral roots here, my prayer and my vision is that I too will grow roots so deep that I will become even sturdier and stronger because I will be among the Pomona Strong.



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