Local nonprofit food pantry battles student hunger

By KEVIN CLEMETSON | La Mesa Courier

Monica Muldoon has always set out to help people. She has been teaching special education classes at Highlands Elementary School in Spring Valley for over 20 years, and in that capacity she has also become a champion in the fight against food insecurity.

“I started by just giving snacks out, that kind of thing,” she said. At first, when a student showed signs of hunger, she would bring food from her own pantry to help. Over time, as the need grew, she

SEE MONIE & MO’S, Page 14

Consultant Teri Black was hired by the City of La Mesa to recruit a new chief of police. (tbcrecruiting.com)

Pickleball players cry foul over Collier Park improvement plan

By KENDRA SITTON | La Mesa Courier

Since lines for pickleball were first added to the Collier Park tennis court in 2013, Collier Park has consistently brought in players from across the region to play the game — a racquet sport that is quickly gaining nationwide popularity. A longstanding plan to improve Collier Park will bring new permanent courts to the city’s oldest public park, but not all pickleball players are on board with the plan.

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SEE POLICE CHIEF, Page 3

SEE PICKLEBALL, Page 4

A crowded Collier Park pickleball court on a Thursday night (Photo by Jeff Clemetson)
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Amid a slew of technical difficulties, Black apologized for the learning curve that conducting online town halls has created. "We’re all getting used to this at the same time. I would so much rather be seeing you all in person – staff and especially the community. We love getting to know each one of the communities we represent and regrettable we’re having to do it this way but at least we know we’re least making a genuine effort and so we’re grateful for that,” Black said.

Black explained that she did not mean for the town hall to mean them to find the new chief of police since Chief Walt Vasquez retired on Aug. 27. Black said after developing parameters for what they are looking for in candidates based on a survey and speaking to stakeholders, she will work with city staff to decide what process they want to take. She will then interview and decide on a new chief of police. Many community members wanted to know more about the process. Dages assured them she did not yet know herself. She did say they typically have job postings on their website as well as in traditional newspapers. Dages added that the process is still unknown, she plans to call for reforms. This meeting was smaller than many other town halls and was largely filled with dedicated and familiar voices. There were disagreements over whether it would be best to find someone in a lower rank who perhaps had experience outside of policing to lead because they would be less indoctrinated with the culture. Others felt having someone experienced would be helpful in earning them respect and they would not need to learn on the job. While many emphasized different virtues or experience levels they wanted in an executive, there was a large consensus that the new chief needed to tackle racial divisions head on.

Black did mention that the protests and riots this year have made it difficult to find people willing to take a public leadership role in many police departments. Still, she said her team is dedicated to finding someone who is a good fit for the community's needs. While the process is still unknown, she expects to start looking for candidates in late December and early January.

—Reach contributing editor Kendra Sitten at kendra@sd-news.com.
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Guest Editorial

Safely give time, money to charities this holiday – even in a pandemic

By BRENT WAKEFIELD

This holiday season, charitable giving and volunteering will look a lot different, thanks to COVID-19. The need for volunteers and donations is greater than ever as millions more people than usual struggle amid the pandemic’s economic disruption.

Unfortunately, many who usually volunteer around the holidays may be unsure about doing so this year, given the risk of contracting coronavirus and the fact that their usual volunteering traditions through school, houses of worship or other organizations might be disrupted. On top of that, scammers will emerge as well, as there is always an increase of nearly 50% in the number of older adults receiving home-delivered meals and other services since social distancing restrictions took effect. We need volunteers to meet this demand and to provide a critical link to more assistance for isolated seniors cut off from their family, friends and support systems.

No matter how you choose to do it – thank you, you can still make a difference with older adults living alone and so that each one sees all day. This makes it more important than ever that the people you serve.

If you are looking for new ways to volunteer this holiday season, here are some ideas:

Do your research! There are a variety of online resources that provide free access to comprehensive reports about nonprofit organizations. Start by looking at the California Attorney General’s Registry of Charitable Trusts (oag.ca.gov/charities), the Better Business Bureau’s Wise Giving Alliance (give.org), GuideStar (guidestar.org) or your local Charity Navigator (charitynavigator.org).

Ask questions. Real charities are able to tell you how they use their donations, what portion of your contribution will go directly to their services, and provide you with a 990 tax form. If they cannot give you this information, don’t give them your money.

Donate food and other items. It is only wise to give what charities ask for. Many charities, including shelters and food banks, have lists on their websites of the types of clothing items, food, household goods, and other things they need for the people they serve.

If you are looking for new ways to volunteer this holiday season, here are some ideas:

Find out how an organization you’re interested in works. What safety measures are in place? Volunteer from home. Many organizations need virtual volunteers to tutor children, give language lessons to adults and reach out to people in need, among many other tasks. This is a great way to give your time if you don’t think you can safely leave your home.

Check in on your neighbors. You don’t have to volunteer with a specific organization to give back to your community. Check in on your neighbors, especially if they’re elderly, disabled or immuno-compromised. Offer to run errands for them or pick up their groceries, or even just lend a listening ear if you know they are lonely.

Volunteer as a delivery driver. If you want to “check on your neighbors” up a notch, volunteer with an organization that delivers meals on Wheels San Diego County as a delivery driver. Meals on Wheels provides more than 10,000 meals a day, and their volunteers deliver meals: volunteers provide services like light home repairs and pet food delivery — and when the person they serve sees all of your generosity in need, they will be happy to know.

This year, I hope that San Diego with a giving spirit will consider giving time and money to help seniors in need, those who need our help more than ever amid the coronavirus pandemic. Meals on Wheels San Diego County has seen an increase of nearly 50% in the number of older adults receiving home-delivered meals and other services since social distancing restrictions took effect. We need volunteers to meet this demand and to provide a critical link to more assistance for isolated seniors cut off from their family, friends and support systems.

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Navajo Canyon members and guests were thriled to attend the November meeting at the Legacy Resort Hotel in Mission Valley. We learned elected officials and prepare for the upcoming election, our ladies were eager to get together and catch up on all the political frontline happenings.

To start, that this election cycle has been a roller coaster ride is clearly an understatement. Locally, Republicans have a lot of statewide victories to celebrate but in the overall picture, we are not where we want to be. Will the presidential election end up in the Supreme Court?

Voters have been made aware of the importance of our voting system and should be demanding transparency and tighter controls in future elections. As a country, we will even require voters to present identification. They do in Canada with no terrible repercussions, so why not in the United States? Is there a real concern for voter fraud? Once we are certain, we will demand transparency and tighter controls in future elections. Perhaps we are due for a system and we should be demanding transparency and tighter controls in future elections. An inspiration for us all.

President Trump led the team that has given us the COVID-19 vaccine. We are so fortunate that this research and development was done in record time and now the delivery of the effective vaccine is right around the corner.

We look forward to Governor Newsom lifting the restrictions and allowing our state's economy to recover and our students return to school. Our local entrepreneurs are struggling and many have been financially devastated past the point of recovery. During this holiday season, let's support our San Diego businesses and help them launch into a profitable and successful 2021.

Navajo Canyon’s next monthly meeting will be Tuesday Jan. 12. The logistics will be determined by San Diego County’s Risk Status Tier at that time. If necessary, we will have a ZOOM meeting but our first choice is to return the Legacy Resort Hotel in Mission Valley for a lunch meeting. Please look for updates and details on rwcNavajoCanyon.org and Facebook at Republican Women of California–Navajo Canyon.

We are proud that Navajo’s membership is growing and we know 2021 will be a year filled with exciting speakers and advancing ways to build our party and communicate our conservative values. We are still WOMEN FOR TRUMP!
Serving East County on the Board of Supervisors for nearly three decades has been one of the greatest honors of my life. Thank you for standing with me as we took on challenges and fought the good fight to do what’s right for the Second District and our entire region.

Thank you for your letters, emails, phone calls, Facebook messages, Twitter comments and for all the times we crossed paths – at a meeting, at a community coffee, in an aisle at the grocery store – and you asked a question or raised a concern.

Those moments kept me grounded, along with the strength and guidance from God. They reminded me why I did this job and why I kept at it for 28 years, longer than any other elected official in San Diego County government history.

Community service has been my calling, going back to my history. Bancroft Elementary School in Spring Valley, I served 17 years on the Jamul-Dulzura Union School District board.

When you add it all up, I’ve spent a total of 45 years in elective office. Because of term limits, I will complete my seventh and final term on the Board of Supervisors in January.

I’m moving on from a lifetime in office and returning to work on our ranch in Deerhorn Valley. Although I would prefer a horse, working the land on a tractor will do just fine. I’m deeply grateful to the folks of East County. I’m proud of what we have accomplished together, and on so many fronts – wildfire safety, growing the economy, protecting the environment and all those libraries and ballfields we built, along with many other improvements.

When I was first sworn as Supervisor in 1993, I promised to challenge the status quo and shake things up. I wanted a county government that put people first — and I was willing to fight for it. Thank you for joining me in the fight.

—Dianne Jacob is the now former representative of District 2 on the San Diego County Board of Supervisors.

San Diego Blood Bank was one of the first blood banks in the country to begin collecting COVID-19 convalescent plasma. In addition to supplying local hospitals, San Diego Blood Bank has supported surge centers and other blood banks across the country. Plasma donations from those who have recovered from COVID-19 are needed to help others who are currently fighting the virus. This is because their plasma has developed antibodies against a virus.

Anyone previously diagnosed with COVID-19 can sign up at sandiegobloodbank.org/donateplasma.

To support the efforts, all blood donations are being tested for antibodies as part of SBB’s standard testing panel in order to qualify donations for COVID-19 convalescent plasma. If a donation tests positive, the plasma in the donated blood may be used to help hospital patients fighting COVID-19.

Historically, convalescent plasma (CCP) has been successfully used to treat SARS, MERS and the Spanish flu, so there is evidence that it may help people suffering from certain infectious diseases like COVID-19.

“We need anyone who has recovered from COVID-19 to contact us to see if they are eligible to donate their plasma,” said David Wells, CEO of San Diego Blood Bank. “The need has already increased over the last couple of weeks and we anticipate even more requests from hospitals as we head into the new year.”

Appointments are required to donate blood and convalescent plasma. To see if you qualify, please visit sandiegobloodbank.org or call 619-400-8251.

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COVID-19 and flu season: How seniors can stay healthy

By JYOTU SANDHA, MD

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) predicts that both the novel coronavirus and flu viruses will spread significantly this fall and winter, which could overwhelm health care facilities. Seniors are already at higher risk of serious health problems from COVID-19, and this year’s flu season will likely compound those worries for older adults and those who care for them.

However, if you keep these four simple tips in mind, you and your loved ones have a better chance of staying healthy and keeping your friends and neighbors safe as well.

Get a flu shot. According to the CDC, getting a flu shot lowers your risk of serious illness, even if you do pick up one of the many strains of flu that will likely spread this fall and winter. During 2018-2019, the CDC reports flu vaccination prevented an estimated 4.4 million influenza illnesses, 2.3 million influenza-associated medical visits, 58,000 influenza-associated hospitalizations, and 3,500 influenza-associated deaths. Although it’s difficult to appreciate on an individual level, this significantly alleviated the strain from the medical community as a whole and benefited public health overall.

Flu vaccines have been shown to reduce the risk of flu infection, hospitalization, and death for both you and those around you—and this year they will save hospital resources for patients with COVID-19. If you are caring for an aging loved one, it’s particularly important that both of you get one.

As we know, heart disease is prevalent and the #1 cause of death in America. A meta-analysis study from 2013 found that flu vaccination improved cardiac outcomes in high-risk patients.

Keep taking COVID-19 precautions. The flu shot does not protect anyone from COVID-19. However, many of the same COVID-19 precautions we have all grown accustomed to over the past nine months (washing your hands, keeping at least six feet apart from people outside your household, wearing masks in public places, and not touching your eyes, nose, or mouth), are also pretty good at preventing the spread of flu viruses. Make sure both you and anyone you are caring for follow all these precautions. Although we are hoping for a milder flu season due to the precautions we are taking with COVID-19, we still strongly encourage people to get their flu vaccines since the outcome of dealing with both infections at once can be devastating.

Time your flu shot properly. In a recent interview, Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases and head of the U.S. efforts to stop the coronavirus, recommended getting your flu shot this year “toward the middle and end of October” — in other words, get it done now, better late than not at all. This way, it won’t wear off in February or early March while we’re still in flu season.

Encourage everyone in your life to get a flu shot, no matter how old they are. It’s not just seniors who are at risk during flu season — babies and young children are particularly vulnerable as well. In fact, patients of all ages can suffer serious complications from the flu, and even die. Flu shots protect pregnant women, are an important preventive tool for people with chronic health conditions such as heart disease and diabetes, and can be lifesaving for children. Children are also at risk of severe illness as well and can spread disease to others. The CDC recommends everyone six months of age and older get vaccinated.

Despite all these benefits, only about half of Americans get an annual flu vaccine. Meanwhile, flu viruses continue to cause millions of illnesses, hundreds of thousands of hospitalizations, and tens of thousands of deaths. Unless we are careful, hospitals may become overwhelmed by both COVID-19 and flu patients this fall and winter.

But, per the CDC, the solution is simple: “Many more people could be protected from the flu if more people got vaccinated.” The more people get vaccinated against the flu, the fewer people will get seriously ill — and that’s something we can all work toward together as we continue to battle the coronavirus pandemic into the new year.

Jyotu Sandha, MD, is a family medicine and sports medicine doctor with Sharp Rees-Stealy Medical Group, a multi-specialty medical group with 19 locations offering services such as primary and specialty care, laboratory, physical therapy, radiology, pharmacy and urgent care. Learn more at sharp.com/ser. Simona Valancute is the president and CEO of San Diego Oasis, an award-winning nonprofit organization serving people age 50 and better, who pursue healthy aging through lifelong learning, active lifestyles, and community service. Learn more at sandiegooasis.org.
Mission Trails Park users share their stories

By JENNIFER MORRISSEY

Recently, the Mission Trails Regional Park (MTRP) Foundation highlighted three park users to help illustrate how much the park means to the San Diego community. As one of the park’s neighbors, you know well how popular the park is and has become, especially during the pandemic.

Protecting and maintaining 8,000 acres as well as providing educational and other resources to Mission Trails’ estimated 2.2 million annual visitors is an immense responsibility. We at the MTRP Foundation support the park and its staff in this endeavor by raising funds for trail maintenance, habitat restoration, education programs and more. We all need the park, and now, we need you.

December is our most important fundraising month and it’s also when the majority of us make our charitable gifts. This year, please make a gift to support Mission Trails and take advantage of the special charitable giving incentives in the 2020 CARES Act. Learn more about these incentives, giving to Mission Trails, and make a donation at mtrp.org/giving.

Now, meet some of our regular park users, people like you who love MTRP.

THE RUNNER

On runner Jenny Nakamura’s first trip to San Diego to visit her boyfriend and now husband Sean, he took her to Lake Murray and Cowles Mountain.

“Both places are special for us. Lake Murray is one of my favorite runs. I love getting to the turn-around and seeing the bullseye at the end,” she said.

Nakamura runs 20-30 miles a week and lives near Mission Trails.

“It’s really cool to have trails in the city. I love that there is so much variety, from paved paths to trails with hills, single track, and even the occasional water crossing depending on the time of year.”

On Instagram at @runnylegs, Nakamura shares photos of her runs at locations near and far, including at MTRP. Remarking on a run earlier this year, she shared, “I remember doing a sunset run at Lake Murray the Thursday before everything locked down in March. It’s such a beautiful place to see the sun-set.” We concur.

Liz Dorski enjoys bird watching at Mission Trails. (Courtesy photo)

Mountain bike enthusiast Ramon Galindo

Crusaders Soccer Club looks ahead to 2021

By JAY WILSON

Beginning the middle of October, the COVID-19-delayed season for the Crusaders Soccer Club’s recreational season began. Over 50 teams of boys and girls have enjoyed being with friends they hadn’t seen in six months, learned new soccer skills and had fun.

The best memory from the season was hearing about an 8-year-old boy yell to his mother as he raced across the soccer field on the first day of practice with a huge smile on his face.”Hey mom, I saw Jason. He is not on my team this year, but he waved at me and said he would wave at me next week at practice.” The expression on his face, and his comment was worth everything. You can see that same smile on virtually every player each week they come to practice and the Saturday scrimmages between the players on their team.

Our competitive teams have been practicing diligently since the middle of June and are anxiously waiting to play games for which they may have to wait until 2021 to be played.

Our professional competitive and volunteer recreational coaches have all risen to the challenges of teaching soccer skills to players with ever changing COVID-19 protocols. There were no off-the-shelf guidelines for coaching players who initially had to remain socially distanced from one another and still concentrate on soccer.

Tryouts of our competitive teams are set to begin in January 2021. The dates and times will be announced on our website, crusaderssoccer.org.

Beginning Dec. 15, registration for our 2021 recreational spring season for boys and girls born between 2007 and 2017 will commence. Visit the Crusaders Soccer website at crusaderssoccer.org for more information and registration. The eight-week season is currently scheduled for March and April. Teams will play on Sundays.

The Crusaders Soccer Club would like to thank Dan and Mary Buxton, the owners of the Play It Again Sports in La Mesa for donating the large portable soccer goals now being used on the lower Lewis field for the Saturday scrimmages.

The Crusaders Soccer Club’s Board of Directors sincerely thank the players, parents, coaches, and grandparents for helping make 2020 a successful year despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 virus. As 2020 comes to an end, we wish everyone a happy and safe holiday!

Join us on and off the soccer field in 2021 as we celebrate 50 years of serving San Diego’s East County.

—Jay Wilson writes on behalf of Crusaders Soccer Club.
**Featured artist: Rustin Holec**

A native of San Diego, Rustin Holec enjoys the mild desert climate of Southern California. He can often be found wandering the local mountains and coastline in search of inspiration for his art. He began working in oils in the early 2000s with the hope of finding a diversion from his everyday work life.

Before he began painting he dabbled in black-and-white photography. He enjoyed manipulating a photograph to create a mood or statement.

After taking classes at Grossmont College and private instruction by Jack Jordan, a well-recognized and respected artist, Rustin began oil painting. He immediately found a powerful means of expression and a way to relax and meditate.

Currently Rustin paints in oils and occasionally acrylics. He subject matter varies with each fresh canvas as he enjoys the serenity in landscapes, the mood and flow of seascapes, expressions in portraits and works to combine facets of each into a story or idea.

Rustin states, “Regardless of the subject, painting is not merely copying or a series of random brush strokes. It is a means of expression through thoughtful creation, fueled by imagination, passion, desire and mood. It is a portal through which to escape, explore, and find oneself. For the artist, it is his or her legacy through which current and future explorers are invited to visit and dream.”

Rustin's art can be viewed online at foothillsartassociation.com.

—Bonnie Owen is editor of Footnotes, the monthly newsletter of the Foothills Art Association.
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MISSION HILLS | $1,671,000
THE NELSON LARSON HOUSE

PT. LOMA | $1,300,000
THE ALICE CLARK HOUSE

MISSION BAY | $1,200,000

MT. HELIX | $1,150,000

MT. HELIX | $955,000

MT. HELIX | $950,000

MT. HELIX | $950,000

MT. HELIX | $845,000

MT. HELIX | $836,000

WINDSOR HILLS | $803,000

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Monie & Mo’s Food Pantry: A Community Effort

FEATURE

It was two years ago, she was explaining what she did and said “Oh my gosh, this is amazing, I want in, but we need to do more. We can do so much more,” Gildersleeve said.

Together, the two women formed the nonprofit entity called Monie & Mo’s Food Pantry, which distributes food bags to needy families at six schools in the La Mesa-Spring Valley School District. Once a month, Monica & Mo’s distributes food bags to needy families. Dealing with some generous donations for this year’s Thanksgiving illustration the importance of school social workers.

“Deciding which families got turkeys and which got gift cards was a matter of knowing which families had ovens at home and which were homeless. “So that’s where the counselor comes in, because they know these families,” Muldoon continued. “We asked her if we should try and get 15 more turkeys and she said ‘No, I know the families that have the resources to cook a turkey and I know the families that could use a gift card. So it’s really important to have that connection with the counselors at the schools.”

In addition to picking up food bags for distribution, the schools’ social workers play a key role in gathering information about each family’s needs. Dealing with some generous donations for this year’s Thanksgiving illustration the importance of school social workers in Monie & Mo’s model.

“We partnered with Valley Farms and they gave us 15 turkeys for Thanksgiving. There was not enough for all the families at Highlunds, but then we were gifted gift cards from Luna Grill so we were able to give gift cards to the other families,” Muldoon said.

In addition to school counselors and partnerships with local businesses like Valley Farms and Breaking Bread, which donates bread and money to the food pantry, Monie & Mo’s has also been fortunate to have help from other local groups like Feeding the Flock Ministry and people like Kristen Timmons, who runs a food pantry on 14th Street and Muldoon’s daughter Morgan Davis who helped with setting up the nonprofit, building the website monieandmos.com and with networking. The help is needed and appreciated because of the exponential growth Monie & Mo’s has seen since the COVID pandemic began.

Before the pandemic, food distributions were only scheduled for the beginning of school breaks to tie over families that suddenly lose the help for two weeks at a time. The need for food exploded. “A lot of these families really rely on the school for breakfast and lunch every day,” Gildersleeve said. “If you think about it, per kid that’s 10 meals per week and we’re leaving them out for two weeks times however many kids are in their family.”

By March of this year, even before the COVID crisis fully took hold, Monie & Mo’s made the switch to monthly distributions because the need was already growing. With the pandemic, the need for food exploded. “Last year at this time we were excited to serve 16 bags of food,” Gildersleeve said. “And this last time we served 120 families, so that’s how quickly we grew.”

In March, Monie & Mo’s served two schools. In April, two more joined the pantry program. In October, four more joined. Currently, Monie & Mo’s serves Highlands, Bancroft, Avondale, La Mesa Dale, Rolando and Northmont elementary schools.

“I wouldn’t be surprised if by next year we have all 15 schools in La Mesa-Spring Valley School District,” Muldoon said.

That kind of growth has brought some changes to how the pantry operates, like insisting that all donated food be non-perishable.

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25 Years in Business!!!
Monnie & Mo’s Food Pantry is flush with donations because people are “feeling deep pockets and they want to share the holiday spirit,” Gildersleeve said. But what about after the holidays or after the COVID vaccine is distributed and the pandemic begins to fade from donors’ consciousness? “We have faith. We always get what we need,” Muldoon said. Somehow, finished Gildersleeve. “Our motto is ‘We haven’t failed yet, so just keep on truckin’. So we’ll just keep going and keep the faith.” For more information about Monnie & Mo’s Food Pantry, or to make a donation, visit monieandmos.com.

—Reach editor Jeff Clemetson at jeff@sdcnews.com.

Boxes and bags of food on pickup day at Highlands Elementary (Courtesy photo)

One thing that hasn’t changed for Monnie & Mo’s is a commitment to the entire community, not just the school community.

“Part of our mission is that it doesn’t have to only be the schools that we’re giving to, if we hear of somebody that is in need that we can help, we’re going to start helping,” Muldoon said. Still, the focus of the food pantry will be mostly on schools and Gildersleeve sees a future where they partner with more school districts to help seed their own self-sufficient food pantry programs, as well as start looking for grant money to give a boost to donations beyond local businesses and residents.

“We are also trying to have every school have a little Mini & Mo’s pantry at every school, where if a family comes in to them and says, ‘Oh my gosh, my husband just lost his job, we don’t have any food. Can you help?’ they would be able to get stuff to them immediately,” Muldoon said.

Right now, Monnie & Mo’s Food Pantry is flush with donations because people are “feeling deep pockets and they want to share the holiday spirit,” Gildersleeve said. But what about after the holidays or after the COVID vaccine is distributed and the pandemic begins to fade from donors’ consciousness? “We have faith. We always get what we need,” Muldoon said. Somehow, finished Gildersleeve. “Our motto is ‘We haven’t failed yet, so just keep on truckin’. So we’ll just keep going and keep the faith.” For more information about Monnie & Mo’s Food Pantry, or to make a donation, visit monieandmos.com.

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THE BIRD WATCHER
Liz Dorski has been coming to Mission Trails since 1983.

“I remember walking the old potholed Junipero Serra road from what is now the Visitor Center to the dam. We had to climb across a large water/sewer pipe to get over the river and hike through the grasslands area. Now, with the establishment of the regional park status, the space is professionally and lovingly cared for and protected, which is invaluable, not only for people, but for nature.”

Dorski is an avid birder and enjoys birdwatching at MTRP.

“The best time to spot birds is either morning or dusk, but really any time of day will be fruitful if you are observant. So much of birding is listening, and being quiet and still. A good place to birdwatch in MTRP is near any body of water with lots of trees. The water draws birds for a drink, food, and bathing, while the trees provide safety and cover from predators.”

In addition to volunteering at MTRP, Dorski has more recently been one of the newsletter contributors, so she knows the park, its staff and volunteers well.

“Not a day goes by that I don’t recognize how fortunate I am to have a home, good health, social support, and resources, and I’m enormously grateful to be able to donate my time and money to MTRP to help keep it going for years to come. It’s not only our backyard, it’s home to many critters and plants who add to the park’s beauty, and they deserve our respect.”

THE MOUNTAIN BIKER
When Ramon Galindo isn’t working as a reporter at NRK 7, you’ll probably find him at Mission Trails where he’s been a frequent visitor for the past six years. In his job, he’s done stories about Mission Trails, including about hiking safety and our rattlesnakes.

In pre-Covid times, Galindo also volunteered at the MTRP Visitor Center.

“I was looking for volunteer opportunities and after completing the 5-Peak Challenge, it occurred to me that volunteering at MTRP would be a great opportunity to share my knowledge of the park’s trails while helping out the place where I love to spend my free time. When I interact with the public at the Visitor Center, I can discuss with them the park’s diverse plant life, fascinating geology, and the rich history of the Kumeyaay.”

In addition to hiking the trails and up Mission Trails’ five peaks, Galindo likes to mountain bike, especially on the trails near East Fortuna Staging Area.

“It’s a good workout and there are a variety of trails so you can bring friends of all skill levels,” he said. “I have been going to the park during Covid, but usually early in the morning and on the weekends to avoid possible crowds. It’s still important to enjoy nature for physical and emotional health.”

Make a donation to support Mission Trails at mtrp.org. Donors of $100 or more will receive our new thank-you gift, an MTRP license plate frame! You can help the park today.

—Jennifer Morrissey is executive director of the Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation.

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Chamber holiday drives a success despite pandemic

La Mesa Chamber of Commerce (LMCC) members, friends and the community come together every year to celebrate the Chamber’s strong belief in giving by collecting and distributing toys and items to military families living in La Mesa military housing.

Each year, LMCC has assisted these children and their families through a partnership with Lincoln Military Housing, the organization that manages military housing throughout the nation. Usually, LMCC hosts a huge party at BJ’s Restaurant and Brewhouse, complete with food and beverages, as a way to collect the toys. This year due to the pandemic, LMCC had to change its strategy and hold a drive-thru toy gathering activity at Grossmont Center.

In addition to the drive-thru event, LMCC partnered with Teresa McClatchy, the manager of Barnes & Noble in Grossmont Center, who usually hosts an annual book drive for these families, as well. With the current restrictions, that activity also had to be shelved. McClatchy and her team were not deterred by the pandemic and held their own in-house book drive, gathering books and toys for the children. With the help of the Barnes & Noble team members, LMCC was able to collect over 402 toys and items this year.

“We want to thank all of those that played a part in assisting the children this year and making a difference in the lives of our La Mesa military families,” said LMCC president May England in a press statement.

LMCC’s annual senior project was also an overwhelming success. People drove from throughout the region to donate items for gift baskets and bags that were delivered to the 21 La Mesa home-bound seniors this year.

Each year, LMCC works with La Mesa Police Department Retired Senior Volunteer Patrol to distribute the gifts. This year due to the pandemic, the RSVP’s have not been able to work, so LMCC enlisted the help of others from the Police Department to deliver the items.

Each year the La Mesa Chamber allocates funds to assist these seniors and were joined by the following financial partners who donated cash and gift cards: AMR, Kyle Nyswonger of Carl Burger Dodge Chrysler Jeep RAM World, Darsi Bakker of PenChecks, Inc. and Michelle Huey of Pete’s Place. In addition to these cash donations and gift cards, LMCC collected canned food, calendars, toiletries, notepads, soaps, shampoos, stationery, clothing, socks, tissues, blankets and other articles for a grand total of 3,298 items.

The Chamber receives all of the items and wraps them in gift baskets and bags that are delivered to each senior. EDCO and Sycuan donated the bags that made the distribution possible.

In addition to these needed items, LMCC received beautiful handmade Christmas stockings from the Pioneers, a volunteer network of AT&T. These folks worked tirelessly throughout the year making those handmade Christmas stockings, then stuffed them with lots of items such as masks, shampoo, gloves, socks, wafers, lip balm, and more. Adorable stuffed animals were attached to each stocking, as an added bonus.

See Chamber Drives, Page 22

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La Mesa Chamber of Commerce volunteers Dennis England, Mary England, Maggie Eggars, Al Russell and Steve Browne helped pack baskets for home-bound seniors. (Photos by Sandra Small)
Reading the 1930s Foothill Echoes, the Grossmont High School student newspaper, enables us to share the experiences of Foothiller students and staff during the Great Depression, revealing timeless issues as well as issues unique to the 1930s.

The Oct. 14, 1930 newspaper article written by Thelma Engstrom, Class of 1931, is titled “No Funds for Annual Say Ex Committee.” The cost of the yearbook in past years was $1.25, but the Associated Student Body had been subsidizing the yearbook and could no longer do that since the cost of the yearbooks was $2.50 to $3.

“If we are to have an annual we can be proud of, we should be willing to pay the entire cost,” read a passage in the article. Eventually the senior class produced the 1931 yearbook through fundraising. That same month, Helen Brunson, Class of 1931, shares her criticism of “That Get By Attitude.”

“How can we, for instance, reconcile the action of a girl who after uniform check, deliberately tucks her middy into her skirt, with the third statement in our Sportsmanship code: ‘A true Grossmont Sportsman will cooperate willingly in every undertaking?’ How can a boy who cheats and gets by with it, claim to be a Grossmont Sportsman, who according to our code, is true to himself and others,” she wrote.

The April 14, 1931 article “ASB Play to Depict Modern Family Life” describes the “Friday Performance of That Ferguson Family as Good Entertainment.”

“If your neighbors put a ‘THAT’ in front of your family name, you would realize that they had your family’s number. It is a play about a realistic American family — who live, love, and react so like one’s own next door neighbor that no audience can fail to share the interests, irritations, trials, and triumphs.”

An iconic Grossmont symbol appeared in 1931, as documented by the April 28, 1931 Foothill Echoes article “Hi-Y Places Big G on Northern Slopes.”

“The honor for the erection of the clear-cut symbol of Grossmont spirit, which rests on the slope directly back of the lake in the form of a giant G, goes to the local Hi-Y boys….Work began by clearing all plant growth, the outline was then filled in with rocks and lastly whitewashed. The letter adds to the appearance of the school; makes onlookers think that Grossmont is awake. Then, too, the school has the honor of being the only high school in the county with such an appropriate symbol.”

Since then, there has been a G representing Foothiller pride on a nearby hill, on the hill in front of the original school, and on Cowles Mountain.

The May 9, 1932 Foothill Echoes includes a Humor section. Rosaleen Remick’s article “Follow Your Conscience,” urges students to behave better.

“We all have a conscience! Let’s use it. We know we shouldn’t throw chalk when the teacher’s out; we know we shouldn’t gossip about people; we know we shouldn’t talk about our teachers; we know we shouldn’t leave term papers, notebooks, book reports, and projects to the last minute…. But we do these things. What is our conscience good for? What a wonderful place this world would be if we only listened to the little voice inside of us that says, ‘Don’t do that.'”

On the same page are a series of jokes, including this one: “Lindens: Why do you call your alarm clock Macbeth? Gordon: ‘Macbeth doth murder sleep.’”

The April 12, 1935 Foothill Echoes in the article “Grossmont Captures Metro Track Crown” documents the achievements of the teams.

“In two extremely spectacular and exciting division fights, Grossmont managed to win the track crown in both A and C divisions of the Metropolitan League.”

Coached by now legendary Jack Mashin, the depth of the A team was shown by “the fact that Grossmont managed to win the track crown in both A and C divisions of the Metropolitan League.”

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May 13, 1932 at Grossmont Union High: (l to r) Nadine Brown, Mary-Pease Romig, Lois Masterson, Janet Miller (Courtesy family of Lovala Simm Edwards, Class of 1932)
Grossmont
CONTINUED FROM Page 18
scored only one first place — indicative of strong teamwork rather than individual starring.

That lone first place was a dramatic finish when “the fi-
nal man of the Grossmont relay team crossed the line inch-
by inch in front of his opponent.”

Sept. 15, 1935’s article “Halls Congested as GUHS’s enrollment exceeds 710” states: “Hall congestion problems, leading to the re-routing of incoming tra-
ffic through the auditorium and the east court, has been the most marked result of the largest enrollment ever seen at Grossmont High School... Students are asked to coop-
erate in every possible way in the matter of keeping traffic moving in the halls, and in us-
ing the designated entries and exits and the correct stairways between classrooms, as a step 
toward solving the congestion problem, and protecting themselves.” From 1935-1937, WPA funded projects would help reduce traffic congestion. WPA funded projects would help reduce traffic congestion.

In June 2020, the Foundation awarded $6,650 in senior scholarships; our goal is to dramatically increase that amount in the future.

To order your tile, visit donationbricks.com/ghs-100yearsscholarships. Or write a check payable to GHS Educational Foundation and mail to Connie and Lynn Baer, 5990 Avenorra Dr., La Mesa, CA 91942.

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— Connie and Lynn Baer — write on behalf of the Grossmont High School Museum.

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SANTA CLAUS ARRIVES AT HELIX IN STYLE.

Some Helix students had a surprise visitor leading up to Winter Break! Santa and Mrs. Claus took time out of their busy schedules to visit the Helix Super Scotties, who are Helix students with moderate to severe physical and intellectual disabilities. The Clauses arrived in their red sleigh piloted by Betsy Burgreen, handed out gifts to the students and spent some time taking photos to commemorate the occasion.

“In a time where things are so tough, it was so heartwarming to see the looks on the faces of the Super Scotties as Santa Claus came rolling across the quad perched on the back of a convert-
able red mustang,” said Gabe Fleming, Helix Special Educator. “It was inspiring to watch as he passed out per-
sonalized gifts and made jokes with all of the students. This is a Christmas experience that they will never forget.”

The experience was enjoyed by more than just the students.

“I had more fun than the kids did today. It was the first time I played Santa since college at the ladies’ dorm,” said John Geary, Helix teacher. “I was much more quali-
fied in 2020 because I watched five YouTube ‘How to be a Santa Claus’ training videos.”

“Today’s visit from Santa brought so much joy to the students. It’s been a crazy year, so this Christmas magic was that much more special for everyone,” expressed Helix alum-

muses and current Special Education instructional aide, Megan Robertson. “Kim (Fleming, Helix 

Special Educator) goes above and beyond to make every experience wonderful as possi-

ble for her students and this was just another example of her gener-
osity and dedication to her students.”

Kim Fleming summed up the day.

“I am so thankful that Helix is filled with such an incredibly sup-
portive and generous staff. I couldn’t have pulled this off without all of their help,” she said. “From the donation of a Santa suit, to dressing up as Santa, professional photos, lending us a sweet sleigh, to tons of donations for gifts, this event was so special because there were so many wonderful people at Helix who pitched in to make it happen! I cannot express the sheer joy that was felt not only by the Super Scotties, but by all of us staff members who got to be part of this magical day.”

Helix will be on Winter Break beginning Dec. 19 and classes will resume on Jan 6. Happy Holidays to the entire community from Helix Charter High School!”


E D U C A T I O N

DEc. 18, 2020 – Jan. 28, 2021
La Mesa Courier

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Look Who’s Open For Business!

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Mexican food
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619-467-7999

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The Weevil Burger

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& Casual Dining

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Order your Holiday Dinner at MarieCallenders.com

1. Turkey Breast Feast $119.99
Serves 4-6
Roasted turkey breast with all the Feast trimmings.

2. Ham Feast $134.99
Serves 4-6
Boner spiral cut quarter ham topped with chipotle-pineapple glaze topping with all the Feast trimmings.

3. The Ultimate Whole Turkey Feast $144.99
Serves 6-8
Whole roasted turkey with all the Feast trimmings.

4. Ham and Turkey Breast Feast $164.99
Serves 6-8
Roasted turkey breast, boner spiral cut quarter ham with chipotle-pineapple glaze topping and all the Feast trimmings.

5. The Ultimate Whole Turkey & Ham Feast $174.99
Serves 6-8
Whole roasted turkey, boner spiral cut quarter ham with chipotle-pineapple glaze topping and all the Feast trimmings.

A LA CARTE
Bone-In Spiral Cut Quarter Ham $49.99
Over-Roasted Turkey Breast $46.99
Whole Roasted Turkey $55.99

Feast trimmings include:
Apple-Tage Stuffing
Browns Gravy
Creamy Mashed Potatoes
Fresh Roasted Vegetables
Turkey Gravy
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Fresh Baked Cornbread
Whole Pumpkin or Apple Pie

Centifonti’s
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Thank you La Mesa for your love & support!

10% OFF YOUR ORDER WITH THIS COUPON

Offer cannot be combined with any other discounts. Expires 12/31/20

We Are Open For Take Out & Delivery

BUY ANY ENTREE OF YOUR CHOICE & GET THE SECOND ENTREE OF EQUAL OR LESSER PRICE FREE WITH PURCHASE OF TWO DRINKS

NOTE: With any other special. Up to $10 value. MUST PRESENT COUPON. Expires 1-28-21

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**PEPPERMINT BARK**

By JULIE WHITE

Sweet layers of dark chocolate and white chocolate covered in crushed candy canes make this an easy and delicious holiday treat.

I wish you all a Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!

**INGREDIENTS:**

- 12 ounce bag of dark chocolate chips
- 16 ounce bag of white chocolate chips
- 1/4 teaspoon of peppermint extract (optional)
- 8 crushed candy canes

**DIRECTIONS:**

Spread out a piece of parchment paper on a cookie or baking sheet.

Place the dark chocolate in a bowl and microwave in 30 second increments until melted. Stir well and spread on the parchment paper.

Refrigerate for 20 minutes.

In a clean bowl, melt the white chocolate the same as you did the dark chocolate. Stir in the extract. Spread on cooled dark chocolate.

Sprinkle the crushed peppermints on top and refrigerate for 30 minutes.

When hardened, you can break into chunks and enjoy!

“Maybe Christmas, he thought, doesn’t come from a store… Maybe Christmas, perhaps, means a whole lot more.” —Dr. Seuss

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**Maya’s Cookies opens Grantville storefront**

Is it possible to have a tasty, ooey-gooey cookie that is vegan? Yes, and egg and butter-free never tasted better than Maya’s cookies. Maya Madsen, owner and baker, has taken her passion for cooking, healthy eating and sweet tooth to a new level that has made her the country’s top Black-owned vegan bakery.

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**Maya’s Cookies offers monthly cookie boxes sent to customers’ homes.**

Being a personal trainer for 30 years, Madsen always ate healthy and allowed herself a cheat day. On that day she made cookies.

Everyone needs a cheat day. As a vegan she wanted to create excellent vegan cookies using the best quality of ingredients.

Over the past few years, people would pass by her bakery and peek in the windows and ask to buy her cookies.

“I was only licensed to sell online, so I had to turn people away,” Madsen said. “I always want to do what my customers want, so I decided to get all the city permits to sell directly from our bakery.”

She has now opened her bakery for retail sales to the public. Her storefront is off the beaten path, but not too hard to find — across the street from the post office in Grantville. Just look for the pink storefront at 4760 Mission Gorge Place Suite G.

Madsen also sells her cookies at the Little Italy Farmers Market on Saturdays and the Hillcrest Farmers Market on Sundays.

Madsen prides herself on using the highest quality ingredients in her cookies. She offers a variety of cookies and is constantly rotating them in and out. Some popular ones are her Classic Chocolate Chip, Birthday Cake, Snickerdoodle, White Chocolate Macadamia, Chocolate Chip S’mores and Marble Fudge.

Gluten sensitive patrons, you’re in luck. Madsen has expanded her business to include gluten-free cookies. The bakery is not “celiac safe” as they cook with regular flour and gluten-free flour in the same facility. But, depending on your level of sensitivity, you can enjoy two or three flavors that she has on hand at a time. It took her a few years to add this to her menu since she had to get her recipe perfected. She has twelve flavors in her repertoire. For the holidays Madsen features gingerbread cookies. To check specific ingredients, look on her website where she lists every cookie detail.

This holiday season, Maya’s Cookies has four different deluxe holiday tins with unique flavors: Chocolate Peppermint S’mores, Sparkle Sugar Cookies, Gingerbread and White Chocolate Cranberry.

You can order cookies online or to be shipped to anyone on your gift-giving list or pass by the bakery and pick up an assortment. The proceeds from the sales of the holiday tins will go to support two charities near and dear to her heart, helping young women of color through high school and college and an animal refuge in Santee.

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**Maya’s Cookies opens Grantville storefront**

Maya’s Cookies offers monthly cookie boxes sent to customers’ homes.
“The Book on Pie: Everything You Need to Know to Bake Perfect Pies” by Erin Jeanne McDowell. Many people are intimidated by pies, but the expression “easy as pie” exists for a reason, and this book is a great choice for newbies and experienced bakers alike. Author Erin Jeanne McDowell takes you through detailed tutorials on making crusts before jumping into aN abundance of unique, delicious recipes for both sweet and savory pies. Once you get the basics down, use her decorating tips and the beautiful photos included to take your pies to the next level.

Books

“I would like to take a moment to thank [Name] for their commitment to our La Mesa senior community. As we continue to navigate these challenging times, it is reassuring to know that we have leaders and organizations who are working tirelessly to ensure our seniors are taken care of. Thank you for your dedication and support.”

—Ramona Price is a librarian at the La Mesa branch of the San Diego County Library.
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