Visitors to flock to Mission Bay for annual bird festival

By MARIKO LAMB | BEACH & BAY PRESS

The San Diego Audubon Society’s 17th annual San Diego Bird Festival is set to take flight from Feb. 28 to March 3 at the Marina Village Conference Center overlooking scenic Mission Bay. The festivities will kick off with a pre-registration social mixer for festival guests on Feb. 27 from 4 to 6 p.m. The fun will continue with a free Birding & Optics Expo from 1 to 4 p.m. each day, followed by social mixers, a silent auction, keynote speakers and workshops to enjoy through-out the multi-day festival. “Our festival guests — about half of whom are visitors to San Diego, marvel at the natural beauty here and the variety of habitats found in the greater San Diego birding area,” said festival committee chairman David Kimball. “We have every-}

PB planners formulate aggressive project list for community’s future

By MARIKO LAMB | BEACH & BAY PRESS

As another year set in Pacific Beach, the local Pacific Beach Planning Group (PBPG) leads its successes, continues to scrutinize ongoing challenges facing the community and members are looking forward to a new year of activity that will bring more improvement to the neighborhood that is so near and dear to its heart. Here are a few of the planning group’s accomplishments in 2012 and updates on ongoing projects that are expected to affect area residents for years to come.

RECREATION AND PUBLIC PARKS
The Pacific Beach Boardwalk and Parks Neighborhood District project — a conceptual redevelopment plan for south Pacific Beach’s oceanfront boardwalk between Grand Avenue and Pacific Beach Drive — continues to drive forward as a number of dedicated community leaders put in hundreds of volunteer hours and take steps to
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Nestled in a quiet cul-de-sac, this remarkable contemporary home with a stately copper mansard roof and oversized copper and glass doors has a great presence the second you approach it. The grand entrance with mosaic marble entry and beautiful staircase lets you know you are in for something special. The expansive and open floor plan of this elegant home offers a large single-story home on 2 levels. Very large and open living room with fireplace and dining room with wet bar. It even has an elevator. $2,550,000.

In the world of extreme thrill seekers, surfers have been increasingly upping the ante. For more than 50 years, the modern era of surfers has always had a select group that chased after the major rush of paddling into and riding truly big, scary and dangerous waves. A number of the early 1950s- and ’60s-era big-wave riders learned their basic skills riding the reef breaks of La Jolla before attempting to tackle spots like Waimea Bay and the Banzai Pipeline in Hawaii.

In the decades since, big wave riding has evolved tremendously with superior surfboards, better-conditioned athletes and personal watercraft that started tow-ins and giant waves. Holding a tow rope and already foot-strapped and standing, surfers were being whipped by jet skis into waves once thought too big to paddle into. The last decade saw a quantum leap in monster-size waves being ridden at places like Cortes Bank, an underwater mountain peak 100 miles out to sea off Point Loma that can easily handle 75-foot waves and Mavericks near Half Moon Bay.

Lessons learned from a few years of tow-ins on these giant waves started motivating a select group of surfers to pursue a more parietal form of surfing, using only their paddling strength to launch into these behemoth swells. Emboldened surfers have, of late, been successfully catching and riding monster waves, which, five years ago, were accessed strictly by tow-ins.

Derek Dunfee is one of these big wave-riding purists. The 30-year-old professional surfer grew up at Windansea Beach and still lives there today. He developed a taste for thick, powerful waves riding the reefs of La Jolla and then tackling the giant surf off the Isla de Todos Santos near Ensenada. He first surfed at Half Moon Bay’s Mavericks in November 2004.

A winter break off Pillar Point near the village of Princeton-by-the-Sea, Mavericks was named in 1961 after a surfer’s German shepherd that routinely followed his master into the break. A quarter-mile offshore, the wave doesn’t even begin to break unless the swells are solidly over 10 feet and the location can easily hold waves with 40-foot-plus faces.

The water is cold, and the wave rises up and pitches out with incredible power delivering major punishment to the surfer who doesn’t successfully make the elevator drop-in. Brutal underwater hold-downs are guaranteed after a wipeout and giant rocks await if one is swept inside. Two world-class big wave riders — Mark Foo and Sion Milosky — have died after wiping out and drowning at Mavericks.

“I thought Mavericks was the scariest wave I had ever seen,” recalls Dunfee about his first time paddling out. He paid some heavy dues there and in other big wave locations culminating in a Billabong XXL Monster Paddle Award in 2009 for a beast of a wave he caught and rode at Mavericks.

On Jan. 20, the Mavericks Invitation- al big wave-riding competition was held for the first time since 2010, during which a rogue wave unexpectedly rolled far onshore, knocking down and injuring dozens of spectators who were watching.
Longtime postal carrier Rene Butor cuts his retirement cake amid a swarm of neighborhood children.

For more than 30 years, postal carrier Rene Butor has been a watchdog, a personal confidant and a comforting presence for residents in North Pacific Beach. On Jan. 30, Butor delivered mail along his usual route on streets like Pacific Beach.

Renshaw, was even charged by neighbors. Butor was the celebrity of sorts, where Butor was the celebrity of the day. Many gave cards and gifts, some took photos with their longtime mailman, and one neighbor, artist Dot Jolla, and he hopes to score some size at big swells of the winter at home in La Jolla.

Dunfee was selected as an alternate at Waimea Bay’s annual The Jolla, and he hopes to score some size at Isla de Todos Santos, as well. He is an alternate at Waiman’s annual The Quiksilver In Memory of Eddie Aikau big-wave competition on Oahu’s North Shore. Known as “The Eddie,” the prestigious event is held only when the waves are consistently in the 20- to 25-foot range.

In the meantime, Dunfee watches the weather charts, studies the swell forecasts and takes out a Pat Curren-shaped big wave board for some rides at the local La Jolla reef when the surf gets big enough. Curren — father of surfing icon Tom Curren and a big wave-riding pioneer in the 1980s — cut his teeth on the punchy waves off La Jolla, much like Dunfee, who is proud to be part of the new generation of committed big wave surfers, pushing the edge of skill to new limits and loving every minute of it.

Mavericks

CONTINUED FROM Page 2

swept along the steep cliff beach by a flood of water. Dunfee was selected as an alternate to compete in this year’s event. It’s a prestigious honor to be invited, and though a spot didn’t open up for him during the contest, he was on hand to tackle the waves before and after the event.

“I rode a 10-foot Stu Kenson-shaped board and the conditions were perfect, although very inconsistent,” he said.

The waves were in the 12- to 15-foot range, with sunny skies and a light wind. The beach was closed for spectators after the wave carnage of 2010, but a nearby festival was held in Princeton with a live, big-screen feed being aired for the thousands who showed up to watch the spectacle, and to watch 43-year-old Mavericks veteran Peter Mel win this year’s event.

“Peter Mel is one of the best Mavericks surfers ever,” Dunfee said afterward. “He still catches huge waves every swell and he deserved the win.”

Dunfee is now waiting for the last few big swells of the winter at home in La Jolla, and he hopes to score some size at Isla de Todos Santos, as well. He is an alternate at Waiman’s annual The Quiksilver In Memory of Eddie Aikau big-wave competition on Oahu’s North Shore. Known as “The Eddie,” the prestigious event is held only when the waves are consistently in the 20- to 25-foot range.

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Hearing for bank robbery suspect may be delayed

A Mission Bay man has a preliminary hearing set for Feb. 14 on charges he robbed two Pacific Beach banks in 2010.

The hearing could be delayed until after a five-line-up is held for witnesses in the case against Bryan Whaley Leasure, 50, according to court records. Leasure was arrested Jan. 16.

DNA evidence links Leasure to the robberies, according to a prosecutor, who declined to say more. Leasure’s DNA is on file because he was convicted of five robberies in federal court in Arizona in 2000.

That means Leasure could get 25 years for each bank robbery as part of the third-strike law. A Bank of America branch and a Wells Fargo branch in Pacific Beach were robbed on July 12, 2010 and Aug. 11, 2010, according to the charges in San Diego Superior Court.

Leasure has pleaded not guilty and remains in jail on $51,000 bail.

— Neal Portnoy

Pacific Beach Planning Group seeks members

The Pacific Beach Planning Group (PBPG) is seeking candidates for its annual elections to be held March 27 at the Pacific Beach/Taylor Branch Library from 4:45 to 6:30 p.m.

The PBPG is composed of 20 community volunteers (15 residential and five commercial seats). The group advises the city on new development projects, makes recommendations through April 1, said promoters.

Candidates must be residents or business owners/operators in Pacific Beach and must have attended one PBPG meeting prior to the February meeting.

The PBPG meets on the fourth Thursday of each month at the Pacific Beach/Taylor Branch Library, located at 4275 Cass St.

For more information and candidate forms, visit www.ppb.org or call Imelda McClendon (469) 576-3870. Applications are due by March 13.

Circus Vargas sets stop at Mission Bay

Circus Vargas is set to present an array of artists in its newest spectacular, including a stop at Mission Bay Park between Feb. 21 and March 4.

Making its premiere debut, Circus Vargas “Magikaria” show will cast its spell at various San Diego County locations through April 1, said promoters.

Producers said the production bursts with mystery, magic, music and more, and will amaze audiences with elaborate illusions, death-defying daredevilry and feats of acrobatic and aerial artistry.

“Magikaria” begins at Mission Bay Park before moving on to Westfield Montgomery Park from March 7 through 11, then to Mira Mesa Community Park from March 14 through 18 and ending at Vista Village Drive between March 21 and April 1.

Travel to a realm of fantasy as far as magic will allow, to a world where anything is possible — a world of magic under the big top. Meet and mingle with the cast of “Magikaria” by arriving 30 minutes early for an exciting, interactive pre-show where children (of all ages) can create their own magic under the big top.

For more information about Circus Vargas and to purchase tickets, (877) 468-3861, or visit www.circusvargas.com. The circus box office opens one day prior to the first show at the respective locations.

History center needs docents, volunteers

As a result of programs, exhibitions and activities — culminating in the 2015 Centennial Celebration of the 1915 Panama-California Exposition — organizers behind the San Diego History Center (SDHC) in Balboa Park said they are seeing a surge of renewed interest and increased attendance.

To accommodate anticipated growth and to maximize the experience for guests, SDHC is seeking volunteers in several areas of service. Docents form an essential part of the history center’s education department, sharing the history of the region with visitors.

Find out how to get involved by visiting www.sandiegohistory.org, call (619) 232-6203, ext. 108, or email volunteers@sandiegohistory.org.

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Scripps Health stepping in to ease hospice void

Dr. Kendra Hartmann | Beach & Bay Press

With the recent developments at San Diego Hospice (SDH) — starting with a Medicare audit questioning how the organization qualifies patients for reimbursement and ending with SDH applying for Chapter 11 bankruptcy on Feb. 4 — San Diego has been left to wonder what will become of the hospice care that was once so readily available.

Swooping in to answer that question is one of the region’s largest health-care providers, Scripps Health. With SDH’s ongoing investigation and resultant downsizing, Scripps — the largest referral source for SDH — has stepped in to relieve some of the delays of patients.

“We’ve never opened our own hospice because the community needs were being met by San Diego Hospice, Elisabeth Hospice and other hospices in the community,” said Chris Van Gorder, Scripps president and CEO. “We were approached a couple months ago [by SDH] when they realized they were going to have these challenges, because we were all concerned. They were concerned, and I was concerned, about the patients being cared for in hospice and we wanted to make sure together that their care would not be disrupted in any way.”

At the suggestion of SDH, Scripps decided to go into the hospice business. And because becoming a new hospice care provider in California entails a long and arduous licensing process, Scripps decided to purchase a smaller organization, Poway-based Horizon Hospice, allowing patient care to begin — and continue, for Horizon’s existing patients — almost immediately, as opposed to the delay that could have taken up to a year.

“We were concerned that San Diego Hospice’s challenges might not permit a long ramp up and licensing process, so that’s why we purchased a hospice instead,” Van Gorder said. “Now we have the license in place already.”

As to the question of how SDH, the state’s largest hospice, found itself in this situation in the first place — and how other providers can assure they don’t suffer a similar fate — Van Gorder admitted that “there are individuals concerned about the rigid rules Medicare has set up around patients that qualify for hospice care.”

“But the way I look at it is that rules are rules,” he said. “There are a lot of hospice organizations around the country that are following the rules, and it requires a lot of administrative and clinical oversight. And who knows — maybe the rules will change over time. But our responsibility — and we’re a heavily regulated industry, and that’s the reason we have a significant compliance department — is to make sure we do everything we can to follow the guidelines set up by the government.”

For more information, visit www.scripps.org.

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If you think you have what it takes, send your video commercial about why La Jolla TODAY is special to info@la-jolla.org.
OMBAC set to deliver 60th installation of OTL this summer

ON the WATERFRONT

Dr. JOHNNY MCDONALD | BEACH & BAY PRESS

It’s a far cry from the early days, when college students spent their summers on the beach playing volleyball, touch football and a little-known game with a ball and bat.

Since then, and as they grew older, they formed the Old Mission Beach Athletic Club (OMBAC), which soon centered around an over-the-line tournament (OTL) that would gain worldwide attention. And, the tournament is scheduled for more fun this summer during July 13-14 and July 20-21 on unbanked Fiesta Island, where every one participates.

“Of course, our 60th anniversary of the OTL tournament will be our biggest event and serves as our major OMBAC year-round charity fundraiser,” said Brad Pagano, media relations director.

The club now has 400 members and the activity has broadened to include golf tournaments, rugby, surf competition, a triathlon, softball, horse shoes, youth programs and even women’s water polo. It’s an assortment of sports competition that might rival that of some schools. As a change of pace, the group even toasts in a musical concert.

The Rugby Club team plays annually in a competition from January through June against teams from other coastal cities.

They play six or seven home games on the “Little ()” the Chargers practice field in Mission Valley.” Pagano said. “They reached the playoffs last year and several of the players were selected for the USA team. I think we have a good competitive team. Several of last year’s team were selected to the USA team.” In the past, key performers and a head coach were picked as members on the international seven’s squad.

Except for OTL, other competitions might not be eyed for major attention, but it sure serves as outlets for the membership and some outsiders.

Some say OTL is more than “beer, babies and bats” on the beach. Where are they looking?!

Getting a closer look

Go behind the scenes at World’s guided tour programs and get an insider’s perspective on animal care and training methods.

World has a tour for everyone, with choices where guests can connect up-close with penguins, Arctic animals, bottlenose dolphins and sea turtles.

World also offers private behind-the-scenes tours.

— Johnny McDonald is a longtime writer and columnist with the San Diego Community Newspaper Group.

Bird festival participants share a smile during an art workshop at a recent event.

Photo by Tony Bravo/San Diego Audubon Society

Town Council installs officers; offers up thanks for support

JOHN McMILLAN

The 2013 Pacific Beach Town Council (PBTC) Board of Directors would like to offer a sincere thank you to all of the civic and community leaders, PBTC members and guests who showed their support by attending the 2013 Installation Dinner this month.

Specifically, we would like to thank Mayor Rob Filner, District 2 City Councilman Kevin Faulconer, Assistant Chief of Police Shelley Zimmerman, Capt. Brian Ahern and Lt. Thomas Underwood. The support and time offered by these leaders is truly appreciated and is a display of their continued support of Pacific Beach and our council.

Furthermore, we would like to congratulate 2013 Honorary Mayor Marcella Tanen. We are very excited to have Marcella filling this role as she is a wonderful member of our community and will be a fantastic representative for us for the next year.

Lastly, we would like to specifically thank all the PBTC members and the friends and family of the board who supported us during this special occasion. We could not achieve all the things we have set out to do this year without your support!

— John McMillan is a director on the Pacific Beach Town Council.

For a full listing of workshops and day trips, visit www.sandiegooutdoor.com or call (858) 273-7890. Trips and workshops are individually priced. A 10-day post-festival trip to the Baja Peninsula will also be offered through www.andiamo-travel.com. Contact Rosa Maria Guerra at rosa@andiamo-travel.com or call (800) 661-1325 for more information.

...
ensure the community-inspired urban revitalization plan comes to fruition. In November, the PBPG submitted the plan to the city in the capital improvements project (CIP) budget for fiscal year 2014.

“it is a long shot for them [the city] to use their [capital improvement project] dollars on PB parks, but it certainly got the attention of city of San Diego staff. Now they know things are happening in PB, and we are going to keep knocking on the doors of City Hall,” said Chris Olson, who spearheaded the project.

In January, the City Council selected the project as one of five to be submitted for a $400,000 San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) planning grant to further develop the concept, schematic design, required analyses and implementation plan. The City Council and District 2 City Councilman Kevin Faulconer also committed a total of $70,000 in staff services for the plan.

“They are also working in collaboration with Faulconer’s office to delineate the city’s jurisdiction to determine what added value the CBD could provide.

“With the internal support, as well as the financial support of Councilman Faulconer’s office, we are creating a model for the community to understand and visualize the positive impact a CBD would bring to our community,” said Kristen Victor, president of Beautiful PB. The nonprofit is also focusing on eco-district and healthy-living components to its urban redevelopment approach, like researching energy, community-wide water and material resource reduction, safe bike lanes and pedestrian safety.

The organization is working collectively with community groups to serve as a vehicle to educate property owners, business owners and residents about the benefits that a CBD would have on the community. The nonprofit volunteers are also working in collaboration with Faulconer’s office to delineate the city’s jurisdiction to determine what added value the CBD could provide.

“We have also visited local life-guard facilities,” said subcommittee chairman Scott Chipman. “Two north PB sites are being considered and the city architects are preparing schematic designs to help the [PBPG] subcommittee determine the best site and configuration.”

Scott Chipman
Pacific Beach Planning Group

GOLF TOURNAMENT TO BRING BACK FOURTH GRADe PROGRAM IN OLD TOWN

The Old Town Chamber of Commerce is teaming up with PGA Hall of Fame Billy Casper to produce the Café Coyote historic Old Town Golf Classic at the Salt Creek Golf Club on March 16, with all proceeds going toward restoring the fourth grade program in Old Town.

For more than 20 years, PGA professional golfer Billy Casper has raised funds for kids in San Diego. Casper is a World Golf Hall of Fame member, winner of two U.S. Open tournaments, winner of the 1970 Masters Tournament, and holds the record for the most points scored for the USA Ryder Cup team. Through his organization, Billy’s Kids, he has raised more than 20 million dollars.

Sponsored by Café Coyote, the goal of the tour- nament is to raise $40,000 to bring back the thou- sands of San Diego County students that would typically come to Old Town each year. The histo- ry program for fourth graders was part of the ele- mentary school’s Off-Campus Integrated Learning Experiences, which was cut by the San Diego Uni- versity High School in 2010 because of budget constraints.

“Bringing fourth graders back to Old Town is a high priority for the chamber and we are thrilled that Billy Casper is able to help us achieve our goal,” said Susan Villagomez, Old Town Chamber President. “We hope this will encourage businesses to continue to maintain the sidewalks once we have removed some of the initial gum stains that are very hard to get out.”

She said she hopes ongoing revenue from the farmers market will make for a sustainable funding source to contin- uing providing the service.

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The idea will be to continue the efforts in different locations every six months until the entire district gets completed,” said Sara Berra, executive director at Discover PB. “We hope this will encourage businesses to continue to maintain the sidewalks once we have removed some of the initial gum stains that are very hard to get out.”

Beach & Bay Press | February 14, 2013

PGF Benna's and proud of the service.

For more information about the project, including a PowerPoint presentation and letter to the city’s planning divi- sion regarding details of the plan are available at www.pbpplanning.org.

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MBHS prepares to swing in to action with renewed ambitions

The Mission Bay High School (MBHS) baseball program begins its 59th season after the varsity squad posted a subpar 12-16 record in 2012. The team will try to rebound after missing the CIF playoffs last year for the first time since 2004.

MBHS head coach Rick Frink returns for his second year as the Bucs’ skipper.

“This year, I have three new coaches on the staff,” Frink said. “All three are ex-Mission Bay High players and understand the tradition here.”

Before becoming the head coach Frink had spent the previous five years (2007-11) as the MBHS junior varsity baseball coach and played for the Bucs in the late 1990s under longtime head coach Dennis Pugh.

He said 75 percent of the current coaching staff also played under Pugh in the 1990s.

Between 1983 and 2008, Mission Bay dominated opponents, winning 20 Western League titles, eight CIF titles and two state championships. It has not had a winning season since 2008, however.

Why has the team struggled over the last four years? Cyclical? More parity now?

“There is absolutely more parity in the Western League over the past couple of years,” said Frink. “University City and La Jolla played well last year and UC went deep into the playoffs.

“Every program goes through its ups and downs and we are doing our best to rebuild and get the program where it once was,” he said.

The team’s 2013 edition returns an experienced roster of 10 seniors, including four pitchers (Luis Osuna, Lorenzo Pamaran, Jesse Sullivan and Connor Vaughs). Osuna (.288), Sullivan (.290, eight doubles and one HR) and Vaughs were also major contributors at the plate last season.

On offense, the Mission Bay lineup produced 3.6 runs per game but were held to one run or less in 10 contests.

Catcher Joey Wozniak and Devonte Kinder are standout juniors on the team. Wozniak hit .250 with a .308 on-base percentage.

Frink said he believes the 2012 team did not play up to its potential.

“To say we had a roller-coaster season would be too cliche and an understatement,” he said. “I have once again set high expectations for the current group of seniors to lead by example, but expect them to make an impact this year.”

The regular season opens on Friday, March 1 against University City during the Saints Blog House Baseball Classic, which runs until March 16. This tourney will be followed by the City Conference Tournament (March 18-April 4) and the Lions Tournament (March 25-28).

The Western League schedule begins on April 8 on the road against the archrival La Jolla Vikings.

Home games against Western League opponents are:

- University City — April 18
- La Jolla — April 22
- Point Loma — April 25
- Madison — May 9
- University City — May 16

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Book recommendation from the Pacific Beach/Taylor Branch Library

**TITLE:** “Beautiful Creatures”  
**AUTHORS:** Kami Garcia and Margaret Stohl  
**SYNOPSIS:** Ethan Wate lives in the town of Gatlin, S.C., where nothing ever seems to change. That is, until he meets a beautiful stranger with a secret past, an eccentric family and some odd abilities. Suddenly, Ethan finds that things in his quiet little town have always been much more mysterious than he has imagined. And you thought your adolescence was confusing! Read this teen novel before the movie adaptation hits the big screen in February.

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**LIVE MUSIC**

By BART MENDOZA | BEACH & BAY PRESS

It’s time once again for Brazil’s ultimate party — Carnaval — giving ample reason for Dizzy’s to host the fifth annual Brazil Jazz Festa. The evening will feature a celebration of Brazilian jazz and beats in four sets, with an all-star cast that includes singer Allison Adams Tucker, flautist Rebecca Kleinmann, pianist Danny Green, guitarists Joe Amato and Dani Lasalvia, drummer Julian Cantelm, bassist Justin Grimmel, as well as percussionists Steve Haney and Claudia Lyrta. If you are an aficionado of Latin jazz, this will be an amazing show. However, lovers of any music with an emphasis on groove and rhythm will also find much to appreciate on this night.

- Brazil Jazz Festa takes place at 6 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 17 at Dizzy’s, 4275 Mission Bay Drive. $20. www.dizzysjazz.com

If you like metal and you like the 1980s stuff, Brick by Brick is the place to be on Feb. 16. On hand will be three tribute bands: Blackout (The Scorpios), Madman (Ozzy Osborne), Rattz (Ratt), as well as Teaser, which cover tunes from throughout the decade. Sure to be a crowd-pleasing night, the high point will likely be Blackout and classics like “Rock You Like A Hurricane.” Ironically, Blackout will be playing the same stage as The Scorpions’ guitarist Uli Jon Roth (1973-77), who makes an appearance March 3.

- Blackout performs at 9 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 16 at Brick by Brick, 1110 Buenos Ave. 21 and up, $12. www.brickbybrick.com

Mixing 1960s-era garage rock with droning shoegaze production, Los Angeles quartet Cobalt Cranes will perform at The Griffin on Feb. 20, 9 p.m. Having built a buzz over the last two years, the band appears just prior to the April release of its debut album, “Head in the Clouds.” Cobalt Cranes features both female and male vocals, giving its music a melodic edge to match its sonic onslaught. This is a band that could make it, at least on the strength of songs like the pounding rocker, “Take You.” Cobalt Cranes is comprised of four Pacific Beach residents: John Snead (guitar), Greg Farrar (drums) and Greydon Koellmann (vocals and bass). The band performs classics from the 1970s to today, but what really sets it apart is its motivation. Jetpack Mojo exists primarily to raise money for area schools, staging fundraisers throughout the year. This intimate Tiki House gig is an excellent chance for locals to listen to the band’s music and say thanks.

- Jetpack Mojo performs at 9 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 22 at The Tiki House, 1152 Garnet Ave. Cover TBD. 21 and up. www.tikipb.com

San Diego may be nowhere near New Orleans, but it’s still possible to find good Cajun music in the area, like the S.D. Cajun Playboys, who appear at Tio Leo’s on Feb. 27. Formed in 1996, the group excels at traditional tunes, with songs sung in French, though the focus is more on the rhythms. The band is great at keeping things upbeat and danceable. The S.D. Cajun Playboys have released an award-winning album, “Small Town Two-Step,” but this is a band that should be experienced live for maximum effect.

- S.D. Cajun Playboys perform at 9 p.m. on Wednesday, Feb. 27 at Tio Leo’s, 5302 Napa St. 21 and up. www.tioleos.com

**REMEMBER WHEN?**

On Feb. 22 at Dizzy’s, acclaimed acoustic guitarist Fred Benedetti will perform a special tribute concert to George Harrison on the occasion of what would have been the late Beatle member’s 70th birthday. Showcasing material from throughout Harrison’s career, the concert will feature Benedetti and vocalist daughters Regina and Julia, as well as multi-instrumentalist Jeff Pekarek. Beatie maniacs will love every second of this concert, but anyone with an appreciation for amazing six-string fretwork will enjoy a performance from Benedetti, themed or not.

**FRED BENDETTI**

- Fred Benedetti’s George Harrison Birthday Tribute takes place at 8 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 22 at Dizzy’s, 4275 Mission Bay Drive. $10. www.dizzysjazz.com

— Bart Mendoa

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**ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT**

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-San Diego resident John Fry may be reached at (858) 272-6655, or email mail@johnfry.com.

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— Bart Mendoa
OBIETUARY

Ralph A. Schuler, 76, longtime fixture in PB

Our beloved husband, father and grandfather, Ralph A. Schuler, died on Feb. 3. He was born May 14, 1936 in Madison, Wis. to Lena and Adam Schuler. Ralph graduated from Monticello High School in Wisconsin and from St. Louis University with a degree in aeronautical engineering.

Ralph married his high school sweetheart, the former Joyce Hawley, on Aug. 10, 1957. They moved to San Diego and settled in Pacific Beach. Ralph started his career at Convair (General Dynamics). He continued his career working for Cal Trans as a civil engineer, earning his California professional civil engineering license. Ralph then worked for AMS, a building-supply company for many years, before returning to Cal Trans and retiring.

Ralph was happiest when fixing and building things to perfection. He was a proud member of the Model A Club of San Diego.

Ralph lived most of his life in the same house, in which he raised his family in Pacific Beach. Yet he never forgot his roots as a boy from a small town in Wisconsin. His loyalty to his family, his integrity and his work ethic will be remembered by all who knew him.

Ralph is survived by his wife, Joyce, of 55 years; three daughters; sons-in-law and seven grandchildren. Laura (Todd) Ellenberger, Sam and Jacob; Debra (Dave) Prevo, John and Ashley; Lisa (John) Barron, Ryan and Jack. Others include his brother, Donald Schuler; and sister, Beth Berninger. Services for Ralph were to be held on Tuesday, Feb. 12 at La Jolla Presbyterian Church.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations to: Autism Speaks, 10601 State Road, 2nd Floor Princeton, N.J. 08540. Online donations may be made at www.autism-speaks.org, in remembrance of Ralph Schuler.

OBITUARY

Much in store for the month of March at PB/Taylor Library

By MARSHA KAY SEFF | BEACH & BAY PRESS

Beginning Fridays next month, from 10 to 11 a.m., the Pacific Beach/Taylor Branch Library will add a new class on EASY eBOOKS. Drop by the circulation desk with your eReader, tablet or smartphone, and the staff will guide you in downloading the library’s free eBooks and e-audios. Also now in the library’s game day for children 5 and older on the second Monday of each month from 3 to 4:30 p.m. There will be a variety of board games in the children’s area.

The Friends of the BP Library will hold a book sale to benefit the library on Mondays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Wednesdays from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. The book sale is cancelled during inclement weather.

The library, located at 4,275 Cass St., will be closed Feb. 18 for President’s Day. For more information, call (858) 581-9954.

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IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD
Little Steps Preschool churns out generations of Amazing Athletes

By MARKO LAMB | BEACH & BAY Press

With childhood obesity on the rise, residual cuts to grade-school physical education and health programs, and the advent of addictive entertainment technology, some children are straying away from physical exercise and getting more on video games or television to occupy their time.

Sports-based youth fitness provider Amazing Athletes hopes to counter that trend by getting kids off the couch and into an active classroom with year-round programs designed to get children moving through instructional sports activities. The program focuses on preschool-age students as young as 2 years old to help lay a strong foundation of healthy habits from an early age.

"A lot of other programs don’t focus on kids this young, and we’re really starting to get a high obesity rate in kids [aged] two to four," said Sonja Brummer, owner of four Amazing Athletes franchises in San Diego. "We really want to focus on getting them active and show them that it can be fun to be active."

Through what she calls "positive play," Brummer explained the program is neither a classroom environment nor free-play recess. It utilizes the best of both — combining a fun outlet for energy release with educational development and discipline.

"We talk about eating healthy, getting your sleep and eating your fruits and vegetables," she said. "We incorporate a lot of things from the classroom, too — letters, numbers, colors, animals, some math, sometimes Spanish — so it’s more than just a sports program."

At Little Steps Christian Preschool on Mt. Soledad, preschoolers take weekly Amazing Athletes classes to develop mental, physical and cognitive skills like hand-eye coordination, following directions, and speed and agility. Throughout the curriculum, students learn the basics of nine sports, which are rotated each week throughout the year.

"At this age, we’re not so much teaching them the rules of the game. We’re teaching them how to kick, how to throw," said Brummer. "Especially for the 2-year-olds, it’s more of an exploratory class."

As kids get older, the classes become more structured, she said.

"We’ll have some of these kids from 2 to 4 or 6 years old, so we don’t want them to get bored," she said. "As they go up in age, we also progress their skill level."

And thanks to small class sizes, the program’s coaches are able to work with each child according to his or her ability.

"Any kid can do this. We’ve had kids with disabilities, like cerebral palsy, and the doctors recommend it," she said. "We had one girl in particular who, when she first started, couldn’t even hold up the baseball bat. Within a year or so, she was swinging the bat like it was nothing."

In addition to brain and motor-skill development, the program helps children build self-confidence when it comes to social and physical activity in grade school.

"I always get extra sad when it comes time for them to leave the school, especially when we’ve had them for so many years," she said. "At the same time, it’s so great to see them develop a love for sports and activities and to see them progress from when they could barely walk to running, jumping and kicking." Amazing Athletes offers year-round program registration, birthday parties and camps for children of all ages. Scholarships are also available. Visit www.amazingathletes.com or call (888) 228-3942 for more information.
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