HELIX WATER TO REDUCE FUTURE RATES

Helix Water District will use $2.8 million received from the San Diego County Water Authority as part of a legal settlement with the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California to reduce future water rates for the district’s customers.

The Water Authority announced a plan on February 25 to distribute $44.4 million to its 24 member agencies after receiving a check for that amount from the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California to pay legal damages and interest resulting from a decade-long rate case.

The Water Authority sued Metropolitan for overcharges on imported water, and then sent a portion of the damages received to member agencies based on each agency’s overpayments from 2011 to 2014.

“This issue directly impacted Helix and our customers,” said Helix General Manager Carlos Lego. “Our board is really pleased that the Water Authority recovered the overcharges and is returning the money so that we can return it to our customers, by reducing future rate adjustments.”

The Helix board voted on March 3, after a year of financial analysis and cost-cutting measures, to move ahead with an April 28 public hearing on water rate adjustments over the next two years.

To minimize the proposed rate increases, the district will use $5 million from its rate stabilization fund, defer $3 million in planned pre-payments to the California Public Employees Retirement System and defer $2 million in planned investment in the district’s infrastructure.

Aviana Dobesh was excited to see her painting displayed inside the temporary Union Bank branch and on the fencing outside. (Courtesy photo)

Hope, love, new design for Union Bank

On the morning of Feb. 24, Union Bank La Mesa branch manager, Carlton Hill welcomed Aviana Dobesh (age 4), and her parents Andrea Sofia and Steve Dobesh to the temporary Union Bank branch in La Mesa, located in the parking lot of the former bank building at 4771 Spring St. Hill, on behalf of Union Bank, wanted to personally thank Aviana for the artwork she created in the days following the fire that destroyed the bank’s branch in May 2020.

The bank selected Aviana’s painting to be featured inside its temporary branch and on related marketing collateral. Her message of hope really resonated with the Union Bank team and brings smiles to the faces of employees and clients when they enter the temporary branch, which opened on Jan. 25.

SEE UNION BANK, Page 16

Council forms sub-committee for the Alvarado specific plan

La Mesa City Council formed a sub-committee to address the Alvarado specific plan which would replace the San Diego RV Park with transit-oriented, multi-family residential housing. The decision was made during the Tuesday, March 9 City Council meeting. At the request of Mayor

SEE ALVARADO PLAN, Page 23

By KENDRA SITTON

An architectural drawing of the 950-unit housing complex proposed for a site along Alvarado Road. (Courtesy photo)
Are you caring for someone with memory loss, dementia, or Alzheimer's? Then the REACH2CAREGIVERS program is for you! This series is offered FREE and virtually to family caregivers to better understand memory loss, develop communication skills, learn stress management techniques and how to better care for yourself and your loved one. You don’t have to do caregiving alone! Sign up today for our REACH2CAREGIVERS online class at https://bit.ly/REACHprogram.

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Vision for property upends housing project

As evidenced by recent-past, current and near-future development in the community, La Mesa is in the midst of a housing boom. Hot-demand to live in the city — and the potential profits that demand brings — is spurring La Mesa property owners to sell and developers to build.

However, one recent project proposal to redevelop the block surrounding the Sprouts Farmers Market building in La Mesa hit a snag in its early stages that shows that not all development in the Village — even smart-growth-developments — is viable, despite the money it brings. That snag in the project is La Mesa First United Methodist Church (LMFUMC), who despite admittedly needing financial resources to care for its 100-year-old church building, opted not to sell off its daycare site the developers needed for the housing project.

A MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL PROPOSAL

“What we were trying to do was pretty cool, I think. But what I think doesn’t really matter — at the end of the day the church didn’t want to sell the land to me,” said Scott Hodson, vice president of PacTrust, the developers who own the Sprouts Market property.

Hodson said the plan to redevelop the Sprouts property has been a priority for PacTrust for several years. PacTrust has owned the property for over 10 years and the proposed project was meant to address issues with the property, including fixing the loading dock for Sprouts, which currently had to stop traffic on Spring Street as they back into the loading area. The plan would also change the grades of the alley behind the market as well as the parking lot areas, which are subject to flooding during heavy downpours.

In a video presentation to the church’s board of trustees in October, Hodson laid out PacTrust’s vision for the project that “would honor the church architecture and preserve Sprouts Market.

In addition to purchasing the church property, PacTrust also offered to make improvements to the 100-year-old sanctuary such as added walkways and most significantly, a fix to the flooding issues in the church’s 7,000-square-foot basement area that is currently unusable.

The plan would have eliminated but some of the church’s parking and would have included a shared parking plan utilizing Sprouts lot on Sundays during church services.

The PacTrust plan also included a suggestion of installing some fencing around the church courtyard for use as a playground for the day care, which conceivably could be moved to another space in the church with the added square feet opening up in the unused basement.

LMFUMC Rev. Christian DeMent said, and cited other large housing projects planned for the city like the 900-plus units planned for Alvarado Road, the Jefferson La Mesa project currently underway along Baltimore Drive and a planned housing project on the old police department property.

“So we recognized that would add more density in the downtown area — which could help local businesses — but with so much, we were concerned how it was going to impact traffic and single-family dwellings in the local area and those people who have moved here trying to escape some of that urban experience, which we know we’re not going to stop it by not selling property — it’s going to happen anyway — but we didn’t want to be contributors to that.”

DeMent also said that if the housing project behind the church was built, some aesthetics of the church would be lost, such as sunlight that illuminates certain stained-glass windows in the sanctuary and loss of some visibility of the church from Spring Street. Also, the aesthetic of the children’s center “provides laughter and children playing in an urban environment that really is important: to see children playing instead of building after building. It’s one of the only open spaces in our downtown area.”

Another issue that guided the church not to sell was a different vision for what the property could be for the community.

“If we were in a situation where we needed to do something with that property to help us sustain us into the future, we want to have more control,” DeMent explained. “As opposed to selling it to a development company that wants to build a four-story complex for their profit, we could if need be drive what might be developed there, maybe as a land lease. We could do affordable housing, or

How to Sell Above Asking: Avoid 3 Mistakes When Selling Your Home

LA MESA - When you decide to sell your home, setting your asking price is one of the most important decisions you will ever make. Depending on how a buyer is made aware of your home, price is often the first thing he or she sees, and many homes are discounted by prospective buyers as not being in the appropriate price range before they’ve even given a chance of showing.

Your asking price is often your home’s “first impression”, and if you want to realize the most money you can for your home, it’s imperative that you make a good first impression.

This is not as easy as it sounds, and pricing strategy should not be taken lightly. Pricing too high can be as costly to a homeseller as pricing too low. Taking a look at what homes in your neighborhood have sold for is only a small part of the process, and on it’s own is not nearly enough to help you make the best decision. A recently study which compiles 10 years of industry research, has resulted in a new special report entitled “Homesellers: How to Get the Price You Want (and Need)”. This report will help you understand pricing strategy from three different angles. When taken together, this information will help you price your home to not only sell, but sell for the price you want.

To hear a brief recorded message about how to order your FREE copy of this report call toll-free 1-800-270-1494 and enter 1016. You can call any time, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Get your free special report NOW to learn how to price your home to your maximum financial advantage.

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**New pastor at First United Methodist**

*By JEFF CLEMETSON*

Rev. Christian DeMent took over as head of La Mesa First United Methodist Church (LMFUMC) back in July of last year in the midst of the COVID pandemic.

“So I haven’t hugged or shaken the hand of a single congregant yet, which is really, really scary,” he said. “We have not worshipped in person. I have not preached from the pulpit to a group of people yet. We’re just now starting to plan to have outdoor in-person worship.”

He will finally get his chance to preach to the LMFUMC flock for the first time on Easter Sunday and said outdoor, in-person sermons will take place at the church on Sundays after that, then indoors the pandemic continues to subside.

“We really are committed to the safety of not only our congregation, but our community and wanting to be a good example to our neighborhood,” he added.

That DeMent is taking added precautions for the church and community is no surprise, considering his roots. He is a fourth-generation San Diegan whose great-grandfather worked in the building the Hotel Del and also raised his grandfather in the community and being in mission beyond our community,” he said.

“Of the great experiences here was not just the youth group and the friends that I met but a real commitment to serving the community and being in mission beyond our community,” he said of the mission projects he traveled the West Coast region for.

After graduating high school, DeMent became a youth group leader.

DeMent’s mother grew up in North Park, went to San Diego High and worked for La Mesa Furniture where she met her father who moved furniture. The couple married and moved to La Mesa in 1967 where they still live today.

“My mom has been a Methodist all her life and so when they moved here to La Mesa they connected with La Mesa First United Methodist Church and my sister and I attended the childcare center, the preschool here.”

DeMent’s “early roots” extend past just the La Mesa church he was baptized at. As a child he attended Lemon Avenue Elementary and also participated in what would become Peter Pan Junior Theater with a young Mayor Mark Arapostathis before going on to La Mesa Junior High then Helix High then SDSU.

DeMent said he attended church all his life, but around junior high got more involved with the LMFUMC youth group.

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The San Diego County Taxpayers Association (SDCTA) is taking a position of funda- mental opposition to new taxes or fees by any local agency until economic growth, employment, and per capita income return to pre-COVID19 levels. SDCTA is the watchdog of local governmental per- formance for over 75 years, and it consistently polls as one of the most trusted household names in the San Diego region.

Normally, SDCTA considers new tax or fee proposals one-by-one with a thorough vetting against pre-established criteria, and its membership has a track record of supporting well-de- signed bonds to build infrastruc- ture projects, including for school children. It even supported the recently-failed Measure A in the City of San Diego, a tax increase to grow the inventory of low-in- come housing in order to reduce more expensive public spending on chronic homelessness.

But the recent deluge of propos- als from the City of San Diego has made SDCTA’s recent communications to local leaders regarding new taxes very urgent. The associa- tion has programs by-stand- ing leadership in addressing the structural- problems in local finance.

Recently, some of our lo- cal elected and pension leaders have been too quick to try to reach into the pockets of taxpayers to patch holes in their budgets. As local governments are about to receive multi-millions of dollars of Federal taxpayer monies, our local leaders should be bold and propose solutions that ad- dress the long-term financial structural flaws plaguing their budgets.

Local governments expect to receive $40 billion in aid of the $1.9 trillion of Federal stimulus, funded by taxpayer dollars, and the City of San Diego alone will receive approximately $900 million. The City of San Diego Financial Services District has received $150 mil- lion of Federal taxpayer dollars and expects more through the state of California, yet inequities for students of color continue to grow.

SDCTA fears that local leaders will use stimulus dollars to delay the tough choices they need to make and use these one-time funds to keep supporting poorly structured programs. We’ve reported a huge price for past short-sighted decisions. Let’s not make those same mistakes again. One-time funds that are not used in the current American Rescue Plan and state coffers should be used for deferred maintenance and unfunded pension liabilities, not conun- dromatically propping up ongoing ser- vices and enhancing salaries, which will further exacerbate structural deficits.

SDCTA will be promoting its ini- tial opposition and review/ endorsement of a tax or fee as it would normally do if it is unani- mously supported by all members of the applicable governing body, such as unanimity would be an unnecessary statement of pri- ority and emergency need. The association assures that each ju- risdiction must prioritize needs, and if SDCTA considers remov- ing its opposition and reviewing or endorsing a tax or fee as it would normally do if it is unanimous-

—Hancy Hong is president of the San Diego County Taxpayers Association. San Diego County Taxpayers Association (SDCTA) is a non-profit, non-partisan or- ganization, dedicated to promot- ing accountable, cost-effective and efficient government and opposing unnecessary new taxes and fees. For the last 75 years, SDCTA has served as “San Diego’s Taxpayer Watchdog Group” by educating the public and helping save the re- gion from unnecessary new taxes and fees.

For more information, please visit sdcta.org or call 619-234-6423.
Republican Women explore gun ownership at next meeting

By LAURA CRIVELO

Hooray! The Republican Women of California – Navajo Canyon are back to in person meetings. We are excited to announce that our next meeting will be April 6 at the Legacy Hotel. Our keynote speaker will be retired homicide detective Richard Carlson. Rick will be speaking to us about defunding the police and its implications, as well as other issues facing law enforcement and gun safety.

Gun safety is an issue that many women are interested in learning more about. Especially, in today’s age of attacks on police, hampering their ability to do their jobs. The #NotMeSDMovement is San Diego County Gun Owner’s initiative to stop sexual assault and domestic violence. SDCGO is providing assistance to any woman who owns a gun or would like to own a firearm, is seeking training or would like to apply for a conceal carry weapons permit (CCW). Our speaker Rick Carlson is dedicated to safety and is a fountain of information that he is always happy to share. Adding firearms protection for women are interested in learning safety.

There are currently hundreds of bills under consideration in some 35 states, all of which are designed to limit Americans’ access to the ballot, and to erect barriers to the free exercise of their foundational, democratic right. The Secretary of State reminded us that the Voting Rights Act (VRA) was enacted not to protect our right to vote. But just as the VRA arose in response to poll taxes, literacy tests and other vile elements of the Jim Crow era, so must Americans today mobilize to protect their franchise in the face of the shameless attempts by the GOP to make it harder for Americans to vote. Dr. Weber plans a series of town hall meetings in the short term, to more fully elucidate Californians on the threat facing the legitimacy of our democracy. Residents of California State Assembly District 79 will in April have another opportunity to exercise that right on April 6. That is the date of the primary election to fill the seat vacated by Dr. Weber’s appointment; ballots will be distributed by mail beginning March 8. Four Democrats are running for the seat, and all four appeared at the LMFDC meeting for a candidate forum. The candidates are Aérimaque Glass Blake, a community advocate for racial justice; Leticia Munguia, an attorney and community advocate for racial justice; Aeiramique Glass Blake, a community advocate for racial justice; and Akilah Weber, a physician and current Vice Mayor of La Mesa. Each candidate offered essential priorities that animate their pursuit of the office. Ms. Glass Blake cited criminal justice reform, public safety, economic development and education policy. Ms. Munguia wishes to improve public education, reduce inequities in health care, and create jobs. Ms. Parmley identified the need to address educational inequities that lead to disparate outcomes, to promote a green economy and to close the opportunity gap. If elected, Dr. Weber said she would work to improve health care access, to close the educational achievement gap, to improve economic opportunity, and to champion equity for all.

On issues regarding policing, all candidates agreed reform is needed. Specifically, Ms. Parmley called for an end to qualified immunity, with Dr. Weber endorsing SB12, which would make it possible to decertify police officers who act contrary to the public interest. Regarding education policy, all four candidates stressed the importance of equity in education, not just simply equality. Ms. Glass Blake, citing a study that indicated black students was on average a year behind other groups of students, spoke of the necessity to close the achievement gap. Ms. Glass Blake cited criminal justice reform, public safety, economic development and education policy. Ms. Munguia wishes to improve public education, reduce inequities in health care, and create jobs. Ms. Parmley identified the need to address educational inequities that lead to disparate outcomes, to promote a green economy and to close the opportunity gap. If elected, Dr. Weber said she would work to improve health care access, to close the educational achievement gap, to improve economic opportunity, and to champion equity for all.
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Antique shop moves into the Village

By ELAINE ALFARO

Downtown La Mesa was once known as a hub for consignment and antique shops. Over the past 10 years, there have been stark changes characterized by an influx of new restaurants and the decline of novelty stores. However, these changes did not deter The Corner Store from opening its doors to La Mesa for the first time on March 3.

Although new to La Mesa, The Corner Store is not a brand new shop. Owner Dee Carlson moved her antique store from Ocean Beach. Carlson said the shop instantly felt a welcoming community spirit.

“We were welcomed by many of the other store owners who came by welcoming us to the neighborhood with cards and gifts,” she said. “We’ve had really good days. Our customers seem extremely happy to have us here in La Mesa.”

After having lunch at Konichiwa Sushi, Lisa, a La Mesa resident, was drawn to the neighborhood with cards and gifts. “We have been able to keep our shop open for 20 years with three or four different locations and it has kind of just morphed into this,” she said. Her design is also a reflection of the family ties within the store. Her daughter creates the stationery that is sold in the store with dried flowers and leaves. In addition to stationery, the store offers novelty decorations, furniture, and chalk paint classes.

Despite a successful first week in La Mesa, Carlson said the past year took a toll on her business. COVID-19 certainly was a huge setback for many businesses and being closed for three months was as well as people staying home definitely hurt our business,” she said. However, Carlson said being a stockist for Annie Sloan Chalk Paint opened some doors for keeping the business thriving.

“We have been able to keep that part of the business going by offering online sales and curbside pickup.” she added.

Carlson said The Corner Store offers new opportunities for home renovation and design with the chalk paint. “Many have been using the chalk paint to fix up old furniture and kitchen/bathroom cabinets,” she said. All the modified furniture in her store is painted with the chalk paint. It is an alternative way to paint furniture without having to sand and prime.

The Corner Store will have its first chalk paint workshop on March 27 with more events scheduled in April as well. Despite the pandemic and unprecedented challenges of temporarily closing their doors, Carlson said the move to La Mesa was meant it be.

“The Corner Store features curated antiques with a “barn house chic” style (Photos by Elaine Alfaro)

“La Mesa was the perfect place,” she said. Even though the downtown has become well-known for its restaurants, Carlson said The Corner Store has much to offer.

“I hope to encourage other stores to join us, so La Mesa has a balance of restaurants and interesting stores to poke around in after a good meal.”

—Elaine Alfaro is editorial intern for San Diego Community Newspaper Group.

Community cats CONTINUED FROM Page 6

Like other programs of its kind, San Diego Humane Society’s community cat program relies on years of scientific research, as well as discussion and debate among those in the animal welfare community who have dedicated their lives to doing what’s best for animals. This program will only apply to healthy cats who demonstrate they are doing well living outside. It does not apply to cats who are unhealthy, were relinquished or abandoned by their owners, or found in a dangerous place. In most cases it will also not apply to kittens under 6 months of age.

By developing a community cat program in line with experts across the United States, we are taking the next step in our commitment to doing what’s best for cats in our region. This is new for a lot of people, and there are questions, as there should be for all new programs that are innovative and push us to evolve how we think about our roles in caring for animals in need.

While successful community cat programs have existed for decades across the country, these programs represent a new way of thinking for many, and we have resources on our website to help our community understand why we think this is the most effective way to work with the outdoor cats who call San Diego County home. We encourage everyone who shares our passion for animals to visit sdhumane.org/communitycats to learn more, and we invite you to join us in creating a brighter future for cats everywhere.

—Gary Weitzman, DVM, is president and CEO of the San Diego Humane Society.
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COMMUNITY COLLEGES ENCOURAGE STUDENT VACCINATIONS TO REOPEN CAMPUSES

The leaders of the 10 community colleges in San Diego and Imperial counties issued a statement March 12 urging their employees and students to get a vaccination protecting them against COVID-19 as soon as they are eligible.

The colleges, which serve more than 200,000 students in the two-county area, have been offering mostly online learning for the 2020-21 academic year because of the pandemic. Only a limited number of classes and labs that train essential workers have been offered at the college campuses.

“Widespread vaccinations will allow our colleges to start reopening our campuses this fall and to continue to offer the top-quality education that our students want and deserve,” says the statement, which was endorsed by leaders for the Grossmont-Cuyamaca, Imperial, Miramar, Palomar, San Diego and Southwestern college districts.

San Diego County opened vaccinations to educators, which includes employees at community college districts, beginning Feb. 27. Educators in Imperial County were eligible for vaccinations on Feb. 22.
**Grossmont student voices of the 1960s**

**Foothiller Footsteps**

By CONNIE DEAN

Every decade has its own voice, but the 1960s decade has become iconic in multiple ways: reading the student newspaper the Foothill Echo reminds us of the universal experiences of students finding their voices.

In the March 18, 1966 newspaper, ASB presidential candidates shared their views. John Reutter and Lorraine Crowe, respectively, shared their voices.

**Danny Traskell believed, “Home shelters are better because they are more private.”**

While Lorraine Crowe, fatalistically stated, “All bomb shelters are just extra-large tombs.”

In the Jan. 18, 1963 Foothill Echo column titled “To Be Shurer,” columnist Bonnie Schurr begins, “Boys, have you even wondered what the girls do in gym when it rains? Well, they play ‘Black Bottom’, which can be literally interpreted, for it is played with a huge medicine ball that is kicked with the feet while sitting on the floor.”

**The new GHS Museum is located in the 1950 Girl’s Rec Room where these “Black Bottom” games took place.**

The column continues: “Fellas, they support us Men Folk while we engage in our various sports events, so let’s get out and support the girls when they are competing.”

In the Nov. 18, 1966 column “Sport ‘N Stuff,” before official varsity girls sports, Bruce Ramet foreshadows the upcoming Title IX revolution: “The Women Folk of Grossmont High have won again! The Girls’ Swim Team took first place over Helix in the Second Annual Invitational Relays at La Mesa Pool on Oct. 25th. The thirty-nine girls work out regularly at the La Mesa Pool. It looks as though their workouts pay off.”

We are excited to announce that Silverlight Homes of La Mesa will be joining the Right Choice Senior Living network of Assisted Living Care Home Communities.

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**March 26 – April 23, 2021**

La Mesa Courier

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sdnews.com

**The 1963 Grossmont High School nominating convention for student body government**

**SEE Foothiller Footsteps, Page 12**

**The 1963 Grossmont High School nominating convention for student body government**
the GHS Educational Foundation is sponsoring a scholarship fund-raising program. “$100 for 100 Years” donors will have their names, their families’, or their businesses’ names engraved on 2-by-4-inch gray tiles, which will be displayed on a wall at the front of the high school.

To order your tile, visit donationbricks.com/ghs100year-scholarships. Or write a check payable to GHS Educational Foundation and mail to Connie and Lynn Baer, 5990 Avenida Dr., La Mesa, CA 91942. On the check memo, please indicate “scholarship fund” and include the text of your tile with your check (up to three lines, 20 spaces each). To have your tile installed before our 100th Anniversary Celebration in the upcoming school year, please order your tile by June 1, 2021.

To order a 100th Anniversary hoodie or T-shirt, please visit grosmonthighschool.itemorder.com/sale. To order a commemorative 100th ornament, please write a check for $25 for each ornament payable to GHS Educational Foundation and mail to Connie and Lynn Baer, 5990 Avenida Dr., La Mesa, CA 91942.

The GHS Museum is currently closed, but we are checking our emails at ghsmuseum@guhsd.net and our phone messages at 619-668-6140.

— Connie and Lynn Baer write on behalf of the GHS Museum.

“we are eager to begin safely returning to our campuses this fall so that we can welcome back our students and offer them a full range of in-person services,” said Lynn Neault, chancellor of the Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District and president of the San Diego & Imperial Counties Community College Association (SDICCCA). The full statement can be found on the SDICCCA website. SDICCCA is a consortium between six community college districts in San Diego and Imperial counties.

The statement notes that the Centers for Disease Control has found that the vaccines are safe and the most effective way to limit the spread of the coronavirus. The three vaccines now available met the Food and Drug Administration’s rigorous scientific standards for safety, effectiveness, and manufacturing quality, and are undergoing an intensive safety monitoring.

“With the high school experience, safety are an important part of any high school experience, safety is the primary focus of the return to campus. All on-campus activity will require adherence to guidelines provided by public health officials, including, but not limited to, daily health screenings and check ins, the wearing of masks or other approved face coverings, social distancing, the use of hand sanitizer when entering and leaving classrooms, daily disinfecting of classrooms, the use of outdoor spaces whenever appropriate, and upgraded ventilation in all buildings. Recent staff development sessions have focused on trainings for safety protocols so staff can help ensure a safe environment for all.

The Helix Administration is grateful to the students, staff, parents, and community for all of the input, patience, understanding and perseverance during the past year. They look forward to serving the Highland student body for the remainder of the year.


Helix plan for limited in-person classes

When Helix students and staff left for spring break in 2020, no one had any idea that most would not return to campus for many months. A small number of students and staff have been in person since October, but the majority of students have remained in distance learning. With San Diego County recently entering the “red tier” in the California Blueprint for a Safer Economy, in-person instruction will be available to all students following spring break 2021.

In the distance learning model in use since the beginning of the school year, students were able to come on campus for academic support, placed in “small cohorts” — small groups of students who only interacted with those same students while on campus. The new hybrid schedule allows students to remain in distance learning, if they choose, while allowing others to attend their classes on campus one day a week. Classes will be taught to all students online via Zoom two days a week. Then, beginning March 30, students with last names beginning with the first half of the alphabet will attend class on campus on Tuesdays, and the remaining students will attend on Thursdays.

For freshmen, this will be their first time attending classes on campus. In order to assist freshmen get ready to come to campus for the first time, Helix ASB (student government) has a few things planned:

• Campus Tour Video - freshmen will receive a campus tour video during spring break to show them all the important places to know about campus.

• Freshmen 101 FAQ - ASB will also be sending out an information sheet with important information about activities, athletics and the Helix community.

• Freshmen Community Forum Webinar - ASB will host a community forum for freshmen students and families to share more information and answer questions before on campus learning and support begin. This will be a great opportunity to hear from current students at Helix and get last-minute questions answered.

Additional opportunities for all students include athletics, which resumed in January; as well as the ASB program, which is Helix’s after school program, offering a multitude of activities. In addition, the Grade Level Team for the class of 2021 will host "Senior Activities" for 12th graders interested in attending with their classmates. Other extra- and co-curricular activities may be offered with safety modifications in place, and staff are working hard to make as many of these available as is feasible. While these activities are an important part of the high school experience, safety is the primary focus of the return to campus.

All on-campus activity will require adherence to guidelines provided by public health officials, including, but not limited to, daily health screenings and check ins, the wearing of masks or other approved face coverings, social distancing, the use of hand sanitizer when entering and leaving classrooms, daily disinfecting of classrooms, the use of outdoor spaces whenever appropriate, and upgraded ventilation in all buildings. Recent staff development sessions have focused on trainings for safety protocols so staff can help ensure a safe environment for all.

The Helix Administration is grateful to the students, staff, parents, and community for all of the input, patience, understanding and perseverance during the past year. They look forward to serving the Highland student body for the remainder of the year.

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**La Mesa Courier**

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**Featured artist: Gabriel Stockton**

Drawing and painting have always been a part of watercolor artist Gabriel Stockton's California life. Colorful jars of paint were within arm’s reach at his mother’s ceramic studio, a.k.a. “The Garage.” While on his educational journey, Stockton worked in mixed media but eventually focused on watercolor.

Stockton resides in sunny San Diego with his family and his art captures outdoor scenes of San Diego, such as historic areas, boats and beaches, in beautiful watercolor paintings in the “en plein air” style, where artists paint the outdoors in the outdoors rather than in a studio. Stockton is often seen out in the community with his hand-made wooden easel with a display of recent paintings.

Being approachable, Stockton enjoys sharing his knowledge, thoughts and feelings about painting outside in workshops, classrooms and paint-outs. With candid brush strokes, bright colors and eye-catching watercolor paintings, it’s no wonder why people want to be a part of this artist’s journey and purchase an original art piece. You can see his artworks in various galleries, libraries and art districts throughout the region.

—Bonnie Owen is editor of Footnotes, the monthly newsletter of the Foothills Art Association

Local groomer competes on ‘Pooch Perfect’

Say hello to Blake Hernandez. If you have a pet that needs grooming in the San Diego area, you’ve probably already heard of him. If not, you’re about to, because Hernandez is going national as he competes on ABC’s “Pooch Perfect,” premiering March 30 at 8/7 central.

Hernandez is one of just 10 groomers in the country selected to participate in “Pooch Perfect,” hosted by Rebel Wilson and judged by an all-star celebrity cast of Lisa Vanderpump, Jorge Bendersky and Dr. Callie Harris. Hernandez is thrilled to represent dog groomers nationwide as he takes on the challenges and showdowns necessary to avoid elimination. This eight-episode series is sure to be a family favorite, so make sure you tune in to support your local dog groomer.

You can find Hernandez at Foxy Roxy’s Pet Salon at 4239 Park Blvd., San Diego or by following him on Facebook and Instagram.
Downed Wire
San Diego Community News Network
RUN: March 2021
TRIM: 6.2” x 13”

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• Sit calmly until help arrives.
• Warn others not to touch the vehicle and direct them to call 911.
• If the vehicle is on fire and you must leave it, open the door or window and jump clear without touching the vehicle and the ground at the same time.

Get more tips at sdge.com/safety

Scouting For Food
La Mesa Cub Scout Pack 319 taking in donations during recent food drive to help families in need. (Photo courtesy Clark Marketing Solutions)

On March 13, La Mesa Cub Scout Pack 319 held a COVID-safe (contact-free, drive-through) food donation drive called “Scouting for Food” at St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church on Glen Street.

The scouts and their pack leaders gathered donations brought by family, friends, pack members and other La Mesa residents who dropped off boxes and bags filled with non-perishable items like canned foods, peanut butter, cereal, pasta and rice. Nearly a thousand packaged food items were donated in total. All donations go to the San Diego Food Bank, where the pack’s donations will be earmarked for specific distribution back into the La Mesa community.

NEW BANK DESIGN APPROVED
On March 23, La Mesa City Council approved the design for the new permanent Union Bank building. The city’s Design Review Board previously reviewed the submitted drawings in consideration of the City’s Urban Design Program and the Downtown Village Specific Plan.

Union Bank proposes to redevelop the westerly portion of its property site with a single-story, 4,864 square-foot commercial bank building. The new bank is similar in size to the former building. The scope of work includes reconfiguring the parking layout around the building, installing new perimeter landscaping, and constructing a new trash enclosure.

Curb openings on Spring Street will be modified in their existing locations and one of two existing vehicular alley access points will be closed. The easterly half of the site is not a part of the project and will remain as a parking lot providing 21 parking spaces.

The plan includes a more modern look to the bank building with a flat parapet roof and asymmetrical horizontal and vertical planes; as well as finish treatments and materials, including CMU block veneer, metal panels, cement plaster, and steel louvered canopies.

At the City Council meeting, Council member Jack Shu voted along with the rest of the Council to approve the project, but commented that he would prefer projects like the Union Bank building to include solar panels and zero gas hookups for heaters or burners. He encouraged the Council to quickly adopt new standards so the city will not “get behind” in its Climate Section Plan goals.

There was no Union Bank representative in attendance at the online meeting to indicate when construction would begin and be completed by.
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Two wineries in one cool spot

By ROBIN DOHRN-SIMPSON

San Diego County has over 110 wineries. There are wine trails to the north, south and east of town along with many urban wineries, where they make wine in their facilities, but don’t grow the grapes.

Two such urban wineries, San Pasqual Winery and Wyatt Oaks Winery, share a tasting room in La Mesa. Both wineries make and sell their wines at their co-op tasting room called La Mesa Wine Works. At San Pasqual Winery, Linda McWilliams is the winemaker and co-owner along with her husband Mike. She has been making wine in La Mesa for years and her business has expanded to three different tasting rooms including La Mesa Boulevard and Seaport Village.

At La Mesa Wine Works, she’s proudly offering her 2016 Tannat that won a Double Gold medal at the prestigious Toast of the Coast Competition. The winery has also released a 2016 Tempranillo and a 2015 Malbec. If you are a sparkling wine fan, try the “Celebration Cuvee”. Linda also features another gold winner with the 2018 San Diego County Chardonnay.

Meanwhile at Wyatt Oaks Winery, Gavin McLain, is the winemaker and co-owner with his wife Stacy. He names his wines after his children and features wines with San Diego grown grapes.

Wyatt Oaks is currently featuring their 2019 San Diego County Chardonnay and a Syrah. Rose Weston’s Estate, named after their son Weston. They also...
Cajun seafood in heart of College Area

By ROBIN DOHRN-SIMPSON

A good Louisiana boil includes spreading out a big piece of paper on a table, full of friends and family, and then tossing corn, potatoes, and a variety of seafood onto it. This is the time to eat with your hands — with or without plastic gloves — and dig in. Sip and sharp. Break a crab leg open and suck out the meaty goodness, perhaps with alternating sips of southern traditional sweetened green tea or sweetened black tea, lemonade or a craft beer. While New Orleans is the epicenter of this type of gastronomic aban- don, The Crab Pub, right here in San Diego does the tradition proud.

SEAFOOD OPTIONS

The College Area restaurant located at 6011 El Cajon Blvd. has all your favorite seafood: Dungeness crab cluster, whole blue crab, king crab legs, snow crab legs, crawfish (with corn and sausage), shrimp, clams or mussels. Try a variety of combinations of a couple of different types of seafood. A pound of crab combined with a pound of crawfish or a pound of king crabs and a pound of mussel.

Next, pick your spice level to enhance the flavors. Perhaps try the well-known Old Bay seasoning mix that includes celery salt, black pepper, crushed red pepper flakes and paprika.

TRY SOMETHING ELSE

Not into a boil or seafood? No problem. There are other options like New England clam chowder, gumbo and rice. Try a basket such as chicken wings, fried catfish, fried calamari, fried oysters, fried pickles, fried okra, or fried green beans. All baskets include spiced Cajun fries.

The Crab Pub is located on the corner of College Avenue and El Cajon Boulevard. Enter in and enjoy the “shipboard” ambiance. Don't mind the shark with a crab in its mouth hanging from the ceiling.

If you like Louisiana cuisine, this is your kind of place. Laissez Les Bon Temps Roular!

—Robin Dohrn-Simpson is a San Diego-based food and travel writer. Reach her at dohrnsimpson@hotmail.com or visit robindohrn-simpson.com.

Wine Works

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

have Aubrey’s Reserve Primitivo, named after their daughter, a Zinfandel and Cabernet Sauvignon. The March monthly case special is the 2012 Rubura, which is a Shiraz, Carignan and Merlot blend currently on sale for $149.

Shiraz, Carignan and Merlot blend is the 2012 Rubura, which is a Shiraz, Carignan and Merlot blend currently on sale for $149.

Sundays, the Crab Pub has live music on the patio with a different band every Sunday night from 6-8 p.m. Enjoy wine by the flight, glass or bottle. The tasting room manager Ashley Bardell. “We feature two different flavors: Sangria and Passion Fruit. They're super popular for sipping on the patio on a warm afternoon.”

—Robin Dohrn-Simpson is a San Diego-based food and travel writer. Reach her at dohrnsimpson@hotmail.com or visit robindohrn-simpson.com.

San Pasqual wines (Photo by Robin Dohrn-Simpson)

TUNA CASSEROLE

An old fashioned, tasty meal in one dish. Quick to put together and you'll have plenty of leftovers. The word “nostalgia” comes to mind as you enjoy this meal.

INGREDIENTS:

* 12-ounce package of egg noodles
* 2 tablespoon of olive oil
* 1 small onion, chopped

DIRECTIONS: Cook noodles as per package directions. Sauté the mushrooms, onion, celery in the olive oil. Combine cooked vegetables, noodles, peas, cheese, tuna and soup in large bowl. Pour into a buttered casserole dish. Cover with the breadcrumbs and butter mixed. Place in preheated 425 degree oven for 20-25 minutes. Serve piping hot!

Tuna Noodle Casserole (Pinterest.com)

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Family Health Centers of San Diego is the #1 enrollment entity for Covered California in San Diego County.

For free enrollment help, call (619) 515-2363.

For 50 years, Family Health Centers of San Diego (FHCSD) has provided caring, affordable, high-quality health care and supportive services to everyone, with a special commitment to uninsured, low-income and medically underserved persons.

With over 23 primary care clinics around San Diego County, FHCSD provides care to over 227,000 patients each year. With a wide-range of health care services throughout the region, the organization also includes 10 behavioral health facilities, eight dental clinics, two mobile counseling centers, three mobile medical units, three vision clinics, a physical rehabilitation department, a pharmacy and an outpatient substance use treatment program. As part of their ongoing dedication to ensuring everyone who needs health care receives it, FHCSD offers free Covered California enrollment assistance.

Covered California is a private health insurance exchange that was established through Affordable Care Act legislation for individuals and families not eligible for Medi-Cal. The program allows California residents to purchase quality health insurance plans to fit individual and family needs. The cost of each insurance plan is based on certain factors, including family size and income.

Covered California has extended its Special Enrollment Period from February 1 to May 15, 2021 without a qualifying life event.

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1. Preventive, wellness and chronic disease management services
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5. Rehabilitative and habilitative services and devices (services and devices to help people with injuries, disabilities, or chronic conditions gain or recover mental and physical skills)
6. Prescription drugs
7. Ambulatory and emergency services
8. Laboratory services and hospitalization (surgery and overnight stays)

For free enrollment help, call (619) 515-2363 or visit fhcsd.org/covered-california.
Mark Arapostathis, Council members Colin Parent and Bill Baber will form the sub-committee to bring the specific plan changes forward and work on significant public outreach.

The decision did not require a vote and came after David Witt presented an update to the planned development on behalf of the owner, Paydar Properties. The development would be constructed on 12 acres of relatively flat land near the 70th Street Trolley Station. It can be seen from the Interstate 8 freeway. It could hold up to 950 apartment units and have a student housing component. The land is on Alvarado Road between 70th Street and Comanche Drive.

“This is really a unique site because it’s so isolated,” Witt said in response to Baber’s concern about neighbors. “It is a unique and challenging site that in the end will be consistent with the goals and policies of La Mesa.”

The raised orange trolley line means the property is separated from other neighbors.

The draft specific plan is on the website and an environmental review has already been conducted. Arapostathis requested that the sub-committee make extra effort to alert the community of the draft plan so the city can be as transparent as possible.

The project is in an area that regularly floods because of the Alvarado Creek. Witt said that the changes made by the project should fix the flooding issue for everyone.

Council member Jack Shu raised environmental concerns about the project. He said that although the project meets the city’s current climate action plan, it may not meet future goals already being advanced by other cities. For instance, the development still uses gas appliances and solar panels would be installed later rather than during the initial build.

“We’re gonna make some allowances for this project and then we should get in return as much low-income and very low-income housing in return,” he said.

Two members of the public submitted comments to the City Council meeting. The first said La Mesa’s peace and quiet is being worried by big developments and expressed concern about the uneven parking lot, alley flooding and traffic-stopping load-bearing dock behind Sprouts.

“Now that we voted to say ‘no,’ we are now engaging in that ‘now what?’ And that is a 10-year plan of prioritizing our greatest needs on the campus, getting bidding on how much that would cost and how do we engage in that and how we would chip away at the issues,” DeMent said, adding that the 7,000-square-foot basement is the church’s biggest issue and how do we engage in that and how do we chip away at the issues.

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Two members of the public submitted comments to the City Council meeting.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Although LMFUMC has made its decision to hold on to the daycare property, it is still left with the question of how to fund the needed repairs to the aging church buildings.

“Now that we voted to say ‘no,’ we are now engaging in that ‘now what?’ And that is a 10-year plan of prioritizing our greatest needs on the campus, getting bidding on how much that would cost and how do we engage in that and how we would chip away at the issues,” DeMent said, adding that the 7,000-square-foot basement is the church’s biggest issue and priority because the space could eventually be used to generate income or used to run programs that help the community.

To raise the funds, LMFUMC will need to start a capital campaign, which DeMent described as “tough” because church membership has declined from 2,000 members to its “heyday” to current membership of just over 200.

“It’s going to be a large price tag and to ask 200 people to dig deeper into their pockets, it’s just not going to be sustaining. We need to find alternative sources of income,” he said, adding that the church recently hired a grant writer and has purchased its bell tower to AT&T for use as a cell tower. “We’re going to need to be creative in how we finance things.”

The church is not alone in its need for a new way to finance improvement projects. PactTrust is also now back to the drawing board in how to approach fixing the uneven parking lot, alley flooding and traffic-stopping loading dock behind Sprouts.

“We do have a long-term plan to intensify the site and put some housing there but ... anything we would be undertaking there would be happening over time and we’re only at the conceptual planning stage at this point. To be sure, if we were to redevelop that site with Sprouts as a continuing occupant there, we’d need to address the parking for Sprouts.”

Hodson said, adding that the Sprouts property is eventually housing there but … anything we would be undertaking there would be happening over time and we’re only at the conceptual planning stage at this point. To be sure, if we were to redevelop that site with Sprouts as a continuing occupant there, we’d need to address the parking for Sprouts.

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Hodson added that he hopes that the goodwill between the church and PactTrust will be repackaged when a new plan for the Sprouts property is eventually ready to be reviewed by the city and La Mesa residents.

“I do think there is an opportunity for a thoughtfully-planned project here that produces a great outcome for the community,” he said.

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

March 26 – April 23, 2021
La Mesa Courier

RAIN, WIND, AND FIRE...

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For a limited time, readers of this paper will receive a special discount on our full chimney cleaning and safety inspection package with special attention to chimney water intrusion points in preparation for the rainy season.
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Top 1% Real Estate Agent in San Diego County

A Palace In Mount Helix/Rancho San Diego!
*First Time Ever on Market*
$2,499,000

Stunning Mount Helix European Villa
$1,775,000

More Italian than Pavarotti!
4500 S.F., 6 BR, 4.5 BA, Pool with Beautiful Rotunda,
Romantic Balconies, Quiet, Serene; Private, One Acre

LAKESIDE
$1,35M

CARLSBAD
$725,000

GLOBAL EXPOSURE. LOCAL RESULTS.

$6.7 Billion
Local Sales Volume

5,600+
Transactions

↑10%
Sales Growth

$150 Billion
Global Sales Volume

1,000
Offices Worldwide

↑32%
Sales Growth

75
Countries & Territories

Now, and always, I work tirelessly to uphold your valued trust and make you feel at home.

Laura Lothian
858.433.3105
Laura@LauraLothianRealEstate.com

SELLING or BUYING?
Call Me
I can’t wait to get started!
619.540.7744
Laura@LauraLothianRealEstate.com