Immunocompromised, disabled young adults left behind in reopening plans

KENDRA SITTON | Uptown News

As California phases into its reopening plan, it comes with a major caveat: all people over 65 and any person under age 65 who are immunocompromised are legally required to continue to self-isolate. All seniors, no matter their health situation, are being asked to shelter in place.

The majority of young and middle-aged people are welcomed to shop, eat at restaurants and engage in social behaviors with relatively low levels of risk. However, not all young people can do this because of pre-existing conditions. Many among the nation’s 26% disabled and chronically ill are not elderly or middle-age, leading to gaps in professional, social and medical support.

There is some shared commonality and solidarity in varying health directives and support that seniors are given. Some seniors are still working and cannot isolate while others get to choose whether and how to reengage society.
Mentorship program struggles in the wake of pandemic

Like many small nonprofit organizations, Boys to Men has struggled in the wake of COVID-19. With a couple events that accounted for the vast majority of the organizations funding canceled, the difficult decision was made to lay off half of the close-knit staff. Still, the reduced staff has managed to bring their mentoring program for at-risk teens online.

Mentors are hosting 12 weekly video chats on Zoom for any boys interested in attending. For the month of April, boys deeply invested in the organization through past camping trips took part in a pilot program where they provided feedback on the virtual mentorship. On May 1, Zoom mentorship opportunities were opened again but only 30 boys participated the first week. The next week, 45 boys attended and the number has continued to grow from there. Still, it is a steep drop from the over 700 boys they were engaging at local schools, although that number does not necessarily reflect the number of boys enrolled in the mentorship program.

"We would love to say that we have 100% transfer rate, but that's just not the case," said youth coordinator Jose Garcia. "[The] boys that show up, definitely want to be there. They want to see their mentors; they want to be part of something again." Garcia worries that the loss of engagement until schools begin taking place in-person again means boys beginning in the program will lose momentum. He said the boys opened up about their lives in the weekly one-hour sessions because they are seeing the same man week after week. That consistent encouragement and help is gone for many of the boys who have not re-enrolled. The boys could ask for help from mentors on a wide range of issues. The questions were often practical: how to file taxes, build a resume, apply for a job, but more often groups built trust by talking about everything going on in their lives at home and at school.

"Our mentors sit and listen and guide them into making positive choices, choices that they're going to feel good about — so they can become a good man," explained executive director Rose Courtney. The mentors also shared their own experiences as they guided the boys.

Garcia, who participated in the program in high school before becoming a facilitator, said it is an opportunity for boys to talk about their sadness, anger and pain. It was often a safe space to cry, their sadness, anger and pain. It was often a safe space to cry, their sadness, anger and pain. It was often a safe space to cry, their sadness, anger and pain. It was often a safe space to cry, their sadness, anger and pain. It was often a safe space to cry, their sadness, anger and pain. It was often a safe space to cry, their sadness, anger and pain. It was often a safe space to cry, their sadness, anger and pain. It was often a safe space to cry, their sadness, anger and pain. That consistent encouragement and help is gone for many of the boys who have not re-enrolled. The boys could ask for help from mentors on a wide range of issues. The questions were often practical: how to file taxes, build a resume, apply for a job, but more often groups built trust by talking about everything going on in their lives at home and at school.

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ENCONTO OWNER RETALIATES AGAINST WORKERS FEARING FOR SAFETY

Many San Diegans were excited at the prospect of being able to go out to a restaurant or bar over the holiday weekend. However, employees were excited at the prospect of being able to work. Not so for the employees of Encontro because it seems.

“It’s scary being back to work,” an Encontro employee told CBS News 8 on Saturday. “I am overworking and there aren’t enough of us surrounding me without masks on. It was really alarming. I didn’t feel safe or comfortable, or prepared.”

The employee, who didn’t want to be named for fear of retaliation, said that she saw her hours cut when she raised her concerns to Mr. Hotchkiss.

“I’m still going to try to talk to him,” she said. “But I’m sure it will result in me being told to leave.”

As part of the state government’s reopening protocols, restaurants are required to create a written safety plan, put someone in charge of its implementation, and provide training to employees, among other guidelines.

Jared Sooper, a manager of the restaurant for more than one year, asked Mr. Hotchkiss for time to implement a safety plan before reopening. Mr. Hotchkiss responded by telling Mr. Sooper to turn in his keys and there’s absolutely nothing I can do. I’m worried for everyone there and I feel totally helpless.”

PROPERTY CRIME RATE HITS 40-YEAR LOW

Property crime in the San Diego region reached a new 40-year low in 2019, according to a report recently released by the SANDAG Criminal Justice Clearinghouse, Forty Years of Crime in the San Diego Region: 1980 Through 2019. The report found that while the region’s population has increased 80% during the past 40 years, the number of crimes reported has decreased considerably.

In 2019, the property crime rate was 3% lower than in 2018 and 74% lower when compared to rates in 1980. The same year SANDAG began reporting regional crime statistics.

The SANDAG report also found that burglaries were at an all-time 40-year low in 2019. More than two in every five burglaries reported did not involve forced entry, suggesting that the number of burglaries could be access to 2.9 million physical materials in the San Diego Public Library’s collection to library patrons for the first time since libraries were closed in mid-March due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It also prioritizes the health and safety of patrons and employees while allowing San Diegans to pick up materials at designated locations.

Pickup service will be available Monday through Friday, from 10:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., at the following locations: Carmel Valley, College-Rolando, La Jolla/Riford, Logan Heights, Mira Mesa, Mission Hills-Hillcrest/Knox, Mission Valley, Point Loma/Hervey, Rancho Bernardo, San Ysidro and Valencia Park/Malcolm X.

As the coronavirus pandemic continues to impact San Diegans across the county, Feeding San Diego is responding by getting more nutritious food into the community. Recently, Feeding San Diego launched a new partnership with the Union of Pan Asian Communities (UPAC). Based in City Heights, UPAC distributes dry goods and fresh produce from Feeding San Diego every Friday, from 1:00 PM to 4:30 PM. 150 households are served each week.

“Feeding San Diego is making a significant impact on the community, and we are extremely grateful for their partnership. This collaboration allows us to provide critical needs for our most vulnerable families and neighborhoods,” said Margaret Iwanaga Penrose, UPAC President and CEO.

The distribution is located at UPAC Neighborhood Enterprise Center, The Neighborhood Café, at 5296 University Ave., Suite A, San Diego, CA 92105.

“With more than 27% of San Diegans unemployed as a result of COVID-19, we continue to experience a tremendous surge in people facing hunger — those living in City Heights are particularly vulnerable,” said Vince Hall, CEO of Feeding San Diego.

Feeding San Diego offers food assistance at hundreds of
The five best tech gadgets for pet owners

There is no doubt about it: San Diego is a town for happy pets. We know how you love to pamper your pet and make sure that beloved dog, cat, or even hamster is safe and secure. With digital innovation on the rise, you can utilize new technology and keep your furry friends entertained and challenged, using specially designed brain teasers to help your pet's mind stay active.

CleverPet Hub

This San Diego-based company has developed a clever approach to releasing your pooch's full potential: the world's first dog-friendly game console. The CleverPet Hub is designed to keep your dogs entertained and challenged, using specially designed brain teasers to help your furry companions. Here are five of the best new tech products out there.

icalmDog 3.0

Fourth of July is coming up soon and that means spectacular fireworks displays — and some serious panic and anxiety for our furry compadres. Here are five of the best new tech products out there.

Petnet SmartFeeder and SmartBowl

If you just can’t bear to miss a single moment of puppy action or if you worry for your dog’s boredom during the long hours of your workday, this Furbo Dog Camera and Treat Toss might be the right gadget for you.

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OPINION

Don’t get scammed out of your stimulus check

By Derek Remer

As your District Attorney, I’m committed to increasing communication and accessibility between the DA’s Office and you, the community. One of the ways I have been doing that is through this monthly column, where I provide consumer tips on public safety matters.

For the most part, difficult times bring people together. But for dishonest actors, uncertain times equals dollar signs and the COVID-19 pandemic is no exception. With stimulus funds going up to $1,200 in stimulus funds, scammers have already begun devising ways to swindle folks from their money.

As stimulus checks begin arriving by mail and direct deposit, it’s important to be on the lookout for common scam strategies. Fake social media messages, phone calls, and bogus websites are common ways scammers try to take money from victims. By being alert and recognizing the strategies scammers use, you can keep your money in your bank account.

The IRS will not contact you:

• If you receive a phone call claiming to be from the IRS, it is a scam. The IRS will not contact you by phone and will not ask for any information in order for you to receive a stimulus check.

• You are not required to pay money in advance in order to receive your stimulus check. Any requests that you need to deposit money into a bank account is trying to scam you.

• If you need to set up direct deposit for your stimulus check, communicate directly with the IRS at irs.gov/coronavirus

Beware of social media messages and phone calls:

• There is no government agency that will contact you through social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

• Any personal messages claiming to be from the IRS, or any government agency, are fake.

• The number of scam calls and messages are likely to increase during the pandemic, so that scammers know many Americans will be getting a stimulus check.

• Even if a phone number looks legitimate, such as from a local area code, remain cautious as scammers can “spoof” fake numbers in order to appear more believable.

The stimulus check process is automatic:

• Scammers may send you phony links asking you to fill out a form, give out personal information, or pay an amount of money in advance. However, the stimulus check is processed automatically, so anyone asking you to volunteer any information is trying to scam you.

• Furthermore, there are no processing fees for the stimulus check. Anyone asking you to pay fees before receiving payment is lying.

• You cannot pay to speed up the process. Anyone who claims you can is not being truthful.

What to do if you think you have been scammed:

• Report it as soon as possible. Reporting the crime as soon as you can will give you a greater chance of stopping the culprits.

• Report stimulus funds theft to the California Attorney General or the Federal Trade Commission.

We are all dealing with enough, the last thing we should have to worry about during this pandemic is someone stealing the assistance we so badly need. By keeping these tips in mind, you can be better prepared to identify and prevent scams.

— District Attorney Summer Stephan

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Authors and gems at the beach
San Diego street names: Part two the series

Past Matters
Katherine Hon

As discussed in the previous Past Matters column, the original names of more than 250 streets in San Diego were changed by Ordinance No. 755 adopted May 21, 1900. This ordinance brought alphabetical order to San Diego neighborhoods. The source of names in alphabetical order in Ordinance No. 755 was Louis Jackson Davids, the relative new city engineer. He noted in his transmittal memorandum to the Board of Public Works that his suggestions for new street names were “taken from natural objects (trees, flowers etc.) or from men celebrated in Science, Literature, Statesmanship, War etc.: care being taken to maintain alphabetical order.”

Who were some of the celebrated gentlemen honored by street names that we still see today?

Authors in Point Loma and Ocean Beach

Ordinance No. 755 gave Point Loma neighborhoods their alphabetical authors from Addison to Zouch (later changed to Zola). Joseph Addison (1672-1719) was an English essayist and poet. Thomas Zouch (1737-1815) was an English clergyman and writer. These names and their alphabetical order in Ordinance No. 755 continued with Elliott through Ten Streets. The alphabet started with Aclot through Dumas for Twenty-seventh through Thirty-ninth streets in what was identified in Ordinance No. 755 as Mannasse & Schiller’s Addition and is now Loma Portal.

Meredith Street is no longer, but might have honored George Meredith (1828-1909), an English novelist and poet. Elliott Street remains, perhaps for Ebenezer Elliott (1751-1849), an English poet who became a passionate advocate for the poor, inspired by his own experience of being homeless, facing starvation and contemplating suicide.

For more about some of these alphabetical authors, visit the website http://reading-between-the-landumps.com/Site/Welcome. html which describes the 2013 book. “Reading Between the Lampposts: The Literary Giants of Loma Portal” edited by Elaine Fotinos Burrell and Karla Lapic. The book contains essays that highlight the lives of 26 authors memorialized by street names in Loma Portal. The essays were written by 26 neighborhood families based on their research of the author name of their street. The website notes that each biographical essay contains a photo or drawing of the author, list of works, excerpts of writings, and references for further reading.

Seventeen other tracts — including Ocean Beach, Pacific Beach, Morena, La Playa and West End — also had their numbered street names replaced with different names courtesy of City Engineer Davids in 1900.

Ocean Beach’s First through Seventh streets became the alphabetical Abbott, Bacon, Cable, Defoe, Ebers, Froude and Guizot streets. These can be tied to historians and writers from various countries. John Stevens Cabot Abbott (1805-3877) was an American historian whose popular books included works about Napoleon, the Civil War and Frederick the Great. Francis Bacon (1561-1626), an English philosopher, statesman and patron of libraries, was considered the father of empiricism. A possibility for Cable Street is George Washington Cable (1844-1925), who was considered to be the first modern southern writer. Daniel Defoe (1659-1731) was an English journalist who wrote the widely popular novel “Robinson Crusoe.” This street later became Sunset Cliffs Boulevard.

Ebers was (1837-1898) a German Egyptologist and novelist of historical fiction. He became known for purchasing a papyrus scroll dating from about 1500 BC from another collector in Luxor (Thebes) in 1872. The Ebers Papyrus is one of the oldest preserved medical documents in the world and extensively details the Egyptian understanding of physical and mental disorders and remedies of the time.

James Anthony Froude (1818-1894) was an English historian who wrote a controversial and partly autobiographical novel entitled “Nemesis of Faith.” Perhaps civil engineer Davids also wanted to honor James Froude’s brother, William Froude (1810-1879), an engineer who established a formula now known as the Froude number to predict the hydrodynamic behavior of full-size ship hulls from small-scale tests.

Francis Guizot (1787-1874) was a French historian and statesman who served many roles in the French government — including as the Prime Minister from 1847-1848 — and wrote popular histories of France and England.

The Mystery of Missouri Among Gems in Pacific Beach

Ordinance No. 755 gave Pacific Beach its gem street names in alphabetical order from Agate to Horneblend [sic] to replace the names of states also claimed in University Heights. Agate was Illinois, Beryl was Georgia, Chaledony was Idaho, Diamond was Alabama, Emerald was Vermont, Felspar [sic] was Massachusetts, Garnet was College, and Hornblend was California. Wait, you might be thinking — there is no California Street in University Heights. That is because California Street in University Heights was changed to Hamilton Street in 1899. Only California Street in Middletown was allowed to keep its name.

The complicated but fascinating story of other state street names in Pacific Beach
The in-office, knowledgeable person for anything plant related, he gets frequent emails from all over the country with questions about plants.

He explained, “For some reason, my mind remembers the botanical or Latin name of every plant and I can tell you where it will and won’t grow, how much water and light it needs, and what kind of soil it requires.”

Since he bought his condo on Oregon Heights 16 years ago, he has become the go-to guy in the community he calls “Between Heights,” as it sits between University Heights and Normal Heights.

Working with parents at Garfield and Binney Elementary schools, he has helped them plan out gardens, raised beds, and irrigation. But with the Covid-19 situation, everything has gone unmanaged “and the weeds are knee high by the 4th of July,” so on his own, he takes his battery-powered weed-wacker there every few weeks to keep things under control. “It really breaks my heart to see the parents’ and students’ hard work go down the drain.”

Over the years as a volunteer, he has been working with city planners on neighborhood bikeways, parking realignment, trees, stop signs, and roundabouts.

As the current president of the American Society of Landscape Architects, San Diego Chapter, Allen is hoping to meet again with the City of San Diego Community Forest Advisory Board regarding the City’s Tree Code Revision Project. This group meets regularly to revise code language as it applies to the 2008 General Plan and 2015 Climate Action Plan which both provide for increased tree canopy and green spaces to benefit the community.

At his cozy condo in an eight-unit building, Allen has worked with his neighbors to improve the building. To date, that includes all new plumbing and wiring, new windows, and new roof. To come is new stucco and painting, “I’m never going to sell it!”

Allen’s growing reputation about his work has resulted in improvements and renovations at neighboring buildings and properties where he can apply skills that he learned from his grandfather and the FFA: painting, welding, building with various materials, managing greenhouses and learning parliamentary procedures.

On his daily five-mile runs, Allen keeps up with community goings-on. Neighbors he meets call him frequently with questions about plants, hinges, trees, grievances, and city codes.

A Mr. Rogers-kind of guy, Allen says, “I’m just super elated that people call and am happy to speak with them. I just really care. It’s what I love doing.”

— Delle Willett has been a marketing and public relations professional for over 30 years, with an emphasis on conservation of the environment. She can be reached at dellewillett@gmail.com.
Diagnosed with Lupus and other autoimmune disorders as a teen, Brawner has known her condition is life-threatening. She said COVID-19 experiences have made her feel as though a spotlight is being put on her as an immunocompromised person, intensifying her precarious situation.

Brawner’s disability and related conditions are also invisible — which causes other issues. She was met with dirty looks when she used an early-morning shopping hour designated for seniors and immunocompromised people, even after she called the store ahead of time. Sometimes she explained her diagnoses, yet people rolled their eyes and tried to stop her from shopping.

“I am worried that I can’t keep up with the changes that are being made simply because of some things that I can’t control about my own health and the risk that’s associated with it,” Brawner said.

For chronically ill and disabled non-elderly adults, the disparities they’ve experienced have always existed because of societal ableism and accessibility barriers — people are just paying attention to it now.

“There’s already a lot in our society that excludes those with disabilities and health concerns,” said Anne. [Editor’s note: A pseudonym is being used to protect privacy.]

She faces the difficult prospect of looking for a job during the worst economic downturn the United States has ever seen. Although it is medically safer for her to work from home, financially she will need to take whatever job that is available.

In addition to financial and health concerns, she fears the “reopen” protesters who are not following guidelines are making it harder to reduce the spread of COVID-19 infections and deaths.

“This shouldn’t be a politicized issue,” the Downtown resident said. “This is my life you are politicizing.”

The divide between able-bodied and disabled people are widely shared on social media. Enrique Ramirez, a disabled Logan Heights resident, said it is particularly difficult to see people complaining about staying inside for a few months when this has been their reality for a lot longer given mobility issues.

“I see the privilege that comes along with that. [It] just kind of makes me even more aware of my unfortunate circumstance,” Ramirez said. “I just feel really disconnected from the world.”

Reopening may not appear to have a major effect on them as their life has looked seemingly the same before, during and after shelter-in-place.

But Ramirez also knows that some of the extra support they have received during the pandemic will soon disappear. They rely on mutual aid networks for rides to and from medical appointments.

As many volunteer head back to work, Ramirez will need to go back to using public transit and risk exposures to more people.

The pandemic has heightened Ramirez’ anxiety and mental health issues. They have been spending so little time outside that his doctors have boosted his Vitamin D supplement.

“I find myself really scared of leaving my house now,” they said. While COVID-19 has left some immunocompromised people more isolated and struggling than ever before, it also increased accessibility in other ways.

Changes that disability justice advocates have fought for decades for have been made quickly in some cases, such as widespread work-from-home movement and immediate returns to medically necessary and sanitary plastic straws and single-use utensils.

For those who can’t drive or are out of range of public transit, social and professional moves to virtual spaces — everything from concerts to legislative meetings — has made many realize how accessible our world could have been prior to the pandemic. Many hope these changes remain.

Mason, who uses the neopro-noun xie, started taking part in a non-binary support group. If that group returns to in-person meetings, xie will not be able to attend. Xie is doing more activities even as xie is leaving the house less.

“What’s been interesting about this crisis is that it’s given me the opportunity to do things from home on my computer,” Mason said.

Conferences and meetings are livestreamed now after claiming it was too technically, socially or financially difficult to do so in the past. Companies with previous policies claiming it was necessary to come into the office are letting all employees work from home.

The shift doesn’t just open doors to needless long-term historical employment bias, many medical appointments are finally virtual, critical for less-mobile disabled and chronically ill patients who can access better and more frequent medical care in safer home environments.

These virtual options prove that many of those places could accommodate disabled people all along.

“It’s unfortunate that it wasn’t until able-bodied people needed to be able to use these things that it finally got done,” said Kay Marie, a disabled City Heights resident.

In other ways, she said, “accessibility has gone out the window for deaf and hard of hearing communities. Kay Marie worked in audiology but is not deaf or hard of hearing herself. She knows her patients are struggling because
to LGBT+ people. “We meet with them on a regular basis throughout the year. They came in and did our all training in the fall and we are actively involved in different needs that they have.”

It was the first company in the county to have an ERG dedicated to diversity and inclusion efforts regarding LGBT+ people. In each of their locations, the LGBT+ ERG receives funding and celebrates Pride in their own way, although a global Pride celebration was planned for the first time this year. That celebration is still happening despite coronavirus but through themed weeks, Zoom backgrounds, and a virtual parade.

Through the funding provided to the ERG, HP has sponsored San Diego virtual Pride events, including an upcoming bingo fundraiser on June 3 at 4 p.m. with drag performer Paris Sukomi Max. The fundraiser will help support Pride’s year-round programming as well as the organization’s charitable giving to local LGBT+-serving nonprofits. SD Pride and its sponsors have also responded to specific needs in the community due to COVID-19. Tito’s Vodka is working with Pride to provide grocery cards to employees at local gay bars who are out of work. HP and Northrop Grumman sponsored a resume-building workshop led by Taylor Meadows of Indeed where 250 of the attendees were given feedback on their resumes.

The help offered to unemployed LGBT+ people is significant because community members historically have higher poverty and unemployment rates than the general population. Recent polling from the Human Rights Campaign shows the economic downturn has exacerbated these existing inequalities.

“An LGBT+ person, when you go looking for a job, there are some different factors at play,” said Sarafina Scapicchio, SD Pride’s director of philanthropy. She helped plan the virtual event to support unemployed community members.

Since Scapicchio works directly with the businesses involved in Pride, she has heard the criticism of Pride being too corporate.

“I think sometimes what young people could forget is that a lot of these people [who engage] are queer people, at least with our Pride,” she said. “I remember a time when you could not come out at work. You could not put a picture of your partner at your job or else you would be fired.”

Much of the engagement with Pride comes from company’s ERGs, which are comprised of LGBT+ people in the workplace. Those ERGs play a significant role in advocating for workplace protections and rights. The ERGs have planned diversity and inclusion trainings led by SD Pride on how to treat lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender employees.

The community found within ERGs allows for internal advocacy, can also play a role in where LGBT+ people choose to work.

“When I was switching companies, having an external presence [at Pride] was something that was very important for me as an individual,” said Jeff Willy, who leads the ERG at Vertex Pharmaceuticals.

Vertex’s ERG has long been present in Boston’s Pride parade and much more recently at the San Diego Pride for the first time this year until the coronavirus pandemic derailed it.

Local companies have had major presences in the SD Pride Parade for years. In 2019, over 400 Qualcomm employees, friends and staff marched in the parade. Qualcomm remains a sponsor of this year’s virtual events.

“Our internal LGBT+ employee resource group has been instrumental in continuing our celebration of Pride month in general and the Pride parade especially — they had a big role in Qualcomm’s chief diversity officer, said in a statement. “We look forward to continuing to work with SD Pride and hopefully attending the 2021 San Diego Pride Parade in person!”

— Kendra Sittin can be reached at kendra@sdnews.com.
Major event organizers embrace virtual world

With major public events continuing to be canceled, the choice for those remaining now becomes postponement—or going virtual.

That wasn’t even an option, or much of one, pre-Covid-19. But now, with no clear end to the pandemic in sight, event promoters are finding they’re run out of alternatives.

The question now becomes, is it worth it to stage a major event remotely? Will it be financially feasible with far more restrictions, and far fewer attendees?

And the answer, according to local event promoters is: It all depends.

Uptown News caught up with four event promoters in town – Sherry Ahern, Laurel McFarlane, Meredith Hall-Chand, and Armando Cepeda – to get their take on the viability of virtual events, and whether we’ll continue to see them more moving forward.

Laurel McFarlane, CEO of McFarlane Promotions, promotes numerous major events annually including the St. Patrick’s Day and Halloween block parties downtown, as well as Old Town’s Cinco de Mayo.

“It worked out great, the virtual fiesta went really well for the businesses there,” said McFarlane of the recent virtual Cinco de Mayo. “Businesses were slammed for that day, and consumers from all over had fun watching it virtually for two hours.”

But it can be really hard to do free events virtually, pointed out McFarlane, adding its almost unfair to compare live with remote.

“Live is a whole different thing, a whole different experience,” she said. “And with free events, unless you’ve got sponsors to support it, it may actually end up costing you more (to stage).”

Sherry Ahern of La Jolla, founder/promoter of both the La Jolla Farmers Market and the La Jolla Art & Wine Festival, recently got the market reopened by adhering to strict state health guidelines. But the La Jolla Art & Wine Festival ended up being postponed until 2021. Ahern said it just didn’t pencil out.

“You would have had to have social distancing with people walking about ensuring they weren’t in clumps,” she said. “And we also would have had to have social distancing in the wine and beer garden, … not to mention that a lot of our event sponsors might not be in their best shape then.”

Adding it all up Ahern concluded. “We just wanted to be the best we could be for that event. We just didn’t think it would be feasible to do it.”

Meredith Hall-Chand with the Susan G. Komen San Diego Breast Cancer Foundation said it worked out for her group to go ahead and virtually stage a fundraising dinner on May 29 for the three-day event, presently planned for Sept. 26.

“With a virtual event you really have to think creatively to make sure you’re engaging your community,” Hall-Chand said. “And you have to have the capacity to figure out how to go virtually. You have to figure out a way to do it from a different platform.”

The answer for Komen in doing its fundraising dinner virtually was to have had a lot of online attractions.

“We have videos showing and talking about (cancer) patients here in San Diego, Hall-Chand said. “We’re having a silent auction, VIP packages, a doctor from Scripps speaking, an electronic violinist and a large contingent of the restaurant community that supports us. We already have almost 300 people signed up and they’re excited about what’s going on at events and got them to interact.”

“Virtual is still a viable tool for that community that supports us,” said Cepeda. “It just makes sense to offer virtual services from here on out. Even if we do go back to normal, virtual is still a unique way to engage people and get them to interact.”

Adderd Cepeda: “Once you get past the learning curve, virtual becomes more comfortable. But it will never replace virtual services from here on out. Even if we do go back to normal, virtual is still a unique way to engage people and get them to interact.”

“Mentality, events have ‘taken on a new life,’” said Cepeda. “The new formats have been really cutting-edge.” he said. “We’ve been able to do virtual events for graduations, fundraisers, galas, fashion, etc.”

Is the trend toward hosting more virtual events a temporary trend in response to the pandemic, or a permanent change in event promotion?

“The East Coast had already been doing more virtual stuff with the possibility of hurricanes and such,” said McFarlane. “More and more people are getting exposed to events online. Though there’s something really amazing about live events. You just can’t go back to virtual. Probably we’re going to have a hybrid of live, and virtual, when this is done.”

“I believe it (virtual) is deeply embedded now in the public consciousness,” said Cepeda. “It just makes sense to offer virtual services from here on out. Even if we do go back to normal, virtual is still a unique way to engage people and get them to interact.”

Adderd Cepeda: “Once you get past the learning curve, virtual becomes more comfortable. But it will never replace virtual services from here on out. Even if we do go back to normal, virtual is still a unique way to engage people and get them to interact.”

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Police parked at the scene while protesters created chalk outlines.

A group photo of the protesters with posters (Photos by Kendra Sitton)

Renters and activists staged a ‘chalk outline protest’ outside of the Mission Hills home of Sheriff Bill Gore on Tuesday, May 26. At least 160 renter households were due to be evicted when protections for renters during the coronavirus pandemic were put in place.

The protesters claim that evicting people in the midst of the pandemic could potentially lead them to be exposed to and die from COVID-19. The group made chalk outlines of dead bodies on the street and made signs with 160 bloody handprints representing the 160 households. Several officers and cars were present at the scene but did not block off the residential street to drivers.

On May 7, the department announced that it was going ahead with eviction orders put in place before Gov. Gavin Newsom’s emergency shelter-in-place order went into effect. At least 160 San Diego County residents were due to be evicted. The department that same day reversed its decision, saying in a statement: “We have heard from several elected officials. Although they agree serving these evictions are perfectly legal, they expressed concerns about the impact.”

Although Gov. Newsom ordered an eviction moratorium in March, that order runs until June 1, at which time, the Sheriff’s Department argues it could proceed with pending evictions.

Meanwhile, District 3 City Councilman Chris Ward pledged to bring forward a proposal for rent relief for San Diegans at the City Council meeting on Tuesday, June 2.

“Renters are struggling under the financial weight of COVID-19. This is one of the most pressing issues that we must address,” Ward said on Twitter.