An adventurous life on the rise
Tate Birchmore’s journey takes him from La Mesa to Hollywood

By JEFF CLEMETSON | La Mesa Courier

At the age of 12, Tate Birchmore is already living a dream life. The La Mesa native is fast becoming recognized as a rising talent, having earned the 2020 Young Entertainer’s Award for Best Leading Actor in a Feature Film for his role in the Vudu channel’s original “Adventure Force 5.” He was also awarded Best Young Actor at the Horror Haus Film Festival and has already appeared in hundreds of other television shows, feature films and shorts.

La Mesa Women’s Club sells clubhouse

By JEFF CLEMETSON | La Mesa Courier

When the La Mesa Woman’s Club (LMWC) held its general meeting in March, the members did not realize it would be the last time in 2020 they would see the inside of their building. The LMWC clubhouse, located at 5220 Wilson St., is currently in escrow and is expected to close early next year.

LMWC was established in 1902, making it the city’s oldest civic organization. The club has met in the Wilson Street clubhouse since it was built in the 1950s.

La Mesa Women’s Club building was recently sold to developers.

NEWS BRIEFS

VILLAGE ASSOCIATION PLANS MODIFIED HOLIDAY IN THE VILLAGE

With the uncertainty of tradition for the 2020 holiday season, the La Mesa Village Association has announced the return of the annual Holiday in the Village in a modified Craft Market format.

The modified event has been approved by county and city officials and will be held on Saturday, Dec. 5 from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. in the La Mesa Village.

This year’s Holiday in the Village will take all precautions, under health official advisement, to ensure this Holiday Market is a safe and cheerful experience for all. Temperature checks will be required upon entry and face coverings and social distancing will be required throughout. Directional arrows will guide the flow of guests to easy spacing amongst groups. Due to COVID-19 regulations, there will not be live, musical entertainment this year, with the exception of carolers. However, the event “will have festive holiday music throughout the streets as you shop, dine and enjoy the merriment,” according to a post on the La Mesa Village Association website.

Vendors interested in selling craft gifts at the Holiday in the Village event can find information about both at lamesavillageassociation.org.

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La Mesa Women’s Club celebrates member’s 100th birthday

On Nov. 4, Gertrude Findley, a 35-year member of the La Mesa Woman’s Club, celebrated her 100th birthday. In lieu of an indoor party, club members honored her by driving by her home in a caravan of decorated cars, honking and cheering.

Gertrude was born in Des Moines, Iowa to parents from Norway and Denmark. She grew up with three brothers and a sister. After graduating from high school, she worked as a bookkeeper. She met her husband Paul, who was a farmer in Grimes, Iowa. They married in 1942, and then Paul was drafted and sent to England with the Army Signal Corps. He spent the next four years working with military photographers and was assigned to photograph various concentration camps following their liberation at the end of the war.

Gertrude and Paul moved to Burbank in the ‘50s with their daughter, Jean Pauline McCoy. After Paul’s death in 1985, Gertrude moved to El Cajon and joined the La Mesa Woman’s Club. She has been an avid golfer and world traveler. She enjoys spending time with her family of two grandsons and two great-granddaughters. She keeps alert and active by playing bridge several times a month. With her elegant and sophisticated demeanor, Gertrude is a well-respected member of the La Mesa Woman’s Club.

Gertrude Findley (center) with friends and family at her socially-distanced 100th birthday party. (Courtesy La Mesa Women’s Club)
Difference Maker: Stephanie Cook

By JEFF CLEMETSON | La Mesa Courier

In August, the San Diego Women’s Foundation (SDWF) announced La Mesa resident Stephanie Cook as its new executive director.

Cook had previously worked at SDWF for over two years managing programs, communications and grantmaking. In her new role, Cook will be responsible for upholding SDWF’s mission of connecting, educating, and inspiring women to come together in collective philanthropy.

“Over the past two years, I have watched SDWF members embrace philanthropic best practices, take on tough issues with our grants, and work to understand and implement diversity, equity and inclusion strategies,” said Cook. “I am constantly inspired by our members’ eagerness to learn and grow, and I look forward to working with our incredible network of changemakers to improve lives in our community.”

Cook was born and raised in San Diego – Lakeside, to be exact. She attended SDSU for her undergrad degree and majored in Women’s Studies before attending grad school at the University of Chicago where she majored in Latin American Studies and researched women’s movements in Latin America. After grad school, she returned to San Diego and began working as director of programming for Lawyers Club of San Diego – a local, nonprofit working to advance women in the law and society — before she left to join the team at SDWF.

La Mesa Courier recently caught up with Cook to find out more about her work at SDWF and what motivates her to be a Difference Maker.

What inspired you to be a Difference Maker and go into nonprofit work?

Having spent my undergrad and graduate studies researching women’s movements around the world, I knew I wanted to get involved and make a difference when I graduated. I’ve been fortunate enough to work for two different philanthropic women-driven, nonprofit organizations in San Diego, and it’s the remarkable volunteers and community leaders I’ve met through those experiences that motivate and inspire me to work for equity and change in our community.

What does SDWF do?

Our mission is to connect, educate and inspire women to come together in collective philanthropy. Our 200-plus members come together each year to learn about critical needs in our community and then pool their philanthropic dollars to make large grants to local nonprofits working on those issues. Since our founding in 2000, we have granted more than $4 million to over 90 nonprofit organizations, touching more than 88,000 lives in our community!

What, if any, changes do you see ahead for SDWF?

Over the past two years, I have worked on the foundation’s objectives and what motivates her to be a Difference Maker.

What goals have you set for the foundation since taking over?

I’ve been fortunate to take on this new role right as Cindi Hill began her term as SDWF Board President. And I came to gether to discuss our vision for SDWF and decided that diversity, equity and inclusion would be our primary focus this year, and we’ve already achieved so much.

SDWF and decided that diversi ty, equity and inclusion would be our primary focus this year, and we’ve already achieved so much.

Oasis receives grant for adult tech education hub

Cox Communications awarded a $130,000 grant to San Diego Oasis, a nonprofit organization on a mission to change the way people experience aging and pursue vibrant, healthy, productive, and meaningful lives through education and community service. This gift will empower San Diego Oasis to create the Oasis Innovation Center, a collaboration hub which will focus on the adoption of innovative technology for older adults, relevant to older adult wellness, healthcare, and lifelong learning needs, as well as provide a virtual technology series in the interim.

This is one of the largest grant awards from Cox Communications in California to a single nonprofit.

“We know how important it is for older adults to be comfortable with technology and the internet as 70% report using it throughout the day,” said Sam Attisha, senior vice president and region manager for Cox Communications in California. “The Innovation Center is an important community collaboration between Oasis and Cox to help older adults adopt technology that will improve their quality of life, such as telehealth, enable them to successfully age in place, and continue connecting them in new ways with those they care about most.”

The Oasis Innovation Center will be among the first of its kind in the United States and the only one in the state of California. It will be located in Grossmont Center in La Mesa and will also provide distance learning and technical support virtually.

“Our goal is to create a sustainable and scalable model with technology adoption and innovation to transform the experience of aging,” says Simona Valanciute, president and CEO of San Diego Oasis. “Thanks to Cox Communications and their generous gift, seniors around the region will have access to technology training and programs to continue stimulating their minds and providing a social outlet now and into the future.”
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Guest Editorial

How local churches can foster racial justice and reconciliation

By DAVID E. CUMMINGS

Bishop AB Vines of New Seasons Church in Spring Valley knows a thing or two about racial bias first-hand. “If I get a ticket for a light not being lit, there’s five cops, guaranteed, because I’m 5 feet 10 inches, 300 pounds. That’s not happening to you [looking at a white person] for the same things. I went to college. I’ve been married for over 25 years, been in ministry for 30 years. I became vice president of the [Southern Baptist] Convention, but I still get nervous when a cop comes by. All he sees is a black guy. I should not have to have that fear. You [looking at me again] don’t have that fear. I live that fear every single day.”

New Seasons is a large, multi-site church comprising a diverse array of ethnicities. “Everyone goes through pain, everyone wants to experience love, and we can’t survive without hope,” says Vines. “Everybody at some point needs those three things. It’s universal. Despite our shared humanity, however, the majority population sets the standards for intelligence, success, and acceptability.”

“The Anglo population thinks or has been thinking or assuming that they are the model and the measure for success,” says Juan-Daniel Espitia, Pastor of Hispanic Ministries at Solana Beach Presbyterian Church in North County. “The Anglo ethnocentric perspective has criminalized whomever looks different, whoever has an accent, whoever’s skin is like mine [brown]. It has been criminalized and thought of as a thief or someone who is going to hurt you or me and our children so we must get rid of them.”

While the church may not be able to undo four centuries of racial injustice entirely on its own, it is in a unique position to facilitate one of the greatest needs of our time. According to City Life Church Pastor Dale Hamilton, “there’s a lot of wisdom we can gain from people in these neighborhoods. For the longest time I thought that I needed to speak up on behalf of people, and [now] I’m trying to learn how to speak up for people to listen to other people. We need to have a learning posture from all people.”

As close communities with common beliefs and values, churches are ideally situated to foster open and honest conversations about race.

Espitia agrees. “I think one of the things we need to cultivate is learning to listen to each other,” says Espitia. “You can never get rid of all of the assumptions, prejudices, judging before, and after that. The problem is that there is fear and ignorance about the ‘other.’ We need to learn to listen with empathy and respect.”

“Miw – I i – Church of the Nazarene in City Heights takes this principle one step further by ensuring that racial justice is represented in the church’s leadership. “I think the beauty in the multi-congregational model is that we make decisions together and govern together when it comes to ministry or responses to, say, Black Lives Matter,” says Mid-City Pastor Becky Modesto. “Because you have so many different cultural perspectives, you have to really listen to what’s going on to have people who are different than you at the table is really important.”

“During recent protests in San Diego to police brutality. Mid-city didn’t unilateral take action to express its opinions. Instead, they reached out to the local Black leaders to hear what they felt would be most helpful from the church. “I called several leaders here and just asked, ‘how can we best walk alongside you?’” says Modesto. “[It’s about] listening to people’s stories, that empathy of just sitting there, just listening and understanding.”

Empathetic conversation with people who are not like us or with whom we disagree, however, is not easy. “One of the problems is that we’re not willing to see if perhaps we’re participating in systemic racism and benefitting from it,” says Hamilton. “We’re just willing to say, ‘I’m not a racist.’ And there’s so much more digging to do.”

Overt racism is easy to spot and easy to correct. It’s the subtle biases, the things we think and say and do without even realizing that are most insidious. “If I go into an elevator, a white woman is going to hold the door for lighter. When I go shopping at Nordstrom’s, I’m going to get followed. Those things have got to be really recognized and dealt with,” says Vines.

Espitia believes that the kind of dialogue that makes a real difference requires humility. “Humility is the one characteristic that would allow us to see ‘the others’ the way God sees them. Humility would be the prerequisite.”

With humility and empathy as the guiding principles, Espitia and Solana Beach Presbyterian Church held monthly meetings on hot-button immigration issues. “Many ministers are aware of these things, but they are scared of what their congregation is going to do,” he told me. After a year of complex immigration conversations, they decided to ask a parishioner named Pedro who had migrated to the United States to share his story with the church body. “When he presented his testimony, the congregation started to applaud and stood up.” No, one, not even Espitia, expected that kind of gracious response. “Churches need to find their voice, and they need to be the nourishing environment where open, honest, humble, and respectful conversations occur.”

Today, the local church has an opportunity – some would say a responsibility – to step up and make a tangible difference in the lives of people in our communities who feel unheard, unvalued, and often unwelcome. The time has come to open our minds, our hearts, and our front doors to empathetic and humble conversations about racism in San Diego.”

—David Edward Cummings, PhD is a professor of biology at Point Loma Nazarene University, and author of “Everybody’s Got Bears,” available on Amazon.

News from your County Supervisor

By DIANNE JACOB

Triple-header: Three big, long-awaited projects are starting construction in Lakeside. Together, they will further boost the town’s economy and quality of life.

* Lakeside Equestrian Park. The nearly 14-acre project at Moreno Avenue and Willow Road will include a covered arena, open arena with shaded bleacher seating and a multi-purpose building.
* Lindo Lake beautification. The east basin is being restored to its natural state, while the west basin is also set for major improvements. Sediment will be removed from replanted and nearly 300 fish habitat and spawning structures will be placed on the lakebed. New amenities will include ADA-accessible walking trails, kayak rentals, fishing stations and a fishing pier.
* Lakeside Library. A new county library will be built on Woodside Avenue across Chatwal Road. The 16,400-square-foot structure will replace the town’s 5,000-square-foot library, built in the 1960s. It will include a 150-seat community room, five study rooms and a Friends of the Library bookstore. It is expected to open in October 2022.

A huge thank you to all the community leaders who worked with me to make these great projects possible!

County Supervisor death: I recently stood with other leaders of the region’s Meth Strike Force to release the region’s annual meth report card. There were a record 546 local meth-related deaths in 2019. There’s no sugarcoating it: Meth is destroying lives and families in our county. These tragic deaths were unnecessary and avoidable. The strike force includes the best and brightest in law enforcement and treatment services, but we clearly need to do even more as a region to address this deadly addiction.

In 1996, when we created the strike force, there were so many meth labs in San Diego County that it was known as the “Meth Capital of the World.” That’s no longer true, thanks to the hard work of this group and the community.

—Dianne Jacob represents District 2 on the San Diego County Board of Supervisors. For questions or comments about your county government, call 619-531-5522 or email dianne.jacob@sdcounty.ca.gov.
As of this writing, all Americans are anxiously awaiting the outcome of the Presidential race. To get it all sorted out may take some time, but we will be patient in order to assure the votes are counted properly and the end result is a fair one. Many are commenting, not on the process of the voting, but on the election for president. It will be over when results are duly certified, not when media conglomerates decide. We stand with President Trump in using every avenue to ensure all legal votes are counted so that the American people can have confidence in their elections,” San Diego County Republican Party Chairman Tony Kvaric said in a statement to the Voice of San Diego on Monday, Nov. 9.

Meanwhile, we are celebrating the apparent victory of Darrell Issa in the CA-50 Congressional District. Joel Anderson is still in the race, and the campaign, and working tirelessly for the American people can have confidence in their elections,” San Diego County Republican Party Chairman Tony Kvaric said in a statement to the Voice of San Diego on Monday, Nov. 9.

We are proud of President Trump for continuing to fight for the American people and accomplishing all that he had promised. It is also helpful to focus on other events. In honor of Veteran’s Day on Nov. 11 volunteers from Republican Women of California-Navajo Canyon will be delivering cakes to the Veteran’s Hospital in Chula Vista. This is a long held tradition of our club, and it is always wonderful to see how much the veterans appreciate the remembrance in honor of their service to our country. It is also a treat for our members to visit with them as they share their memories. We owe our liberty and freedom to those who fought and sacrificed their lives. Let us never forget.

Republican Women of California-Navajo Canyon will be delivering cakes to the Veteran’s Hospital in Chula Vista. This is a long held tradition of our club, and it is always wonderful to see how much the veterans appreciate the remembrance in honor of their service to our country.

A very special thank you to the voters who voted for me, believed in me, contributed to the campaign, and helped get the word out. Thank you La Mesa!

I would like to thank the people that helped me with my campaign:

- My wife, Angela Durden
- My good friend and campaign manager, Jeff Litteken
- Darren Honda
- Alexis Durden
- Michaela Barney
- Jack Rowell
- Gabe Giordano
- Jessyka Heredia
- Derek Vinyard
- My Helix Family

Congratulations to Colin Parent and Jack Shu for being elected to La Mesa City Council.

Alexander Hamilton was no fan of democracy; he generally favored an elected monarch, and he feared the masses having too much power. But even Hamilton could foresee that, at least occasionally, the presidency might fall to an unqualified actor. And if that were to happen, the electoral process itself was to impose some moral certainty, to rein in such an ominous threat as would be presented by a trespasser who was not eminently endowed with requisite qualifications. This month, faced with another grave threat, the American people responded with moral certainty. Even with a potentially deadly virus cracking in the air around them, Americans stood in line for hours to cast a vote, starting weeks before Election Day. Millions voted by mail for the first time. And just as in the spring, when we hailed our heroic frontline healthcare workers, this fall we saw the heroism of election workers all across the nation, their quiet resolve visible in the eyes above their masks. They stood in spartan and cavernous rooms, working tirelessly for days on end, to ensure that millions of our fellow citizens’ votes were handled with scrupulous integrity.

In an historic display of democratic resolve, with turnout not seen in more than a century, the American people overwhelmingly rejected Donald Trump. Joe Biden received more votes than any other presidential candidate in U.S. history. By the time all the votes in California and New York are tabulated, somewhere around 80 million Americans will have condemned Trump to the sad list of presidents — only four in the last 100 years — who were so ineffective they failed to earn a second term from voters. In what must be the most stinging rebuke to his deformed psyche, Donald Trump will now and forever be known as a loser.

In typical fashion, Trump is petulantly whining about being treated unfairly, and making baseless claims of election fraud, but the American people were handled with scrupulous integrity. This process of election affords a moral certainty that the office of President will seldom fall to the lot of any man who is not in an eminent degree endowed with the requisite qualifications.”

- Alexander Hamilton

To brighten up their holiday season with the donation of our club, NOVEMBER’S MEETING was held at the beautiful new Legacy Resort Hotel in Mission Valley. It was our first “in person” meeting since February and we certainly were looking forward to it. Our speaker was Michael Harrison, District Chief of Staff for Office of CA-50 District Chief of Staff. He discussed elections results and political updates.

A cake delivered to the Veteran’s Hospital in Chula Vista (Courtesy RWNavajo Canyon)

“Please stay up to date with our meeting schedule by checking our website RWCNavajo Canyon.org and on Facebook at Republican Women of California Navyo Canyon.

—Pat Boerner writes on behalf of the Republican Women of California-Navajo Canyon.

A cake delivered to the Veteran’s Hospital in Chula Vista

Thank you, La Mesa!
impropriety. But Americans no longer need care about Trump's pathetic self-pity. On Jan. 20, 2021, Donald Trump will again be just another dyspeptic old crank on Twitter. And as a private citizen, Trump might wish to recall his claims of being a “law and order” president. Because once he can no longer hide from prosecution in the White House, he should think about getting his affairs in order, because he will soon have to face the law.

Meanwhile, here in San Diego County, voters also overwhelmingly chose Democratic candidates to represent them, and to assume the levers of local governance. Five of the region’s six U.S. congressional seats are held by Democrats, as are five of seven State Assembly seats. For the first time in 30 years, the County Board of Supervisors will have a Democratic majority. In the City of San Diego, voters approved the slow-rolling devastation of San Diego, voters approved a measure to create a Police Review Board, an action already endorsed by the La Mesa City Council. These are the priorities of elected officials who heard the voice of the people, and who intend to answer that call.

So in two weeks, at our Thanksgiving tables, as Americans and as San Diegans, we can raise a glass in gratitude. To give thanks for a return to truth and decency in the White House and to express appreciation for the prospects of good local government. And speaking of the holidays, we hope you might join us for our December meeting. It’s a holiday party on Zoom, with entertainment and an opportunity to contribute to local charities. We’ll be collecting socks, toiletries, canned goods and other staples for folks who are in the greatest need this holiday season. The meeting starts at 7 p.m., preceded by a half hour of freestyle conversation starting at 6:30 pm. Zoom details at lmfdens.com/links.

—Sean Quintal writes on behalf of the La Mesa Foothills Democratic Club.

**LOCAL ELECTION RESULTS ROUNDUP**

San Diego county voter turnout: 63.4%

**NATIONAL**

President: Biden – 60.21%, Trump – 37.46%

CA-53: Sara Jacobs – 59.91%, Georgette Gomez – 40.49%

**STATE**

State Senate 39th District: Toni Atkins – 66.18%, Linda Blankenship – 33.82%

State Assembly 79th District: Shirley Weber – 65.38%, John Moore – 34.62%

**COUNTY**

Board of Supervisors District 2: Joel Anderson – 50.05%, Steve Vaus – 49.95%

**CITY**

City Council, two seats: Colin Parent – 24.20%, Jack Shu – 23.57%, Kristine Alessio – 22.73%, Laura Lothian – 18.71%, Allan Durden – 17.08%, Mark Papenfuss – 3.71%

**SCHOOLS**

Grossmont Union High Governing Board: Elva Salinas – 53.43%, Justin Siagle – 32.11%, Jim Stieringer – 14.46%


*S结果 as of Nov. 24. San Diego County Registrar of Voters.

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**HOLIDAY IN THE VILLAGE**

Craft Market & Holiday Cheer

Dec. 5th from 10am - 9pm.

Get covered with health insurance in 2021

Covered California is urging people to “get covered and stay covered” during the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, not only with masks to fight against the pandemic, but also with quality health care coverage. Open enrollment is underway right now, and during these trying times, having a health plan you can count on is more important than ever before.

An estimated 100,000 people remain uninsured in San Diego County, even though they are eligible for financial help through Covered California or low-cost options like coverage through Medi-Cal.

“The pandemic shines a light on the importance of health insurance and access to quality care, and now is the time to sign up for coverage through Covered California,” said Peter V. Lee, executive director of Covered California. “We will be reaching into every corner of the state to encourage Californians to keep COVID-safe and to get health care coverage that works for them.”

The good news for people in San Diego County is that premiums will remain relatively unchanged in 2021. Covered California announced the rate change for the region will be -1.5 percent in 2021, which is lower than the statewide average change of 0.6 percent. More importantly, consumers may be able to pay less than they are paying now, by an average of -13.3 percent. If they shop around and switch to the lowest-cost plan in the same metal tier.

“Providing access to affordable health care coverage is more critical than ever as our state and nation continue to navigate this pandemic,” said Gov. Gavin Newsom. “Covered California opens the door to quality care by making financial assistance available to help Californians get the coverage they need. Now is the time to get covered and stay covered.”

In an effort to promote open enrollment and make clear the connection between insurance coverage and the COVID pandemic, Covered California will be mailing masks to its record 1.5 million enrollees and provide them to all new consumers who sign up during the open-enrollment period. All consumers will be asked to wear the masks to prevent the spread of the virus, while spreading the word about open enrollment.

“The pandemic is front and center in all of our lives, which means the issues of health and well-being are more important than ever before,” Lee said. “Getting covered with a mask will help protect Californians and their families and friends; getting covered with a health plan will help protect people if they get sick.”

Open enrollment, which is the one time of the year when eligible Californians can sign up for health care coverage without needing to meet any requirements, runs through Jan. 11. In addition, in order to help bring the cost of coverage with in reach, the state of California will continue to provide more financial help to eligible consumers in 2021 through a subsidy program. Overall, the financial help from the federal government, the state, or both, helps the average person save about 80 percent off the cost of their monthly premium.

The most recent data shows there are 113,340 Covered California consumers in San Diego County. Depending on their ZIP code, people in these counties will once again be able to choose plans from Blue Shield of California, Health Net, Kaiser Permanente, Molina Healthcare and Sharp Health Plan.

Consumers can see their options and find out whether they are eligible for financial help by visiting Covered California’s website at CoveredCA.com and using the Shop and Compare Tool. Consumers who do not have health insurance will be able to begin signing up for 2021 coverage in the fall. Others with special qualifying life events, like losing their coverage or moving, can enroll year-round. Medi-Cal enrollment is also year-round.

Interested consumers should go to CoveredCA.com to find out if they qualify for financial help and find free local help to enroll. They can contact the Covered California service center for enrollment assistance by calling 800-300-1506.

and when it is safe again to gather in person.”

The Oasis Innovation Center will offer technology classes and workshops, technology demonstrations, a “Tech Help Bar” for in-person and online tech support, a telehealthcare center, and research studies relevant to supporting the needs of the community of older adults. The Innovation Center will also include a Cox Smart Home education hub, which will highlight how older adults can use smart technologies in their home to live more independently, stay connected to family and friends, improve their quality of life and wellness, and lower hospital readmissions.

At the onset of the shelter-in-place orders due to the COVID-19 pandemic in mid-March 2020, the leaders at the nonprofit San Diego Oasis had to make very quick decisions on how to continue to deliver their classes and workshops virtually. Until then, all of their classes were delivered in-person at more than 40 locations throughout San Diego County.

Although San Diego Oasis’ mission is to change the way people experience aging, adjusting to a 100% fully online environment was a big change and risk. The team trained and coached their professors and experts in history, humanities, languages, technology, art, finance, fitness, and more to bring hundreds of presentations online. It has paid off for the nonprofit, in ways they could never imagine, and created a nationally recognized virtual senior center, replacing their physical community presence temporarily. San Diego Oasis has seen positive growth in their class attendance and this grant will allow them to further serve those who not only have embraced the online environment but also provide confidence to other older adults who are trying to adapt to technology. “Our popular Senior Tech Fair held every fall has proven to be a tremendous value to older adults in the region. The Oasis Innovation Center will allow us to expand these programs and workshops on a more consistent basis, reach more seniors, and boost confidence in technology use among older adults,” said Valanciute.

Prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, social isolation was already an epidemic among seniors. “Studies show social isolation can be as bad for your health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day and can cause debilitating health issues in persons age 55 and up,” said Valanciute. “Online learning and socialization are critical for mental health and wellness in the months to come. This grant from Cox Communications enables us to advance our programs and expand inclusion to San Diego County seniors, which is an effective method to combat social isolation.”

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Stephanie Cook
CONTINUED FROM Page 4

We fundraised and made grants in partnership with the Latina Giving Circle to local nonprofits working for racial justice; we’ve brought together a task force to apply a DEI lens to our operations and determine areas for improvement; and we launched a DEI Education Series to help us learn about and advance equity in our organization and community.

Having spent the last two years managing our grants process, one of my goals as executive director is to build authentic partnerships with the incredible nonprofits in our community, and so much of what I had envisioned fits right in with the equity work we’re doing. We’re looking at every aspect of our grant process and making adjustments to ensure that we are listening to and centering the voices of those we hope to serve with our grants. We’ve lifted program restrictions on our grants to allow our nonprofit partners the flexibility to put those unrestricted funds to use towards their highest priority. And we’re working to break down the barriers between funder and grantee by building a more transparent and streamlined grants process.

How has COVID affected the work the foundation does? What impact do you hope to make with the Cycle 21 grants program? What do you look for in recipients of grant money?

COVID has significantly impacted nonprofits in our community, not to mention the populations they serve.

Early in the crisis we shifted our funding strategy and released all restrictions on our existing Cycle 19 grants serving survivors of human trafficking as well as the Cycle 20 grants we awarded in June 2020 to serve refugees, asylum seekers, and asylum seekers. We did this so that our nonprofit partners could have the flexibility to pivot as the crisis unfolded and put those funds to use towards their highest priorities. Our Cycle 21 focus is housing and we’ve brought in a variety of local experts to talk about the impact of COVID on housing stability in San Diego so that we can keep emerging COVID needs in mind through the selection process.

We’ve learned that COVID has caused a spike in immediate needs — socially-distanced shelters for people experiencing homelessness and rent and mortgage assistance for folks impacted by job loss as a result of COVID, but we’ve also heard that we won’t see systemic change in the housing sphere without significant policy advocacy work. In light of this, we’re looking to partner with a combination of organizations working towards short and long-term solutions.

Cook’s appointment to executive director happens to coincide with another milestone for the nonprofit — its 20th anniversary.

To learn more about the San Diego Women’s Foundation, please visit sdwfoundation.org.

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

STEPHANIE COOK
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4
By ROBIN DOHRN-SIMPSON

Carol Tolosko created Centifonti’s restaurant as a nod to her great grandfather Cosmo Centifonti who immigrated with his wife Carmela, in the late 1800s from Abruzzi, Italy to Burlington, New Jersey. Cosmo started his “One Stop Shop” — a delicatessen, with an ice cream parlor, candy store, smoking lounge and a bar. Tolosko wished to emulate the concept with her own eatery located in the Village of La Mesa.

Centifonti’s is a restaurant with an eclectic menu of Italian and Californian favorites — something for everyone, children and adults. You’ll find a bar featuring 25 craft beers on tap, a gelateria and also a candy store. Carol and her daughter are fourth and fifth generation chocolate makers, who make their own chocolate goodies. Carol’s mother, until recently, made the candy and caramel apples so loved by patrons. The house-made gelato is a specialty that Stacey Robinson takes very seriously. He loves to experiment with flavors and follows the philosophy “something unique sells”. The fig, cinnamon, walnut and whiskey gelato is a favorite. Full of unique yet compatible flavors that make the mouth beg for more. After sampling a variety of the gelatos, the chocolate was definitely another favorite — very rich and creamy.

The restaurant, which is open daily, serves breakfast, lunch and dinner. A unique breakfast favorite is the Southwest Breakfast Bowl. This is a bread bowl filled with Centifonti potatoes (red potatoes with red and green bell peppers and onions) smothered in house-made chili, two eggs any style, cilantro, tomatoes, avocado and more.

Fig, cinnamon, walnut and whiskey gelato
Clam Linguine (Photos by Robin Dohrn-Simpson)
Strawberry topped Waffle (Photos by Robin Dohrn-Simpson)

**Centifonti’s**

CONTINUED FROM Page 12

sprinkled with cheddar and cotija cheese. If this isn’t enough, you can have it topped with chipotle cream.

If you prefer a sweeter meal, try the French toast with thick Texas toast dipped in a custard batter flavored with Amaretto, cinnamon and vanilla sprinkled with sliced almonds and grilled to a golden brown.

For a healthy alternative try their house-made granola with a mixture of grains, nuts, seeds and raisins, sweetened with honey. Cover with your choice of milk. Soy milk or almond milk.

Lunch and dinner offer an assortment of burgers, paninis, soups and salads, as well as full entrees of American and Italian food. If Italian food is on your wish list, try the Spicy Penne Pasta, Lasagna, Spaghetti and Meatballs, Ravioli and Fettucini Alfredo. Not all entrees are Italian, but all are flavorful and made from fresh, local ingredients. The good news for gluten-free eaters is they offer gluten-free pasta.

For the competitive beer drinkers, try the 128-ounce Das Boot filled with your favorite brew. Or for the not so competitive, try the 64-ounce option. Ring the bell once you’ve finished.

“My motto is: Something unique sells and treat the customer like family,” Tolosko said. And it’s working. Centifonti’s has been in business for 15 years and going strong.

What’s next for Tolosko? A speakeasy with dining and dancing. Like her food, she has an eclectic assortment of musical acts who are waiting to transport San Diegans away for an hour or two.

For current hours and specials go to centifontis.com.

—Robin Dohrn-Simpson is a local freelance food and travel writer. Reach her at dohrnsimpson@hotmail.com.

Caramel Apples

**ROOT VEGGIE GRATIN**

*2 fennel builds, ends and fronds removed, then sliced thinly*
*2 cups heavy cream*
*1 cup of chicken stock*
*1 teaspoon salt and good pinch of pepper*
*1 tablespoon of fresh thyme leaves (dried thyme can also be used)*
*2 cups of grated Gruyere or Swiss cheese*
*1/2 cup Parmesan cheese*

**DIRECTIONS:** Heat oven to 350 degrees. Butter or oil a 10-by-13 baking dish.

Sauté onions and garlic in oil. Combine remaining ingredients in a bowl and toss to coat. Pour into the baking dish and bake for one and 1 hour 30 minutes or until tender, bubbly and golden brown. Serve warm.

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**Wishing you warm and cozy holidays from Anthony’s La Mesa.**
New evidence in the mystery of S-L Studios site

By RICHARD THOMAS

Sometimes what you think is fact, well, really isn't.

For years, I, like many others, had concluded that locations of movie studios important to the history of La Mesa were located in a specific geographic site according to historical lore. Further, conclusions were drawn about this accepted location that were perhaps simply just not true.

While researching the history of the Grossmont Severin Hills neighborhood in La Mesa, a long-standing assumption (at the very least on my part) seems to be just plain wrong. In fact, published historical documentation seems to be in error based on recorded records.

S-L Studios — later named Grossmont Studios by East San Diego County legend Ed Fletcher — was a big deal for La Mesa in 1922. According to an article by Roger Anderson in the Sept. 7, 1989 issue of the San Diego Reader, the El Cajon Valley News had reported on Nov. 19, 1922 that between 15,000 and 20,000 people attended a formal dedication of the studio. According to Anderson, the Grossmont Severin Hills area was a mecca for those creating this new art form.

But where exactly was the S-L Studio located? This has apparently been debated for years according to Anderson's article. And that was news to me.

I had always thought it was near what is today Anthony's Restaurant. I am not alone. This has been repeated by current residents and historians for years. After all, Fletcher has long been associated with what was then called the "Lotus Pond" that is now part of the restaurant's outdoor dining experience. And as it turns out, this also may be wrong! The fabled San Diego Flume Company, later called the Cuyamaca Water Company, when it was purchased by Fletcher in 1910, ran its fresh Cuyamaca sourced water through its redwood flume directly behind the pond. In fact, for a period of time the flume helped fill what was actually built as an earth dammed reservoir by business mogul Harvery Parke on his Alta Ranch in the 1890s. Written historical accounts abound describing Fletcher as the owner of the "solitary lotus pond in the entire county," with Fletcher lending the land around it for a theater group to perform in.

When Parkes Ranch holdings were sold upon his death in the early 1900s Fletcher was a buyer. But not of the entire ranch, which also included what was then known as Villa Caro, an adjoining ranch a little further east that was considered the gem of East County at the time. Fletcher kept the Villa Caro and surrounding hillside of the north Grossmont Summit that made up a large portion of the Villa Caro Ranch but only purchased portions of what was the Alta Ranch which did not contain it's fabulous barn, ranch house and reservoir. This portion of the former Alta Ranch was sold to others, contrary to widely held beliefs. This was recently confirmed by the San Diego County Recorder's Office. "We have concluded that a transaction between a Bank of Chicago (holding company for a portion of Parkes Estate) and Ed Fletcher regarding block 29, lots 1-6 did not occur," a cadastral technician in the mapping division of the assessor's office said.

He continued, "According to our records we have ownership for BLK 29, Lots 1-6 recorded as 1893 - Charles Johnson; 1895 & 96 - Hervey Parke; 1903-1907 - Hervey Parke; 1911-1915 - Harriet Miles; 1939-1944 - Frank Huneca.

So, if Fletcher did not even own the land where the S-L Studios purportedly existed (or the "lotus pond" for that matter) it must have been located elsewhere.

The answer lays, I believe, in the same 1989 San Diego Reader article by Anderson. In it he states that a long-time East County resident, responding to a 1983 daily Californian article that had published the location of the studio as "built behind the plot of land where the La Mesa branch of Anthony's Fish Grotto has stood for decades" was just plain wrong.

"The old Grossmont Studios building was not located near Anthony's, unless the restaurant has moved in the last couple of years.... [It] was located west of Fuerte Drive about 100 yards from the crest of the hill on the north side of the highway. The acoustics in that old barn were terrible and after it became a bar room and dancehall it even smelled bad. I distinctly
in his seventh years in the business. But for Tate, critical success isn’t the most rewarding part of being an entertainer.

“It’s the adventure of it,” he said. “And all the amazing people I meet and all the awesome things I do. I think that’s really what the industry was made for – to have a creative freedom and have fun with it.”

That adventure in entertaining began when Tate was 2, said his mother Katherine Birchmore.

“He would watch Marry Poppins and he would watch really intensely and as they did movements on the screen, he would do the same movements, he would do dances and things,” she said.

When he was 5, Tate auditioned for a local dance team but did not make the cut. Katherine asked her son what he loved about dance and he said it was performing for an audience.

“So I told I’ll find you an audience and I actually took him street performing and he just loved that,” she said.

While taking Tate to Seaport Village so he could busk for tips with his unique interpretive dances to an eclectic mix of heavy metal, show tunes and classical. Katherine also started involving him in Christian Youth Theater and making the long trek to Los Angeles for auditions with Actor’s Access — a premier casting call company.

Tate’s first role was in a film project by a student at Biola University.

“He spent nine days on set and it was the happiest I had seen the kid in my whole life,” Katherine said.

After that, there was a lot of driving back and forth between Hollywood and La Mesa, mostly for auditions that would last only 5 minutes. Katherine made sure of that kind of workload eventually required the Birchmores — Katherine, Tate and Tate’s younger brother Maximus — to purchase a small motorhome that they would camp in on the streets of Los Angeles during shoots or auditions.

“When we were in worse neighborhoods, I was kind of scared,” Tate said, and recalled a time when the family was parked near the Hollywood Bowl and was woken from sleep because they thought a drug deal was going down right outside.

“I made a sound or something, and they were like, ‘There’s a baby in here,’” Tate said. “So we were getting ready for them to knock and open the door and my mom was going to shine a flashlight in their eyes and me in the bunkbed above the driver’s seat. I was going to hit ‘em over the head. Yeah, we were scared. But they just kinda ran.”

Three years ago, the Birchmore family schedule had them in Los Angeles four to five days a week, so they packed it up and moved into an apartment in Burbank. By that time the whole family had immersed itself in the film business. Maximus joined his older brother and started acting, with a recurring role in “Kidding” which starred Jim Carrey, a leading role on a religious-themed series called “Answered Prayers;” a music video for Michael Bublé’s “I Believe in You” and more. Katherine, who took over talent management duties for her two children, expanded that role to manage other child actors and started her own agency TANDM Talent Management.

The busy lifestyle of child acting hasn’t been without some sacrifices. Even before the move to Burbank, Tate had to leave Fuerte Elementary and start homeschooling. Tate said the hardest part of leaving La Mesa was leaving his grandfather behind because he only had a few friends at Fuerte and they’ve not stayed in touch. Friendships, Tate said, are difficult to maintain.

“Usually when we make a friend, it’s somebody like a director’s kids,” he said, and added that he’s also made friends with some of the other actors he meets at auditions, but that it sometimes takes meeting them 10 or 20 times before even sparking up conversation. “You see them around and after a while you become friends.”

Even with a busy schedule that leaves little time for the kinds of friendships most 12 year olds have, Katherine doesn’t worry about her son becoming another child actor horror story.

“He’s like the most grounded person in the world. He’s just loves people and that’s what he’s in this for, I realized,” she said. “And he’s very precocious, being around all the adults and just sort of playing pretend. So his motives are I think a lot different than a lot of people.”

Birchmore reacts to winning Best Leading Actor at the Young Entertainer Awards. (Courtesy photo)

Birchmore in a scene from his first movie (Courtesy photo)
‘El Recuerdo’ yearbook is a tome of history

The foreword of the 1925 yearbook states, “The editors and faculty advisors have endeavored to make this a faithful account, a true ‘Recuerdo’ of this year, and to incorporate into it some of the spirit of Grossmont. In years yet to come it is hoped these pages will recall happy memories of your Grossmont days.”

Within this year, as in the others, are the calendar (Diary of the Hall Clock), the Class History, and The Class Will. In the Will, each student leaves something to GHS: “Austin Hinck gives his supply of adverbs to the English Department.”

“Carmen Meza leaves her walk (home) to Lakeside after basket practice to Alma Pratt.” As shown in the 1921–1925 yearbooks, while the details of their daily lives may differ from ours, Foothillers then share much with today’s students: pride in their school, a sense of fun and camaraderie, and a desire to learn.

BECOME PART OF OUR HISTORIC CAMPUS

In honor of our historic 100 Years of Excellence Celebration, the GHS Educational Foundation is sponsoring a scholarship fundraising 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 near the front of the school. In June 2020, the Foundation awarded $6,500 in senior scholarships; our goal

See EL RECUEERDO, Page 17

1922 GUHS Helen Moriarty and friends sitting on football field in Lakeside. (Photos courtesy GHS Museum)
End of term brings new coach, academic awards, virtual arts

Coach Jason Cavazos

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Helix is pleased to announce that Jason Cavazos has been named the new Boys’ Basketball coach. He takes over following the retirement of John Singer, who coached at Helix for 39 years.

Cavazos previously played basketball at El Capitan and Grossmont College, and served as El Capitan’s coach for eight years, and their athletic director for six years.

HELIX SENIOR RECOGNIZED AS NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLAR SEMI-FINALIST

Senior Jeremy Potter has been recognized as a National Merit Scholar semi-finalist.

Over 1.5 million juniors in about 21,000 high schools entered the 2020 National Merit Scholarship Program by taking the 2018 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT), which served as an initial screen of program entrants.

The nationwide pool of 16,000 semifinalists — representing less than one percent of U.S. high school seniors — includes the highest-scoring entrants in each state.

READ WITH A SCOTTIE TRADITION CONTINUES

In a tradition annual, Helix National Honor Society (NHS) runs a booth at the La Mesa Oktoberfest to read with and donate books to local children and families. The Read with a Scottie program has donated over 500 books to attendees each year for the past three years.

The current situation required NHS students to think outside the box to continue the program. They rose to the challenge!

The NHS students recorded and uploaded more than 45 videos of them reading some of their favorite children’s books and created a Read with a Scottie YouTube playlist channel. It can be found at bit.do/readwithascottie.

The group will also send the link to local elementary schools and some of the NHS students will be participating in local elementary school class live Zooms to read with the entire class. During the live session, Helix NHS students will hold a raffle and donate a book to the class winner. NHS students are also volunteering to read with students (distanced, of course) at Rolando Elementary on the weekdays.

PERFORMING ARTS EVENTS

Helix Dance presents “Dancing Under the Stars,” a dance film drive-in movie experience. The film will show on Friday, Dec. 4 at 5 p.m., 6:30 p.m., 8 p.m., and 9:30 p.m. in the Helix faculty parking lot. Tickets are $20 per car, and are only available through presale online. Space is limited. For tickets and details, visit helixdancers.com.

The Helix choirs proudly present their first virtual concert “Haunted Helix Holidays,” combining their traditional Halloween and winter holiday concerts. The concert premieres Saturday, Dec. 12 at 7 p.m. on the Helix “scholarship fund” and include the text of your tile with your check (up to three lines, 20 spaces each).

To learn more about GHS, past and present, visit the GHS Museum website at foothillermuseum.com. Due to the coronavirus and our continuing move into our larger museum space, 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.
Featured artist: Linda Boltodono

Linda began her studies in art at Southwest High School in San Diego. She received a scholarship to study commercial advertising art at Platt College. Linda then received the United States Achievement Academy Award in the field of Art, and the Bank of America Achievement Award. She has designed logos and other advertising art for many companies including No Fear, 8 Ball Snowboard, Church’s Chicken, and Shorebreak. She grew up on the beach with her grandparents who owned a hotel called El Summer Hotel in Masachupa, Nicaragua. Grandmother Fanny Paniagua, owner of the hotel, painted seascapes that were proudly displayed in the hotel. This was Linda’s first inspiration.

As her love of the ocean grew she decided to dedicate her art to the preservation of the ocean and marine life. Linda is the owner of High Tide LLC, a marketing and advertising firm, that was awarded the Award for Commercial/Residential Interior/Exterior Property Management for 30 Years.

Gifts that give back to Mission Trails

How is it November already? This year has felt incredibly long, but also like it’s gone by in a flash. However, the changing weather and impending holidays are moving us out of limbo.

Through the months, Mission Trails Regional Park (MTRP) has been a respite for the entire San Diego community. As previously shared, the park has had record numbers of visitors during the pandemic due to limited access to indoor gyms. In addition, many parents have brought their children to the park to provide breaks from distance learning, explore nature, and breathe fresh air. A silver lining from this time is that we’re creating a new generation of environmental stewards.

For many, 2020 has been one of the most challenging years of their lives, and for the MTRP Foundation, this year has been a struggle. Key sources of MTRP Foundation income — facility rentals and local government grants we’ve received for years — have not been available and there’s no prospect of either returning anytime soon. Because of this, we need the community’s support now more than ever, and are asking our neighbors and park users to make a donation to support the park through the Mission Trials Regional Park Foundation.

For the last few years, the MTRP Foundation has participated in #GivingTuesday, a global day of charitable giving that takes place on the first Tuesday in December. Each year, more donors have come forward to support the park and we’re asking you to donate on Tuesday, Dec. 1 for #GivingTuesday, or at any time before the end of the year. Several donors have pledged to match up to $6,000 in donations to the MTRP Foundation for #GivingTuesday, so you can give knowing that your contribution will be doubled! In addition, there are special charitable giving incentives for donors who give by Dec. 1.

Learn more at sdge.com/safety

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Books about learning to be thankful

By CHELSIE HARRIS

We’re almost there – 2020 will be coming to an end soon! The time has come for giving thanks and looking ahead. These titles are available for ordering at sdcl.org. You can read them online as an e-book or request a physical copy to be sent to your nearest branch.

“The Year of Less” by Cait Flanders: In her late twenties, Cait Flanders found herself stuck in the consumerism cycle that grips so many of us: earn more, buy more, want more, rinse, repeat. Even after she worked her way out of nearly $30,000 of consumer debt, her old habits took hold again. When she realized that nothing she was doing or buying was making her happy — only keeping her from meeting her goals — she decided to set herself a challenge: she would not shop for an entire year.

“How to Raise Kind Kids” by Thomas Lickona: We all want our kids to be kind. But that is not the same as knowing what to do when you catch your son or daughter being unkind. A world-renowned developmental psychologist, Dr. Thomas Lickona has led the character education movement in schools for forty years. Now he shares with parents the vital tools they need to bring peace and foster cooperation at home. Kindness doesn’t stand on its own. It needs a supporting cast of other essential virtues — like self-control, courage, and gratitude.

“The Book of Delights” by Ross Gay: The winner of the NBCC Award for Poetry offers a spirited collection of short lyric essays, written daily over a tumultuous year, reminding us of the purpose and pleasure of praising, extolling, and celebrating ordinary wonders.

“Thanku: Poems of Gratitude” by Miranda Paul and Marlena Myles: This poetry anthology, edited by Miranda Paul, explores a wide range of ways to be grateful (from gratitude for a puppy to gratitude for family to gratitude for the sky) with poems by a diverse group of contributors, including Joseph Bruchac, Margarita Engle, Cynthia Leitich Smith, Naomi Shihab Nye, Charles Waters, and Jane Yolen.

To put any of these on request give us a call at 619-469-2151 or visit www.sdcl.org.

—Chelsie Harris is managing librarian of the La Mesa branch of the San Diego County Library.
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Another thing keeping Tate grounded are the college classes he is currently taking at L.A. Valley College to earn an AA degree in directing.

“Directing inspires me and motivates me at the same time,” Tate said. “I want to become a director because you have a creative freedom and you can tell your story. Directing has always been interesting to me. I think it’s just fun.”

Tate said he’s someday like to go to a film school like UCLA and continue to pursue the creative side of directing — a goal that he sees as keeping him from losing his head in the entertainment industry.

“The ultimate do-it-yourselfers I think,” Katherine said. “We’re looking to spend time with family and working on home movie projects, Tate is also attending the occasional film festival held at drive-in theaters, promoting ‘Patch,’ a short film he stars in opposite Adam Zastrow. Most of all, the family is looking forward to getting back to the pre-COVID lifestyle they enjoyed together.

“We think back on like, ‘Wow, look at all the adventures that we’ve had in all of this’ — so many unique places and trips and things,” Katherine said. “We’re the ultimate do-it-yourselfers I guess, so that includes becoming a manager, screenwriters, producers, directors.”

In addition to directing, Tate is currently taking at L.A. Valley College to earn an AA degree in directing.

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remember the urinals running over every time I was in there, which was quite often, even though I was only nineteen. We started early in those days,” the unidentified old timer went on.

“A close look at a recorded 1911 plat map clearly shows the area being described. And it is not even laid to rest. —Richard Thomas is a local history buff who is currently researching the history of the Grossmont/Severin area of La Mesa.

In the same 1989 San Diego Reader article the S-L Studio is described in the Sept. 8, 1922 edition of the El Cajon Valley News as being “immediately north of the pavement leading over Grossmont and just east of the dirt road which leads to the Eucalyptus Reservoir.”

A close look at a recorded 1911 plat map clearly shows the area being described. And it is not even laid to rest. —Richard Thomas is a local history buff who is currently researching the history of the Grossmont/Severin area of La Mesa.

**CROSSWORD PUZZLE**

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**SUDOKU PUZZLE**

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**SERVICE DIRECTORY CONT.**

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