The adapting artist

Musicians, actors find new ways to perform in lieu of traditional venues and theaters

By JEFF CLEMISTON

On Sept. 1, theaters and music venues across the country lit their buildings red to draw attention to the plight of an industry that employs over 12 million people nationwide. Legislation to save performance venues — the Restart Act and the Save Our Stage Act — is stalled in Congress along with other pandemic relief aid bills. Concert venues and theaters were among the first businesses forced to shut down because of the pandemic and will most likely be the last allowed to open. With performance spaces unable to open doors to patrons, local artists are exploring new ways to bring their craft to fans, while at the same time hoping to one day return to performing from lighted stages to audience-filled seats and dance floors.

ALL THE WORLD’S A STAGE

On Aug. 29, musicians from around the world participated in the seventh annual Play Music on the Porch Day. The event was originally conceived to bring people together from across racial, religious and political divides to share a moment together in harmony. This year’s event had even greater meaning as musicians put on porch concerts to also raise awareness of the challenges faced by the music industry.

One of the bands that part in the event was San Diego-based Enter The Blue Sky — a folk rock trio featuring singer/songwriter Sandie Lollis, viola player and singer Karen Childress-Evans and backing singer Tina Dee. Although Enter The Blue Sky’s Play Music on the Porch Day performance was one of their most attended, according to Lollis, it was still a new experience.

SEE ADAPTING ARTIST, Page 16
COMMUNITY

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

DEL CERRO ACTION COUNCIL NEWS

Del Cerro continues to remain quiet as we work our way through an ever-changing list of COVID-19 protocols. The next meeting of the Del Cerro Action Council (DCAC) will be on Thursday, Oct. 22 at 7 p.m. It will most likely be another Zoom type meeting.

Brad Callahan, a friend, and long-time principal at Lewis Middle School, has announced his retirement at the end of September. He is the second key principal not returning this year to our communities. Listy Gillingham, the former principal at Patrick Henry, has retired as well. A replacement has not been selected for Lewis Middle School and Michele Irwin is the new principal for Patrick Henry.

Congratulations to the Grantville/Allied Gardens Kiwanis Club (GAG), which will celebrate its 70th anniversary on Sept. 17. Their continued public service to the community and beyond has been exemplary. For decades, many of us purchased a Christmas tree from them. They continue to sponsor Circle K at SDSU, the Key Club at Patrick Henry, the Builders Club at Lewis Middle School and the K-Kids at Hearst Elementary. Their longest tenured member is John Peterson who joined in 1966 and is still going strong. Check out their webpage at alliedgardenskiwanis.org

or you will find them on Facebook. They now meet every Thursday morning at 9 a.m. via Zoom. A majority of their members are from Grantville, Allied Gardens, Del Cerro and San Carlos. They are always looking for new members interested in helping our communities.

Our Aug. 19, Zoom District 7 candidates forum went well with our two candidates Raul Campillo and Noli Zosa. The forum was moderated Jeff Clemetson, the editor of the Mission Times Courier. Each candidate was given equal time to answer the more than 20 questions presented by Jeff. A link to the video of the questions and responses is posted on the homepage of the DCAC website: delcerroactioncouncil.org.

Our second candidate forum for our communities of Grantville, Allied Gardens, Del Cerro and San Carlos is set for mayoral candidates Todd Gloria and Barbara Bry. It will also be a Zoom meeting on Wednesday, Sept. 23 at 7 p.m. The link to attend will be posted on the DCAC website and will be sent to Shain Haug, chair of the Allied Gardens Community Council and Mark Schultz, the chair of the San Carlos Area Council for distribution within their members and community.

We are also asking residents to send in questions to be asked at this mayoral candidate forum. Only questions submitted in advance will be accepted. The deadline to submit questions is noon on Monday, Sept. 21. Email questions to mayorcandidatessu- rumdcac@gmail.com.

On Aug. 27, representatives of All Peoples Church met with many of the residents living directly adjacent to the church property to discuss a proposed property line wall between the church property and the residential lots that are at the same grade. The church shared three proposed wall types for consideration and residents are considering the options.

Mark your calendar for Wednesday, Sept. 23 to attend the Zoom mayoral candidate forum.

—Jay Wilson is secretary of the Del Cerro Action Council.

ALFORD GARDENS/ GRANTVILLE COMMUNITY COUNCIL NEWS

It is important that District 7 Voters elect a candidate who will work for our communities and will best represent our interests in City Council. On Sept. 22 at 6:30 p.m. by way of Zoom, the Allied Gardens/Grantville Community Council will host a candidate forum for the candidates for the District 7 City Council member seat Raul Campillo and Noli Zosa. What issues are important to you? What questions would you want to ask the candidates? Please share your input by taking the survey on our website, aggccouncil.org, and click on ‘AGGCC Candidate Forum Community Input Survey.’

The value of the event will be found in your attendance by way of Zoom access. Contact us through the “Contact Us” page on the website or by email to aggcchair@yahoo.com. We will send you what you will need to attend.

Our Urban Box Art project is underway. Pending clearance from SDG&E our initial job will be the boxes on the south side of Zion Avenue across the street from the Mission Trails Church. If this work piques your interest, think about an SDG&E box near your house that could use some TLC and artistic beautification. Envision the vibrant and whimsical boxes near Foster Elementary School. Are you interested in putting your creative talents to work? Do you have an idea for a format and color scheme for the box? We want to hear from you! Visit aggcouncil.org/urbanboxart where you will find more information about the project, how you can nominate a box for painting, and how you can participate in the project.

With the hot weather, our 60 Zion Avenue trees require intense support. Residents are caring for 40 of the trees near their homes. We have a crew of 12 volunteers who water and care for the rest. But best of all are our newest volunteers from Brownie Scout Troop # 4835. Under the leadership of troop leader Dana Peterson, they water and fertilize their trees on a regular basis. To learn more about the Zion Avenue Tree Project and to volunteer to care for the trees on the website, click on Community Projects, and then on Zion Avenue Tree Project. Fill out the Tree Care Volunteer Form and a DCAC board member will contact you to discuss watering, weeding, and mulching.

At monthly meetings of the AGGCC Board of Directors, the community designs and implements important projects. Use the “Contact” page at aggcouncil.org to let us know how you can support our neighborhood. We next meet on Tuesday, Oct. 6 at 6:30 p.m. by Zoom.

—Jay Wilson is president of the Allied Gardens/Grantville Community Council.

SAN CARLOS AREA COUNCIL NEWS

After a hiatus of nearly half a year, most of our San Carlos Area Council (SCAC) members along with some neighbors, came to Tuxedo Park on Aug. 30 to speak with mayoral candidate Barbara Bry. Over the past weeks, Bry has been visiting San Diego neighborhoods to talk to community members about the issues affecting us. I have ever seen a mayoral candidate go out to each and every neighborhood to talk to community members about the issues affecting us. Pending clearance from SDG&E, our initial job will be the boxes on the south side of Zion Avenue across the street from the Mission Trails Church. If this work piques your interest, think about an SDG&E box near your house that could use some TLC and artistic beautification. Envision the vibrant and whimsical boxes near Foster Elementary School. Are you interested in putting your creative talents to work? Do you have an idea for a format and color scheme for the box? We want to hear from you! Visit aggcounsel.org/urbanboxart where you will find more information about the project, how you can nominate a box for painting, and how you can participate in the project.

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—Jay Wilson is president of the Allied Gardens/Grantville Community Council.

COMMUNITY

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Democratic voters or can peel away conservative support from the other. Vaus believes he can do both because of the work he has done as mayor of Poway — a record he said he is “most proud” of.

AN UNCONVENTIONAL ROAD TO POLITICS

Vaus was born in Los Angeles, but moved with his family to a Black Angus cattle ranch in Oregan when he was a toddler.

“That shaped my life,” he said. “When you got to get up at the crack of dawn to feed the cattle before things that you learned something about hard work. And that has served me well.”

After high school, Vaus attend- ed Eisenhower College in Seneca Falls, New York. While he was away, his parents returned to Southern California, settling in San Diego. When he graduated, he left the West Coast and moved back west.

Vaus’ first job after college was working for an organization that provided residential care for troubled youth — a precursor for his future life as a public servant.

“I have a heart for that social service aspect of the job,” he said. However, Vaus also had a heart for music and soon pursued a ca- reer as a singer and songwriter.

“That had always been a pas- sion of mine,” he said. “I wanted to try my hand at it and ended up getting the highest awards in the industry and being reasonably successful.”

Vaus credits the work ethic he learned growing up on a ranch for propelling him in the music indus- try and also credits hard work for his success in politics — a pro- fession he found himself in after leading a recall effort of a former Poway City Council member.

“That’s how I discovered Poway City Hall on a map,” Vaus said, after reading about a City Council member involved in a scandal, he decided to take action.

“I was really ticked off that this person could abuse the power of her office like that and the council had no idea she got rid of her,” he said of his successful recall effort.

“And so I discovered I was pretty good at this kind of stuff and two years later I ran for City Council and I won. Two years after that I ran for mayor and won and I think we’ve gotten some important things done in Poway.”

POWAY AND SANDAG

Vaus said the secret to his suc- cess as mayor of Poway is “being accessible.”

“T’ll never forget a couple years in, once I became mayor, I got a letter from a little girl that they needed a stop sign in her neighbor- hood. She was worried about the road just outside her home and the little girl’s face that the mayor would show up at the door.”

“When it comes to urban area. Vaus said there needs to be more options, but added that he sees a chance of getting people back on mass transit because of the pan- demic. One way to meet the coun- ty’s transportation goals, he said, would be to have a large telecommu- nating by exploring countywide broadband WiFi — a proposition he added could also solve distance learning issues for families that lack internet connection.

“We got a lot of opportunities to do big things, we just got to make sure they are the right big things,” he said.

COVID RESPONSE

When it comes to dealing with the pandemic, Vaus said he sup- ports being cautious about re- opening because he doesn’t want to see mandatory shutdowns again.

“That county is doing right is they’ve been acting very fact- based. We can’t have rules and regulations that are like a light switch — on, off, on,” he said. “I know it’s frustrating to a lot of people, but safety has to come first.”

Vaus said Poway was one of the first in the county to offer small business long-term loans.

“That has been incredibly helpful to our small business- es,” he said, adding that Poway was also one of the first to adopt a plan to allow businesses and churches to operate in outdoor public spaces.

Poway also started program where city purchased 100 picnic tables to loan to restaurants while restrictions are in place.

“Afer we get through with the pandemic, all the picnic tables can go into our parks.”

HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS

With fires currently threat- ening homes in District 2’s back country, Vaus said it is import- ant for the Board of Supervisors to listen to locals and especially fire departments before approving any new housing developments in the district.

“You got to listen to your com- munity planning boards. You got to make sure something fits with the character of the community

TRANSPORTATION

In addition to being mayor of Poway, Vaus is also chair of SANDAG, having been voted by fellow members unanimously in 2018.

Transportation issues are of major concern to District 2 resi- dents, especially in the back coun- try. Vaus said he would continue the “balanced” approach he has taken as SANDAG chair if he is elected to board of supervisors, by promoting mass transit in urban areas and funding roads in rural areas.

At SANDAG, Vaus said he has already prioritized roads projects in District 2.

“Twenty years ago SANDAG made commitment to widen road from Ramona to Lakeside to four lanes. That’s been ignored,” he said. “I was able to lead a coalition of Democrats and Republicans to reprioritize the expansion of the 67 and completion of the 94/125 interchange; improvements or ex- pansion to the 52 and improve- ments or expansion to the 78.”

Vaus said the coalition has budgeted $90 million to start the work.

We’re all elected to be public servants,” he continued. “But far too many people in office focus on their first term — I focus on the person on the servant part. I had all the public acclaim back in my enter- tainment days, I’m here to serve the people.

As proof of Vaus’ record of serv- ing the people, he points to a list of Poway’s strengths as a city — ranked best to raise a family; safe roads; and strong fiscal standing with paid-down pension obliga- tion and significant reserves.

“Right now we’re building a brand new senior and community center. It’s been talked about for 20 years. We’re finally getting it done and we’re paying cash,” he said, adding that the city recent- ly completed a revitalization of its downtown and also has added around 490 acres of open space.

“All together, I think that offers a great blueprint for the rest of the county,” he said. “Being a supervi- sor is like being a super mayor. Day in and day out I’m taking care of the people here in Poway and that’s what you got to do as supervisor.”


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and isn’t going to present fire chal-
leges," he said, adding that he is
against developers using the ballot
initiative process to circumvent lo-
cals stopping developments in their
backyards.

“I worry about when these things
go to the ballot,” he said. “Should
someone in San Ysidro be voting on
whether or not a new project goes in
Fallbrook? I don’t think that’s ap-
propriate. Are folks going to take the
time to really understand what the
challenges are, what the problems
are? No, that’s going to come down
to an advertising war.”

Vaus said he sees housing opportu-

A coalition of regional part-
ners, including the County of
San Diego, The San Diego
Foundation, Child Development
Associates and YMCA of San
County have joined to-
gether to launch the San Diego
County Childcare Provider
Grant Program, an initiative
that will distribute $25 mil-
lion in CARES Act funding to
childcare providers impacted by
COVID-19.

Recognizing that affordable
and safe childcare is essen-
tial to our recovery and the
ongoing health of our region,
the San Diego County Board of
Supervisors unanimously
voted to distribute $25 mil-
lion of CARES Act funding to
eligible childcare providers in
San Diego County. To distrib-
ute the funds, the county has
partnered with The San Diego
Foundation, Child Development
Associates and YMCA of San
County to manage the
application, verification and
grantmaking process.

Starting August 24, eligible
providers could apply for fund-
ing by visiting SDFoundation.
org/ChildcareGrants. Funding

SUNNYVALE PROPERTIES

Virtual Tour

For those counties not testing
their residents at the same rate
as the state, new adjustment
factors have been added, poten-
tially increasing a region’s case
rate. Counties that are testing
above the state’s rate have had
their case rates scaled down.

Based on the state’s testing
data from the County, the re-
gion’s case rate is at 7.9 per
100,000 residents, but the re-
gion did not get penalized be-
cause the state has been hav-
ing issues, going back several
months, that prevent it from
getting the County’s correct
testing numbers.

“We’re working with the
state to resolve the issue,”
Wooten said. “Currently, the
state has indicated that they
will use the County’s data to
calculate the case rate and pos-
itivity percentage over the next
several weeks.”

Should the County’s case rate
drop to under 3.9 for a con-
cutive two weeks, it would qualify
to move into Tier 3, or Orange
Tier. The region’s positivity per-
centage has been under 4.9% for
over two weeks and would
allow the region to move to
the higher, less restrictive Tier
3. However, both metrics will
need to qualify for the Orange
Tier for two weeks before the
County could move into it.

The state will assess coun-
ties on a weekly basis, with
the next report scheduled for
Tuesday, Sept. 15.


San Diego County

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about the whole family
and the whole YOU.

Of course, we can help you
with your daily needs and
safeguards. But did you know you
also have options for fitness,
activities, healthy dining, and more?
and our assisted living services
are tailored to you, so you’ll get just
the right amount of help you need,
when you request it. No matter
if you need a little help or a lot,
you’ll be amazed by the
difference.

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Visit Our Website: www.thaheatingandair.com/plumbing
Californians deserve better data protection

By BRIAN SCHRADER

This November will be monumental for Californians. Voters will be tasked with making decisions on a swath of issues addressing a wide-range of issues from voting rights restoration and bail reform to changes in consumer protection, property tax assessments, and social distancing. California Proposition 24, also known as the Consumer Privacy Rights Act, is one of these propositions that will help us improve our control over the data that businesses collect on us. California Proposition 24, is a new California Data Protection Agency which would take over administering and enforcing these provisions as well as those in the now active CCPA. This new Data Protection Agency would function similar to the FDA or other consumer watchdog agencies. Staffed by knowledgeable experts in consumer protection and privacy law, it would be in charge of developing regulations for good faith practices, to businesses, assessing penalties, and raising public awareness about the dangers of businesses abusing our data. This agency would protect the digital rights of all Californians and reign in the worst instincts of the corporate surveillance, ad tech, and data brokerage industries. Creating a separate agency also ensures that these issues are given the attention they deserve rather than languish under other departments not staffed with technology experts and the nuances of privacy law and technology.

This measure marks an important step in California’s history as a role-model for the rest of the country. We have the chance to set the standard once again and proclaim our rights in this digital age. With Proposition 24, and the federal government may well follow suit. As Governor Gavin Newsom likes to say, “so goes California, so goes the nation.” We desperately need better privacy protections online. Our private data is vacuumed up from all corners of the internet, bought and sold with reckless abandon, and used to sell ads. I’m a web developer, so I understand what can be done with this technology and what’s being done today to abuse it. If you had said to a crowd in the early 1990s that in 30 years they’d be under constant, targeted domestic surveillance by companies looking to sell them skin cream and e-cigarettes, you’d have been laughed out of the room. But that’s exactly the world we live in today.

This November a whole host of elected offices in San Diego will be up for grabs. San Diegans will be asked to decide who our next president will be, who will represent us in the U.S. House of Representatives, in the California State Assembly, and who will be our next mayor. What’s more, Californians will be asked to vote on probably the most progressive slate of ballot measures in recent California history. With everything up in the air, it’s ok to feel overwhelmed, but don’t let ourselves get distracted. We have a chance to further cement our rights, and we should take it.

—Brian Schrader is a local business owner, software developer, writer and San Diego resident living in Normal Heights.

Letters

DELR GROO NEEDS HOUSING, NOT MEGACHURCH

Re: “New church proposed for College Avenue property” [Volume 25, Issue 5 or bit.ly/SDFCM]

Most San Diegans can agree on the need for more and more affordable housing. A parcel of undeveloped land along College Avenue from the I-8 freeway to Del Cerro Boulevard was approved by the city planning department for development of 24 homes. The property planner would have been consistent with the existing housing in Del Cerro — single-family, single-story. Within days after developer ColRich received city approval for the construction, the property was sold to All People’s Church for a corporate complex of a 950-seat church with classrooms, offices, parking structure and gymnasium.

There are several problems with this particular proposal. Plans initially proceeded without input from neighboring residents, schools, businesses or the Del Cerro Action Council. The main building is to be within 48-52 feet high, which would dramatically change the character of the surrounding residential community and visually dominate the landscape. The area is vulnerable to wild fires and this parcel is in an environmentally sensitive area. Traffic would be a major issue. There is currently no ingress or egress to the property and considerable traffic would be added to an already busy College Avenue. Since the church opens seven days a week, this would dramatically change the character of the surrounding residential community and visually dominate the landscape. The area is vulnerable to wild fires and this parcel is in an environmentally sensitive area.

Traffic would be a major issue. There is currently no ingress or egress to the property and considerable traffic would be added to an already busy College Avenue. Since the church opens seven days a week, this would dramatically change the character of the surrounding residential community and visually dominate the landscape. The area is vulnerable to wild fires and this parcel is in an environmentally sensitive area.

This measure marks an important part of any community; we appreciate those already in Del Cerro, however there are other and better locations in San Diego County for a megachurch. Del Cerro, as a residential neighborhood, is better suited as a place for much-needed housing. If you are also concerned, please get involved in maintaining the residential quality of Del Cerro.

—Mardene Davis, Del Cerro

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At our September meeting of the La Mesa Foothills Democratic Club, we talked with more than a half-dozen Democratic leaders about how you can volunteer to help Democrats win election, stop the spread of bigotry and superstition in La Mesa and surrounding East County communities, using the peaceful tools of democracy. Our goal is to bring all with social distancing — you don’t have to leave home! If you missed us, you can catch up on our YouTube channel.

OPINION / POLITICS

OPINIONS/LETTERS: Mission Times Courier encourages letters to the editor and guest editors. Please email submissions to jeff@sdnews.com and include your phone number and address for verification. We reserve the right to edit letters for brevity and accuracy. Letters and guest editors do not necessarily reflect the views of the publisher or staff.

SUBMISSIONS/NEWS TIPS: Send press releases, tips, photos or story ideas to jeff@sdnews.com. For breaking news and investigative story ideas contact the editor by phone or email.

DISTRIBUTION: Mission Times Courier distributes the second Friday of every month. © 2020 All rights reserved.
As we approach the election in less than 60 days, it seems appropriate to consider the words of a very wise man, “When personal attacks replace honest debate, no one wins.” Unfortunately we are witnessing these attacks every day and are seeing that the result is further division in our communities. Now is the perfect time to practice civility and treat others with respect. Stand up for your convictions but do it with dignity and remember to listen to others and seek to understand their viewpoints. As Republicans, believe we can present our conservative principles with logic and clarity and do not need to resort to disparaging others. We are all aware of the violence, riots, looting and lack of respect for law and order that are taking place all over the country. Is this really what we want? President Trump supports our police, and we, as Republicans, want us to feel safe in our own place all over the country. Is this really what we want? President Trump supports our police, and we, as Republicans, want us to feel safe in our own communities. When there is an incident that needs to be investigated, it will be done swiftly, fairly and justly. When we vote in November let us stop and think who has done this to our country. We, as Republicans, seek to understand their viewpoints. We, as Republicans, have a strong message for the next four years. Carl DeMaio, host of “DeMaio Report” on New Radio 600 KOGO from 3-6 p.m. will be the featured guest speaker. DeMaio served on San Diego City Council and is chairman of Reform California which wages campaigns against tax increases and advocates for government reforms. During the Zoom meeting he will address the various measures on the ballot including SB731. GOTV stands for “Get Out The Vote.”

Republicans: volunteer and vote. sdnews.com

Kevin Silverstein
BIG BLOCK REALTY

Get ready to move!

If you’re planning to buy or sell a home or property, we would like to help you with your plan in motion. Here are some properties that are currently on the market, but they’ll be going fast.

GOTV cares for the property owner. Market your property with the help of our professional staff. Get a fast, accurate evaluation of your property.

By PAT BOERNER

Republicans: volunteer and vote.

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Republicans: volunteer and vote.

We are all aware of the violence, riots, looting and lack of respect for law and order that are taking place all over the country. Is this really what we want? President Trump supports our police, and we, as Republicans, want us to feel safe in our own place all over the country. Is this really what we want? President Trump supports our police, and we, as Republicans, want us to feel safe in our own communities. When there is an incident that needs to be investigated, it will be done swiftly, fairly and justly. When we vote in November let us stop and think who has done this to our country. We, as Republicans, seek to understand their viewpoints. We, as Republicans, have a strong message for the next four years.
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School year begins at Patrick Henry High, online

On Aug. 31 Patrick Henry High School began the 2020–2021 school year with 2,654 students enrolled in grades 9-12. Our campus was very quiet though on the first day of school since we started this year online. While we all wanted to return to campus and start school like we have always done, we understand that the safety of our students and faculty take priority. So, we did the next best thing—we Zoomed with 2,654 students! The first week of school was considered a "soft-launch" so we could iron out any technology and/or connectivity issues with our staff and students.

Beginning on Tuesday, Sept. 8, our bell schedule will be as follows:
- Period 1: 8:50 a.m.–10:04 a.m.
- Period 2: 10:13 a.m.–11:27 a.m.
- Period 3: 11:36 a.m.–12:50 p.m.
- Lunch: 12:59 p.m.–1:29 p.m.
- Independent Learning Time: 1:38 p.m.–3:29 p.m.

Due to the extraordinary year, we have modified our bell schedule where our students will take three classes first semester and three classes second semester in order to support both synchronous and asynchronous learning. We all hope to return soon to in-person school but until then we will provide rigorous and relevant lessons to our students virtually.

On behalf of the Patrick Henry High School faculty, we want to thank you for being our partner in education so we can ensure all students graduate with integrity, purpose, and options.

IMPORTANT FUNDING FOR HENRY

At Patrick Henry, we receive over $200,000 of federal funding when parents turn in free or reduced lunch applications. I encourage families to submit your application online whether or not you believe you will qualify. This federal funding supports our library, provides tutoring for all students, mental health counseling and more.

We will lose this funding if not enough people apply and qualify. Please go to this website and apply today at sandiegounified.org/food-nutrition-services.

On behalf of the Patrick Henry High School faculty, we want to thank you for being our partner in education so we can ensure all students graduate with integrity, purpose, and options.

IMPORTANT FUNDING FOR HENRY

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Patrick Henry High School News

By MICHELLE IRWIN

Despite fall classes beginning online, Patrick Henry’s campus was decorated with messages of hope and solidarity for incoming and returning students.

(Photos courtesy PHHS)
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Mission Trails life during quarantine

[Editor’s note: This article will appear in the fall issue of the MTRP newsletter, mailed to contributors to the MTRP Foundation. For information about supporting Mission Trails, visit mtrp.org.]

The City of San Diego manages 47,000 acres of preserve and conserved lands, and the Parks and Recreation Department manages 28,000 acres of this land, which includes Mission Trails Regional Park (MTRP). Incredibly, only Anchorage, Alaska manages more city park acreage in the United States than does the City of San Diego.

Open space parks are differentiated from developed parks (Balboa Park, community parks) in that they are left in their natural state as a haven for our native wildlife and vegetation, and these spaces give local scientists the opportunity to go into the field to study our highly diverse flora and fauna. Additionally, our open space parks provide a much-needed escape into the natural world that many of us crave and enjoy.

With the closure of many of our public spaces (gyms, swimming pools, etc.) due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we wondered if more local residents are using MTRP since it re-opened and wanted to explore the pros and cons of this change in use. We spoke with Mark Berninger, the city’s Natural Resource Manager in the Parks and Recreation Department’s Open Space Division, who shared some hard data, along with anecdotal evidence, regarding changes in park use since the pandemic.

Here are some of the highlights from our conversation with Mark.

Is there any data showing how many people use MTRP? We have collected uninterrupted data for two and a half years on how many people use MTRP to explore different trails. In July 2020, 45,000 users climbed the main trail, and another 20,000 used the three other trails. That’s a 20% increase from July 2019, when 16,000 people climbed the main trail. That data lets us extrapolate public use across all our parks and have estimated that city open space parks — not including developed parks — received 2.2 million visitors in 2019, more than the San Diego Zoo, Padres and Chargers games (combined), and several national parks.

That really speaks to the need of people wanting and needing nature and wild. Do you have any information on who these new park users are? We talked to rangers who believe most are active adults whose gyms and yoga studios are closed, so they go to the open space preserve to work out, rather than to enjoy and appreciate wildlife. There are pros and cons to this change — on the one hand, new people are being exposed to outdoor parks, including lots of kids who would typically be indoors in day care or school but are now being exposed to nature and the outdoors at an earlier age and more frequently. The flipside is those who think of the trails as their personal gym may not know park rules or be aware of trail etiquette.

With our urban preserves, it’s about the space being for the animals and habitats, people’s use is a secondary benefit. The main benefit is to maintain rare and endangered habitats for plants and animals so they have a place to continue to exist.

How might better community understanding of park and trail rules be achieved? Education will be most important. We see an opportunity to engage these new users and partner with MTRP to spread the word about trail etiquette. The parks need more rangers now more than ever, because there’s no better substitute for the personal engagement with ranger programs. These programs can sway people more than any sign. Ranger programs also teach kids at a young age to respect the environment. If I had my way, I’d have dozens more rangers full time they did was education.

During the park’s closure, it seems the City’s park rangers — including MTRP’s rangers — expended having to do a lot of policing and encountered people upset that they couldn’t use the park.

Right, and all the rangers’ regular duties didn’t go away (monitoring and eradicating invasive species, etc.), so they had extra work while they enforced the lockdown.

Did you have any data of how wildlife changed during the lockdown? During April, we were busy figuring out what we could and should study, and how, but before we were ready to begin, the parks reopened. We also study local nesting, and we wondered if they would come back while the beaches were closed. One day during the shutdown, I went to Ocean Beach Dog Beach and saw thousands of least terns, pelicans, and seagulls resting on the beach. It’s a wide flat open area where they could watch for predators and find their own prey. After it opened up again, all those birds were forced to move inland to the flood channel.

What else should the public know about the importance of our open spaces? The lockdown gave us a chance to see how valuable these open spaces are to people. They got so used to MTRP, they couldn’t imagine it being closed.

Did you get a chance to be at MTRP during the closure, and did you witness anything special? I was at MTRP during the closure and had a cool encounter with a roadrunner in the East Elliot area while monitoring the progress of San Diego Goldenstar, a native plant. I heard a male roadrunner cooing in the brush next to me and realized I was snapping lizards off the trail and into the brush, so he must’ve been snatching up lizards as I flashed them out. His call was so soft, that if someone were on the trail talking, I wouldn’t have heard it. You don’t hear roadrunners making noises, so that was really special. Saw a legless lizard, which are typically very secretive. Lots more snakes this spring too.

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MISSION TRAILS
upset when they closed. They felt it was their trail, their quiet time and exercise.

Open spaces are important to cultivating the next generation of conservationists by getting them in the parks early and developing programs for kids. What better way to be safe and socially distant than outdoor schools?

Advocacy matters the most with the people who approve our budgets. When I request funding to hire more rangers, equipment for trail maintenance, expanding programs for kids. What better way to be safe and socially distant than outdoor schools?

—Liz Doroski is a Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation volunteer.

ALLIED GARDENS/ BENJAMIN BRANCH

Women's Suffrage Contest Winner: Local 14-year-old, Emilia W., was the winner for our recent contest celebrating the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th amendment. Emilia's artwork and writing captured many of the positive outcomes related to granting women the right to vote a century ago. Emilia also took advantage of this opportunity to show off her excellent drawing abilities. Congratulations, Emilia!

Contactless Pick Up now available: The Allied Gardens/Benjamin library is now a contactless pick up location! All patrons are now able to place a hold and have the items come to our branch. When notified via email that your hold has arrived, stop by Monday through Friday between 10:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. Simply give us a call at 619-516-0155 when you arrive in our parking lot, give us your library card number and, after checking the materials out to you, we will bring them out and place them on the Pickup Service table.

Short Classics Online Book Club: Looking for a quick read and some lively discussion? We are currently hosting a monthly book discussion group with titles that are freely available on Project Gutenberg, a website that has a variety of public domain ebooks. In order to join us in the discussion you will need to become a member of the Facebook group “SDPL Short Classics Book Club.” Once on the Facebook page, click on “Join.” Then on the day of our discussion — Sept. 29 — return and click on “join room.” Check out our podcast:

We have begun producing a podcast that will air twice weekly. Library assistant Dave Cederholm will host this short yet informative show to keep you up to date on all the goings-on at SDPL. If you have been wondering what types of online content is available and the current services that we are currently offering to library patrons, then this will fit the bill nicely while not taking up too much of your time. So be sure to

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CONGRATULATIONS BRAD CALLAHAN

Principal Callahan is retiring after serving 13 years at Lewis Middle School. Mr. Callahan has increased in academic growth with our students while providing opportunities such as building one of the first and finest world-class Engineering and Coding Maker Spaces with help from Qualcomm.

Area Superintendent Hazel will conduct community input meetings in order to find a replacement. Thank you, Brad for supporting our community with your dedication and commitment to student learning.

—Michelle Irwin is principal of Patrick Henry High School.

As of Sept. 2, St. Katharine Drexel Academy is officially re-opened for in-person learning, per the governor’s mandate that San Diego County remain off the watch list for 14 consecutive days.

SKDA took a phased-in approach by welcoming transitional kindergarten and kindergarten students on Sept. 2, first through fourth grade on Sept. 8, and fifth through eighth grade will begin on Sept. 14. Parents also have the option to continue distance learning for their child if they’d like.

The school’s reopen plan is in accordance with the local, state and CDC guidelines for schools. In the morning, all students will be screened for symptoms and have their temperatures checked. Each grade level has their own designated hand washing station. All students are 6 feet apart in the classroom and have their assigned desk all day.

Masks will be worn on campus all day unless the students are eating or playing outside safely more than 6 feet away from each other. In addition to this, the campus will be sanitized every day. No supplies will be shared without sanitization in between and no cohorts will mix.

All of these rules still allow for fun, a love of learning and community. Recess and lunch will have music and students will still be able to work in groups with the use of Google Meets. Each child will be assigned their own device while at school as well.

We are still hosting clubs on campus, where the students will meet virtually from their classroom with students and a teacher throughout the school, including Lego Club, Craft Club, Future Scientists and Coding, just to name a few. We will also be continuing to hold Mass outdoors, welcoming one grade level a week and livestreaming Mass to the classrooms and to home.

For families who choose distance learning or for children who are quarantined at home but well enough to join class, each teacher will have a tripod streaming their class via Google Meets. The students at home will be able to watch class and unmute themselves to ask questions.

For all classes, all of the curricular material will be available on either SeeSaw for younger students or Google Classroom for third grade and up. This way, the transition from home to school is seamless. We know this year is bound to present challenges, but we want to work with all of our families to make this the best experience we can for the child.

SKDA is still enrolling and has some spots available. The full re-open plan can be found on the school website at skda-sd.org. To schedule a tour, contact the main office at 619-582-3862 or email mainoffice@skda-sd.org.

—Kelly Bonde is principal of Saint Katharine Drexel Academy.

The way we celebrate these days has changed. But one thing hasn’t. Though metallic foil balloons seem harmless, they can actually be dangerous around electric power lines. The metal in the balloons can cause the line to arc and spark. So keep balloons securely tied down or weighted when outdoors. Always deflate and dispose of them when the party’s over. And when we all return to our normal celebrations, think about using festive rubber or vinyl balloons instead.

Get more tips at sdge.com/safety

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Restaurant Review

By FRANK SABATINI JR.

With some of the cheapest meal prices in town coupled with big, bold signage that stands out from blocks away, Mystic Grill & Bakery is difficult to ignore. Located advantageously on the corner of University Avenue and 70th Street, the fast-casual restaurant has been serving up Mediterranean-inspired food for over 12 years. Yes, there are the obvious choices such as Greek-style salads, hummus, gyros and kabobs. But you’ll also find things like kibbeh, which are crunchy Arabic croquettes encasing ground beef and onions, plus assorted meat pies of Levantine origin filled with spinach, beef or chicken shawarma. The kibbeh and meat pies are only $1.99 each.

There’s also pizza using house-made dough. Remarkably a 14-incher with two toppings sells for $5.95 — less than what many food trucks, commercial brands cost. Their aromas initially hit your nose upon entering the place, just as your eyes lock onto those gorgeous cones of gyros and shawarma sitting on spits behind the order counter.

Mystic Grill & Bakery’s Syrian co-owner, Kamal Laila, oversees the kitchen. He’s been in the food industry for 30 years. Having cooked in eateries while growing up in his homeland, and then owning and operating restaurants in Baton Rouge when coming to the U.S.

He ran a second location of Mystic Grill on Fletcher Parkway in La Mesa but closed it for an offshoot he opened on Balboa Avenue in Kearny Mesa. I kicked off a midday lunch with two kibbeh constructed traditionally with sturdy bulgur wheat casings. With kibbeh I’ve encountered elsewhere, the ground beef inside is usually lightly seasoned. Yet in this case, the ground beef inside is usually light- and meat was so under-spiced that the flavor too, as I could barely detect the wrap a decent zip. On the plus side, it’s a weighty item with plentiful fillings for only $4.99. When I asked Laila how he’s able to keep prices so low, he didn’t offer an explanation, but said with a chuckle, “We’re going to charge them soon.”

I concluded my visit with a small plate of finger-sized desserts: two types of baklava, one made with pistachios and the other with almonds; and a miniscule square of harisa.

The latter is an Arabic cake combining cream of wheat, yogurt, fresh coconut and honey. The merged ingredients create a distinct flavor that sort of resembles a juicy sugar cookie, if one ever existed. As for the baklava, both pieces were flaky on the outside and moist and nutty inside.

Mystic Grill’s large, pictorial menu hangs over the order counter and visually entices you with substantial entrees and combination plates as well. Those offerings average around $11 each and include beef or veggie moussaka; salmon or jumbo shrimp over rice; pasta with a choice of sea-foods and sauces; and kabobs of beef, lamb or chicken served with rice and salad.

The triple-storefront space offers ample seating at granite-topped tables. Vivid, framed paintings of Mediterranean landscapes occupy the walls and correspond well to the assorted foods from multiple countries that inevitably end up in your mouth.

—Frank Sabatini Jr. is the author of ‘Secret San Diego’ (ECW Press) and began his local writing career more than two decades ago as a staffer for the former San Diego Tribune. You can reach him at fsabatini@san.rr.com.

Co-owner Kamal Laila at the cone of chicken shawarma (Photos by Frank Sabatini Jr.)

Falafel wrap

Kibbeh with yogurt sauce

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Adapting artist

just one of the many concerts the group has put on from the garage of Childress-Evans’ home at 7623 Flag Lake Street in San Carlos. Since early May, the band has put on a concert every two weeks, drawing fans and neighbors out to the street to hear their music play. “It’s just nice to be on this regular schedule,” Lollis said.

The alt-weekly garage concert schedule replaces the band’s normal rehearsal schedule, which averaged six to 10 shows a month. Lollis added. The band performed regularly at places like Nate’s Garden Cafe, Wynola Pizza in Julian and the Pine Valley House in Mount Laguna. The band was also a fixture at large events like Art Walk, Adam’s Avenue Street Fair and was billed to play at this year’s San Diego County Fair.

The band members said they worry about what might happen to local music venues as the pandemic drags on keeping their doors closed. One venue they frequently play at — Space Bar in La Mesa — is being helped out by the musicians who played there regularly, a group of over 50 people who have made it a habit to buy coffee or lunch there at least once a week.

“We’re, as a community of musicians, trying to keep [it] alive,” Childress-Evans said. “We’ve got to have these places to go to when it’s safer.”

Since the pandemic began, many musicians have taken to the internet, performing online and asking for tips through PayPal or Venmo. Although some artists have found some success in that format, it is one that Enter The Blue Sky has largely avoided, preferring instead to put out a tip jar for people to offer up support during their garage concerts.

“I still see a lot of those online live open mics, but there’s really nothing like the actual live live,” Lollis said.

Dee added: “There’s something real sterile for me playing the online open mics because I have to have that feedback from people. We’re having a conversation here. With Sande’s words, which are amazing, this conversation has to be received. If you’re just singing to the wall there’s some sterility there.”

The band has found a happy medium by broadcasting their garage concerts on Facebook Live. Beyond live streaming and garage concerts, the band members are hopeful some more socially-distant performance opportunities will arise.

Childress-Evans pointed to a gig her and husband have playing “30s and ’40s music to seniors. “When we go to the retirement homes, we can’t go in, but they come out on a balcony and [we] play from a patio,” she said, adding that the idea could be expanded to local casinos where hotel room balconies could overlook a performance stage. Concerts in parks could also return if families sat together and stayed socially distant from each other.

The problem is not us,” Childress-Evans said. “The problem is the people that come to see us. They got to wear masks and they have to stay at appropriate distance.”

While waiting for more performance opportunities to come about, or for the restrictions on venues to be lifted, Enter The Blue Sky has stayed busy with its regular rehearsal schedule and has also finished up their first music video to the title track of their latest album “Wanderlust.”

And, of course, the group is playing their every-other-Wednesday concerts in San Carlos, which they said they plan on doing all the way through the mandatory shutdown of live events.

“Who knows?” Lollis added. “Maybe we’ll just keep doing them forever.”

THE SHOW WILL GO ON

In the middle of a pandemic where people are asked to stay socially distant from each other, it would seem improbable that a theater company could put on a full production. However, that is exactly what Rolando-based Moxie Theatre plans to do. Opening Sept. 12 and running Thursdays through Sundays at 7 p.m., Moxie will offer online presentations of “The Niceties” by Eleanor Burgess, a play that focuses on two women at an Ivy League school and delves into the topic of racial justice.

“We thought, ‘We already planned to do this, this moment is ripe to have this discussion and we don’t want to do this just on a Zoom conference call. We want to make theater and what is the safest way we can do this,’” said Moxie Executive Artistic Director Jennifer Eve Thorn.

To pull off a full-production play safely, Thorn said they chose “The Niceties” because it was the safest to produce all the plays in the season that was planned before the pandemic. “There are only two actresses in the play and they were able to do much of their rehearsal on video chat. The simple set — a school office setting with books and a desk — was built over a much longer period of time to allow for social distancing.

September Specials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Price</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Our Own Chicken Fajitas</td>
<td>$5.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>USA Choice Burger</td>
<td>$7.99</td>
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<td>Whole Brisket</td>
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WE ARE WORKING HARDER THEN EVER IN THIS NEW ENVIRONMENT. KEEPING YOU SAFE IS OUR #1 PRIORITY.
When in person rehearsal was set to begin, the director, stage team, camera crew and actresses self-quarantined after being tested. Because members of the Moxie board of directors are filmmakers, the production was able to be filmed with very high quality, Thorn said.

“We’re attempting to capture what feels like live theater on film — so we’re not making a movie,” she added. “People watching will know it’s a play. It’s lit like a play. It moves and sounds like a play.”

Although the play is not presented like a movie, there is a movie that will come out about the production. Filmmaker John Brooks is also making a documentary companion piece about the “unique convergence of things happening with the production” — the attempt to do theater in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and the play being about racial justice during a time of mass social unrest following the recent high-profile killings of unarmed Black men, Thorn said.

Although the companion documentary won’t be released right away, each night of the production, audiences will be invited to join in discussions with the cast or special guests.

“I will be live before every single performance welcoming the audience and talking about who you will meet after the performance that night,” Thorn said. “And every single night of the show, someone from the community — maybe a professor, an expert in themes in the play or perhaps the actors or the director — will give the audience a live post show interaction.”

These audience interactions are a regular feature of in-person Moxie performances and Thorn said keeping this tradition for the online presentation was especially important for this play because the subject matter “calls for discussion.”

“Normally you’d get to digest [a play performance] even in your car with whoever you came with on the way home,” she said. “But [online viewing] sort of just leaves you in the living room, if that’s where you’re watching from, and I think the play deserves some time to digest and talk about it and so audiences will get to do that after they watch.”

A lot is riding on “The Niceties” success — it being the first ticked performance by Moxie since the start of the pandemic. But Thorn is confident it will do well, in part because Moxie very early on in the quarantine pivoted to producing plays on the Zoom video platform.

“As soon as we all know we were going to be home, my company, like so many companies, started video conferencing on Zoom. And it was only after a couple of meetings that it became clear to me that it’s really theatrical, being on a video conference call. It’s hilarious,” she said. “We started reaching out to artists and playwrights we work with and asked them if we could pay them to keep writing new plays and performing them live and our audience response was pretty incredible.

Thorn herself wrote the first Zoom-themed play for Moxie — a play titled “Safe Distance” about a company who had pivoted to a Zoom-themed play for Moxie performances and Thorn is confident it will do well, partly because the subject matter “calls for discussion.”

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“Thorn said the response from audiences was “crazy.” Shows would have a preshow comedy routine on current events, and productions covered topics ranging from marriage therapy to online dating for seniors and even a murder mystery. The Zoom productions were about 20 minutes long and Moxie put out a new play every week for 10 weeks straight. Moxie put out the plays for free, asking for donations only, which brought in some money for the cash-starved theater and its artists.

After the production of “The Niceties” wraps up, Thorn said Moxie will return to producing more Zoom shows — a necessity to keep some income trickling in while the future of the theater remains threatened by the pandemic.

“I’m certainly concerned about the longevity of this,” she said of Moxie’s future. “We’ve managed to survive through this moment, but nobody knows how long this will go on and there’s been a 50% cut to arts funding in our city at this point. We’re not just closed, one of our largest sources of income has been cut in half and our donors are ... stretched thin.

They’re helping us and that’s why we’ve survived this long, but I know we can only ask so much of them.”

Thorn said the best way people can help the arts and artists is to make a conscience effort to consume art however they can.

“I do think Moxie will be able to survive this because our organization is unique and we don’t have a big staff,” she said. “But also because we’ve been paying artists all along the way through this whole quarantine. I’ve been mailing out checks consistently. Maybe it’s not a lot, but our commitment at Moxie to pay artists right now while they’re not getting the income they need to survive is part of what’s lifting us up.”

To purchase tickets to “The Niceties,” visit moxietheatre.com.

—Reach editor Jeff Clemetson at jeff@sandnes.com.
SAN CARLOS BRANCH

The San Carlos Library Contactless Pick-Up Service is going stupendously well! We average between 50 to 60 pick-ups per day and even top 100 on Friday afternoons. It is wonderful to see so many familiar faces, and we hope you are smiling behind your masks.

Don’t forget that you can return your library items. Library bookdrops at all 36 locations are open Monday through Friday but will be closed on weekends. Come by during the week to drop off your library materials. Please note that all returned materials will be quarantined for 96 hours so it may take up to one week before they are cleared from library accounts.

Do you or your kids miss reading the ‘Magic’ paperback books? The ‘Go Reads! Here are Visit the San Carlos Library, choose a prepackaged set of five themed books, and we will let staff know you are here for your pick-up service. At this time, participants will receive a coupon for the free book prize. Hold on to the coupon to choose a book when we reopen.

—David Ege is managing librarian of the San Carlos Library.

Click in and listen, new episodes are added on Tuesday and Thursday, and can be accessed through the library’s website. For more information, contact John Gregg, Branch Manager (sandiego.librarymarket.com).

Free craft kits: Our staff is working diligently to create take home craft kits for young children looking for something to do. Available kit themes are displayed on a sign in the parking lot and will be available while supplies last. To request a kit, please come to the library and give us a call indicating which kit theme you would like. We will gladly bring out the kits for you and your little one to take home and enjoy.

Distance learning tools for students: San Diego Public Library has curated a list of several resources to help students with their academic studies. To navigate to, go to the homepage and select the “Kids and Teens” tab toward the top of the screen. Once on the page, simply select the “Distance Learning Library” for the full list of resources.

Thank you, and feel free to reach out to us with any questions 619-533-3970 Monday through Friday 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and check out the Library’s website for the most current information (sandiego.gov/public-library) or download the SDPL app. To get feedback on your mobile device.

—Kathryn Johnson is managing librarian of the Allied Gardens-Benjamin Branch Library.
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