## San Diego Junior Theatre hopes this is intermission, not curtain call

**KENDERA SITTON | Uptown News**

San Diego Junior Theatre has laid off all but two of its staff members in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The children’s theater group is not alone in struggling financially: San Diego Civic Theatre and Balboa Theatre laid off nearly half their staff and Cygnet Theatre has focused on fundraising to keep its staff employed while instituting a 20% pay cut across the board.

A confluence of problems at SDJT led to the decision to go on “intermission.”

Director of operations Carla Corder closes a bag full of keys from former employees. (Photo by Kendra Sitton)

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## Independent bookshops have new opportunity with Amazon lag

**KENDERA SITTON | Uptown News**

With Amazon shifting its delivery priorities to household goods, the company that started as an online bookstore has Prime members waiting five days to a month for in-stock books to be delivered. Despite storefronts being closed, independent bookstores have a unique opportunity during the pandemic to reach new customers through book delivery.

The Book Catapult in Burlingame has managed to maintain its normal sales numbers and even increase them slightly by offering free delivery to many neighborhoods. Compared to March 2019, co-owner Seth Marko said their online sales increased by over 2,000% in March 2020.

“We always did do a little bit of business through our website, but nothing like this,” he said.

They have kept all employees working by shifting book sellers to new roles. Alexiss is picking up books each day than packaging them for USPS to ship. Meanwhile, Independent bookshops have new opportunity with Amazon lag Co-owners Seth Marko and Jennifer Powell inside the Book Catapult (Courtesy photo)
The remote meetings also provided new opportunities for Ward to spend more time with his kids. In the gaps between meetings, he has been able to play with his kids for 20 minutes because he is not out of the house for eight to 10 hours at a time.

Despite the city being in a state of emergency, Ward is not sure he is working more, just that the focus of that work has shifted. Instead of spending weeknights and weekends at community events — all of those have been canceled — Ward is primarily focused on the city’s response to the pandemic. That is shifting now as some of those meetings are being moved online. He was part of a Q & A livestream hosted by the East Village Association on Wednesday, April 15 and will be a part of another session hosted by San Diego Pride on Monday, April 20.

Some of the shifts in his workflow were anticipated before the pandemic began and even welcomed. After the March 1 primary, Ward was planning on spending less time with his campaign for Assembly District 78. He made it through the primary with 55.62% of the vote, a healthy lead over fellow Democrat Sarah Davis who won 27.69% of the vote.

January, February required me to put a lot of attention into the campaign, obviously. I was very much looking forward to an election being over so I could better train my attention on those two priorities, my family and my job,” he said.

The current pandemic hasn’t changed Ward’s campaign priorities, only confirmed his belief that addressing climate change, homelessness, and housing affordability are essential. He is especially interested in how air pollution has improved while people are not driving to work.

“As we are rebuilding our economy and our jobs and our levels of employment, how do we do so in a way that maybe takes some positive lessons learned from distancing as we engage in the work environment so that maybe we can reduce trips? These are all good questions that will need to be addressed,” he said.

He has also prioritized housing while working at the city level, including working to pass the eviction moratorium.

“At least there would not be any immediate exercising of eviction, but rather some protections for people until we can figure out how to get our head back above water and how to move forward when this crisis is on the other side. The direct and indirect economic hits that we are going to have to our neighborhoods are not going to be anything short of devastating,” Ward said.

While the City Council, Mayor Faulconer and county officials have tried to partner together to address the crisis as much as possible, some conflicts have arisen. Ward first learned from the media that Mayor Faulconer was immediately furloughing many city workers in order to make up for budget shortfalls. Ward thought the decision was alarming and that labor processes should be respected even while officials are making difficult decisions. The mayor eventually backed off the furlough, and hundreds of nonsalaried city workers have been converted into doing essential work.

Labor renegotiations were already ongoing ahead of contracts being up for many sectors on July 1, and Ward expects unions and other officials to all come back to the table to reevaluate what they will do going forward.

Another priority Ward hopes to address at the state-level once the crisis is over is how the state can incentivize new job creation and help retrain workers for new careers.

“These are all lessons that I actually had a front seat leading on when I was working with the state legislature back in 2008,” Ward explained.

Before running for City Council, Ward worked extensively with Marty Block. After helping Block in his campaign, Ward was given the opportunity of the lifetime to serve as his chief-of-staff in the Assembly. The timing of Block being seated means Ward has first-hand knowledge about how a legislature addresses a recession.

“When Block transitioned to the State Senate, Ward took a position in San Diego so he could grow his family. While in San Diego, members of the LGBT community and other community groups approached Ward asking him to consider a run to replace Todd Gloria on the City Council. Ward ended up winning the seat outright in the primary (a voting system that no longer exists).

In addition to his work during the Great Recession, Ward is well suited in another way to address this public health emergency: his medical background. Although he is not a former virologist perfectly prepared for this crisis, Ward does have a Bachelor’s degree from Johns Hopkins University where he studied neuroscience with a pre-medical emphasis. He was drawn to the industries around UCSD as well as the LGBT community in Hillcrest. He put off medical school and eventually forewent it entirely after he moved to San Diego.

Since he moved around often as a child because parents were in the Army, San Diego soon became his permanent home.

“I decided that I just didn’t have the fire in the belly for [medical school], although I still think sciences are very interesting. What I was really excited for was engaging with my neighborhood and my home community and LGBT services and something that was a little bit more social in nature,” Ward explained.

Ward began to spend his time helping candidates get elected, starting with Rep. Susan Davis’ election in 2000. Through that, he met Donna Fry, Todd Gloria and many other local political figures he knows to this day.

In the middle of his foray into progressive politics, Ward decided he needed further education. He went on to earn a Master’s in Public Policy and Urban Planning at Harvard’s Kennedy School. From there, he became an environmental planner for a private firm until Block offered him a job in local government.

If Ward is elected, he will be back in Sacramento to assist the people in District 78, coming full circle from his first job in politics.

“It’s been an honorable and thankful career so far. I thought really critically about [running for Assembly], especially with two young kids at home and a job that I liked a lot — being so directly close to communities and city services. At the time I made the decision, it really was because when I looked around knowing that this [seat] is central to a lot of San Diego regional resources and attention. I was really compelled internally to try to avail the most of my passion to be able to help the most people in San Diego,” Ward explained.

—Kendra Sitton can be reached at kendra@sdnews.com.
An Open Letter from the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California and Your Water Providers

To the communities we serve,

These are difficult times, carrying great uncertainty and many challenges. However, the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California and its 26 member public agencies continue to deliver safe, high-quality and reliable water supplies to homes and businesses, just as we have done for nearly a century.

Tap water is safe.

Our water agencies use state-of-the-art, advanced treatment processes that remove and kill viruses, including coronaviruses, as well as bacteria and other pathogens.

There is plenty of water.

Southern California has an extensive distribution, storage and treatment system to ensure continued deliveries even during a disruption. And, our reservoirs are at some of the highest levels ever.

Water deliveries are reliable.

Agencies are taking steps to protect the health and safety of our workforce. Our laboratories, treatment plants and facilities continue to be staffed by skilled and dedicated men and women who provide the vital services that keep our systems running.

Metropolitan and your local water agencies are working together, combining our vast resources and talents, to maintain critical services to the communities we serve.

Sincerely,

Gloria D. Gray, Chairwoman

mwdh2o.com
Like many of my clients, you have somehow survived the last several weeks working from home through a haze of shock, worry, and interrupted routines. This week you have decided that you want to have a plan in place as to how to best navigate what appears to be at least several months of working under the same roof and possibly even the same room as your partner.

You want to be able to do more than just keep the peace and be cordial with your current career connected office mates. You want to be able to actually feel productive while avoiding feeling resentful of your partner because of too much forced togetherness.

You have decided that to you need to set up a new set of rules as to how to co-work without emotional distancing.

Here is a set of guidelines I have been suggesting my clients put into place while waiting out the quarantine:

Rule 1: Set healthy boundaries around your space and time. Where is your work area, and how is it designated? Do your partner and family know how they can best honor the time that you are dedicating to getting your job done?

It is necessary and mentally helpful for you to create a workspace area in your home that is respected by other members of the household. This means this desk, kitchen table, or corner of the room is to be off limits for others to borrow from, play at, or disorganize.

You also need to create an area that you feel is safe for you to think and feel productive in. Consider making the area represent things that are important to you—a picture, a flower from the yard, a quote or inspirational phrase that helps you carve out a little section of your workday that represents your passions and motivators.

Also, understand that carving out a space doesn’t mean that you won’t experience any interruptions. Just like you probably experienced at the office, there are going to be encroachment and distractions. Take a deep breath and treat your family with the patience you would like to experience if roles were reversed.

Setting healthy boundaries around your time also means noticing and actively seeking out time for self-care. Honor that you will need some down time from your family and partner. Schedule at least an hour a day where you can go off to a room or backyard area and sit down with a good book, meditate, journal, or do something that helps you relax and take a deep breath. There is a lot being asked of you right now both mentally and emotionally. It is time to honor the need for self-care more than ever.

Rule 2: Hold family meetings and daily check-ins. Even though the pace of life in the outside world has slows down to a crawl, there is still a need to co-ordinate and give your attention to inside your home and family.

Consider creating a daily checklist about the needs and to-dos that need to be done at home and how you plan to go about doing those chores to each family member so that everyone is participating in keeping the house moving and in order. Talk about ideas like earmarking a certain time of the day when everyone spends an hour working on their chores. Consider having a morning meeting or check-in where the family has discussions about what needs to be done or when tasks will happen so that priorities for the day are addressed.

This checklist should also include play time and the ability to build in some rituals of connection for the family to either continue doing, restate, or add as a new part of your time as a couple or family.

If you want to reintroduce dinner at the dining room table at 5:30 every night and include a new habit of going around the table and talking about the biggest blessings you experienced for the day, then this is the time.

It will be much easier to make these habits a part of your daily routine during the quarantine than any time ever before in our hectic schedules.

Your family will also likely benefit from holding weekly state-of-our-union meetings to address how everyone is feeling and what may or may not be working in your current situation. If a family member or partner is feeling frustration, worried, unacknowledged, or concerned about how you are handling things as a family, this is a time that has been set aside to focus and hopefully find empathy and compromise about how to do things differently moving forward.

Rule 3: Be compassionate and help each other maintain a positive perspective. Your partner and your family don’t want to be in this situation any more than you do. If you are feeling frustrated and upset, it is likely your partner is too. They are not acting and behaving the way they are in order to make you mad or push your buttons. They are having their own experience that is painful, and they are suffering too.

I tell my clients to accept an attitude of being curious versus furious with their partners. If you are noticing they are not acting like they normally would, you can check in with them about what is happening that is making them upset or what expectation they have about the situation that is not being met.

What is causing them to feel disconnected, worried, angry, or upset? Checking in with your partner and finding something you can acknowledge for them does not mean you agree. It doesn’t even necessarily mean you are going to do anything differently.

What it does mean is that you are offering compassion, kindness, and care to a person that you love and admire who is in pain. This attitude is going to serve you well as you continue to manage confine, close quarters, and the uncertainty of our current situation.

Rule 4: Have a sense of humor and find something to laugh about each day.

Nothing beats stress up better than a good belly laugh. Looking for something to share, such as a funny story, something you see online, or a Remember, your partner made you laugh or did something that you still think about and smile. This is good medicine during such serious times.

Rule 5: Use this time to strengthen your relationship and deal with some of the communication issues that haven’t been addressed. Many of my clients want to take advantage of this time to put something and see this time as a catalyst to finding the energy and time to work on strengthening their commitment to each other.

You and your partner have had issues with communication, trust, or feeling emotionally disconnected, it is unlikely that this time will automatically fix things without doing some difficult work.

Acknowledging the areas of the relationship that need some attention and some repair is one way to utilize the time spent with our partner. All of us want to have loving relationships where we feel acknowledged, heard, seen, and comfortable being emotionally vulnerable with our partner. If you are your partner having so much time alone with your partner, that can often be a sign that your relationship needs some healing or you as a couple need new tools to strengthen your relationship.

Consider using this time to enter into couples therapy as a way to manage this difficult time and as a way to help build the skills you want to cultivate with your partner. Having this much time at home with a partner is a perfect practice ground for the tools you can learn on handling conflict better and strengthening your partnership.

Consider doing this without emotional distancing. This doesn’t have to be the fate of your relationship, and your marriage doesn’t have to be a casualty of the virus quarantine. Taking the time now to craft the skills needed and work on finding new ways to respond to your circumstances in a relationship is a step worth taking in the midst of this time.
Haiku - "Protect, Secure, Shield"

SUSAN J. FARESE

Have you thought of this?
our health care teams are high risk
for Covid-19

Please think about it
for future medical needs-
we need them to thrive

Their ethical pledge
to save others at all costs
disintegrated

A tragic effect
humanity’s protectors
must be protected!

How can they be safe?
provide them with PPE-
or they will be doomed!

How will this finish?
how many will pass away
due to negligence?

Their masks, gloves, and gowns
are Covid-19 armor
that must be secured

First responders and nurses
physicians, aides, housekeeping
pharmacists, NP’s

No time to waste now!
shield from coronavirus
and celebrate them!

Susan J. Farese, MSN, RN, a na-
tive of New Jersey, is the owner and
president of SJF Communications, San Diego, CA.

Covid-19: A small business disaster

J. AIELLO

Fourteen years ago, along with my wife Rhonda, I em-
barked on an amazing jour-
ney: we started our own
business. We opened our first
shoeshine stand on the upper
level of San Diego’s Westfield
Horton Plaza Mall.

Several years later, we
moved our stand to the ground
level. Over the years with the
help and support of many peo-
ples in San Diego, we were able
to grow, opening additional
stands in the Bayfront Hilton,
Marriott Marquis, San Diego,
Manchester Grand Hyatt and
Emerald Plaza along with ex-
panding into the trade show
industry.

When Westfield sold Horton
Plaza Mall last year, we relo-
cated to the Westin Gaslamp
Quarter which is our current
location. Over the years, we
worked hard to establish our
business and developed a rep-
utation for quality-service
and workmanship. Just about
everyone — politicians, cor-
porate executives, judges, law-
yers, movie stars and tourists
— have sat in my chair. It has
been the greatest experience of
our lives to serve San Diego’s
Downtown community.

At the beginning of March,
we learned along with the rest
of the country that Covid-19
was going to be a serious na-
tional health issue. By the
middle of the month it was
officially a pandemic. The
State of California along with
the City of San Diego declared
a State of Emergency. Social
distancing and the closure of
all non-essential businesses
was ordered.

For a small business such
as ours that is a devastating
event. We have never made
a lot of money, but we have
been able to support ourselves
in a comfortable lifestyle and
save a little for slow periods.
However, to suddenly lose our
sole income is frightening.
Our bills must still be paid we
still have to eat and there is
no longer any income to pay
for that.

We have been able to cov-
er our expenses for April.
Beyond the month of April,
we are going to be in trouble.
On March 30th, we applied
for the City of San Diego Small
Business Relief Fund. On the
same day we also applied for
Economic Small Business
Disaster Assistance with
the SBA. Most recently we
attempted to apply for the
Paycheck Protection Program
with Citibank where our
business checking account
is. Nobody has contacted
us regarding those actions
and there is no one we can
contact.

I am now in my 60’s and
starting over is not an op-
tion. We will be fine for April.
Beyond that, everything we
have worked for will be gone.

— J. Aiello is the owner of Joey’s
Shoe Shine.

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fireplace, or stove.”

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wind damage exceeds one hundred million dollars
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due to structural damage and chimney fires.

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with the National Fireplace Institute and have an A+ rating with the Better Business Bureau.

For a limited time, readers of this paper will receive
a special discount on our full chimney cleaning and
safety inspection package with special attention to
chimney water intrusion points in preparation for the
rainy season.
**Uptown Briefs**

**HiHillcrest Farmers Market reopens Sunday**

Classified by the State of California as an essential food service, the Hillcrest Farmers Market will be open utilizing new social distancing and safety protocols on Sunday, April 19 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. The weekly Sunday market has been closed since March 15 out of an abundance of caution during the COVID-19 crisis.

As the full Hillcrest Farmers Market is one of the largest and most popular farmers markets in town, many Hillcrest residents and others rely on the market for essential fresh fruit and vegetables. Since the market has been classified by Governor Gavin Newsom as an essential food service, the Hillcrest Business Association (HBA) will re-open the market for fresh groceries and pre-packaged food only.

Staff and volunteers at the market will work to ensure that all customers and vendors are safe at the reopened market so there will be some important safety changes in place for the duration of the current public health emergency. These changes include opening the market specifically for elderly customers between 9 a.m. and 10 a.m., a maximum capacity of 100 customers, offering fresh produce and pre-packaged food only, and social distancing measures.

Customers are also encouraged to go on-line and pre-order their produce items ahead of time. Visit hillcrestfarmersmarket.com to find links to favorite Hillcrest Farmers Market vendors.

The Hillcrest Farmers Market is located on Normal Street between University Avenue and Lincoln Avenue (under the Hillcrest Pride Flag). Free parking will be available for farmers market customers in the Hillcrest DMV parking lot on the west side. After parking, please queue and enter the market from the south side of the DMV building.

**San Diego Museum of Art hosts virtual art alive event**

For the first time in the event’s 39-year history, Art Alive will be completely hosted online. Follow the San Diego Museum of Art’s social channels every day at 3 p.m. for content featuring floral interpretations over the years, Art Alive fun facts, cocktail recipes and more. Museum visitors will also have the opportunity to submit their own photos and memories of Art Alive for a chance to be featured!

Virtual Art Alive Weekend (April 24th - April 26th, 2020) will feature a dance party, new online exhibition and Garden of Activities, including:• Dress up, make your favorite cocktail and join the live Bloom Bash party with a music set by DJ Gabe Vega on Friday, April 24th at 7 p.m. PST via Instagram Live. • Keeping with the tradition of featuring exquisite interpretations of famous works of art, #VirtualArtAlive will feature an online exhibition of works interpreted by designers using items from home. • End the weekend with a step-by-step tutorial for making crepe paper flowers at home on Sunday, April 26th.

Art Alive is the Museum’s annual fundraiser in support of education, outreach programs and special exhibitions. All events during Art Alive weekend, including Bloom Bash, are available to the public for free, but suggested donations will be accepted for those who wish to donate.

Follow #VirtualArtAlive on the Museum’s Facebook, Instagram and Twitter accounts.

**San Diego County Fair postponed to 2021**

Based on Gov. Gavin Newsom’s press conference on April 14, mass gatherings are not likely to be allowed for the foreseeable future. Therefore, it is the decision to postpone the San Diego County Fair to 2021. The postponement of the Fair was announced at the monthly 22nd District Agricultural Association board of directors meeting at the Del Mar Fairgrounds on April 14.

“The health and safety of our community take precedence during this unprecedented time of crisis,” said Tim Fennell, CEO/general manager of the Del Mar Fairgrounds. “The San Diego County Fair is a beloved family tradition for more than 1.5 million San Diegans each year, as well as a source of livelihood for numerous individuals and businesses. Yet with the continued impacts of COVID-19, postponing this year’s fair is the right thing to do.”

This fair’s theme couldn’t be more relevant: Heroes, Unite! “Now, more than ever, we’re acutely aware that some of our very greatest heroes walk among us. We are so thankful to the healthcare workers and first responders who are keeping our communities safe, the teachers who keep our children learning and the countless community heroes who are going to extraordinary efforts to help others during this great time of need,” Fennell said. “That’s why we’ll be proud to carry this theme through to next year’s fair – honoring the heroes who continue to emerge throughout our community.”

Making the decision to postpone this year’s fair was no easy feat. Yet, as the largest annual event in San Diego County and one of the top five fairs in North America, they are following the recommendations of public health officials to postpone mass gatherings until it is safe to host them again.

For now, the fairgrounds are currently on standby to be utilized for Emergency Operations Services at any time. “We’ve partnered with the San Diego Food Bank to serve as a food distribution site, have donated several hundred N95 masks to health care providers and will continue looking for ways to serve the community,” Fennell said.

**Mama’s Kitchen hits sixth consecutive week of record meal deliveries**

Mama’s Kitchen, a local non-profit meal delivery service dedicated to women, men and children vulnerable to hunger due to HIV, cancer, and other critical illnesses, including congestive heart failure and Type 2 diabetes, is working around the clock to maintain operations during the “shelter-in-place” mandate.

For the past six weeks, each delivery day has been a record delivery day. On Friday, April 10, Mama’s Kitchen delivered 7,284 meals to 607 clients. This is already a 40% increase from just a few weeks ago before the mandate was issued.

Mama’s Kitchen projects its clientele and meals served will continue to increase over the next two months due to the crisis.

As the pandemic progresses in our region, the organization has seen an increase in demand for its services to provide home-delivered nutrition to critically ill individuals and families who are most at risk to the devastating complications from COVID-19 given their compromised immune systems and chronic illnesses.

During these challenging times when everyone is encouraged to telecommute or stay home to avoid the virus, Mama’s Kitchen provides an opportunity to help those in need.

Mama’s Kitchen is still accepting referrals for new clients, and does not have a waiting list. As always, the organization’s goal is to never turn away a qualified individual.

The nonprofit is still accepting backup volunteer applications. Those interested in supporting Mama’s Kitchen’s efforts can visit mamaskitchen.org/volunteer to learn more.

Mama’s Kitchen has also established an Emergency Response Fund to support increased expenses due to the response efforts. With the distribution of stimulus checks coming down the pipeline, the organization invites the community to give back to nonprofit organizations in need so they can continue supporting our local community members in need.

**San Diego libraries manufacturing protective gear for healthcare workers**

Continuing efforts to make City resources available in the fight against COVID-19, Mayor Kevin L. Faulconer today announced the San Diego Public Library is producing hundreds of protective face shields for local hospital workers to flatten the curve.

Faulconer was joined on April 9 by Chris Van Gorder, president and CEO of Scripps Health; Jane Finley, senior vice president and area manager for Kaiser Permanente; and Patrick Stewart, CEO of the San Diego Public Library Foundation.

“We’re going to use every tool we have to protect our hospital staff and first responders in the fight against COVID-19 and that requires thinking outside the box,” said Faulconer. “These machines, once used for class projects and entrepreneurs, are now exclusively used to produce face shields and save lives in our local hospitals. This is a great partnership between so many San Diegans to provide innovative solutions to combat this deadly disease.”

**Mama’s Kitchen volunteers fill food orders. (Courtesy photo)**

**The midway at a recent San Diego County Fair. (Photo by Thomas Melville)**
Matthew is fulfilling free delivery orders to several neighborhoods in Uptown in his car. Co-owner Seth Marko has been inside the store on Janiper Street, processing orders, ordering books, and receiving shipments while co-owner Jennifer Powell cares for their young children at home.

In addition to regulars, the Amazon’s delivery lag has brought new customers to The Book Catapult.

“I think people are realizing that ‘Oh, there is actually a bookstore that maybe actually means, and now especially a great place to weigh us down and give purpose,” explained Nelson.

Bluestocking is selling gift cards and offering curb-side pick-up as well as shipping books through the mail. Bluestocking’s mix of used and new books were already showcased on their website and Abe Books.

“They were all things we already did but most people shopping here just haven’t used these sales,” Nelson said.

In addition, Bluestocking Books recently joined bookshop.org, a new site for independent bookstores that has promised to give affiliates a larger portion of sales than Amazon. It is also more user friendly and has better incentives for publishers and authors to use it than indiebound.com, which always faltered at rivaling Amazon.

Even iconic independent bookstores that have pivoted to online sales have struggled with their brick-and-mortar stores shut down. Powell’s Books in Portland, Oregon, the world’s largest independent bookstore, had to put out a desperate plea for customers to buy books to stave off layoffs. San Francisco’s City of Lights Bookstore had to raise hundreds of thousands of dollars to stay in business.

Other bookstores have chosen different paths. Verbatim Books in North Park has furloughed staff and has not moved to sell books online.

“We are completely closed and are not selling books online. Verbatim Books aims to cultivate a browsing experience where people can browse and discover new books in a pleasant, art-filled environment and online sales are not conducive to this mission,” said Justine Epstein.

Epstein has applied for local and federal grants and is not worried about the survival of the bookstore at this time.

Even book buyers shopping online have lamented the loss of getting to shop at the brick-and-mortar store. Marko is in the best financial position of the three bookstores in Uptown, but he has noticed this loss as well.

‘Most people when they place an online order, they’ll leave a note that says, ‘I can’t wait to come back in and actually look at the books or touch the books.’ It’s a strange existence right now,” he said. “I’m here by myself in a space that we created so that we could have conversations with people about books all day long.” Marko said. He has been alone in the store listening to music for the last few weeks.

Marko estimates that each transaction is taking 10 times the work of a normal purchase. He thinks they may actually be doing more work than normal and is trying not to overburden his bookellers, especially The Book Catapult’s bookseller Matthew who is spending all day in a car making deliveries— which is not the job he signed up for.

“I hope it doesn’t go on forever because it’s a terrible business model,” Marko said.

National Independent Bookstore Day has been postponed from later this month in April to August. Bookstores are hoping to host events in their brick-and-mortars then, as long as they make it through this crisis.

— Kendra Sitzen can be reached at kendra@sدنews.com.

A display of books inside the Book Catapult (Courtesy photo)

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Bluestocking Books

The front window of Bluestocking Books (Photo courtesy Kris Nelson)

Bluestocking Books ready to be delivered for free in Uptown neighborhoods from the Book Catapult. (Photo by Seth Marks)
FROM PAGE 1

The San Diego Junior Theatre’s offices and program venues are inside Balboa Park. Many of the museums, houses of hospitality and recreation centers were closed early in March. When too many people crowded the park just to use the walkways and lawns, access to the entire park and parking lots were blocked, including the offices of SDJT which contained all their scripts, props, and documents.

Initially, Executive Director Jimmy Saba thought he would only need to lay off customer service workers in charge of the box office and everyone else could work from home. He soon realized that although Balboa Park was only officially closed until April 6, the crisis would stretch longer than that, something the organization could not afford without revenue from ticket sales, classes and summer camps.

“We’re a small arts organization [with] about $1.3 million in our budget annually. We do have some reserves, but without any income coming in those reserves, it would go down super quick. We’ve had to put down any income coming in those reserves,” explained Saba.

“Artistic director Desha Crownover’s job was eliminated in the cuts. She has been with Junior Theatre for much of the last 25 years, weathering financial downturns, swine flu, and challenges internal and external. When she turned in her key, she said she spent the week overwhelmed with questions about what will happen to the 30,000 kids Junior Theatre touches per year as well as how she will pay her electric bill.

“The thing that really makes me sad is whenever this like that hits everybody, it affects the nonprofits the most. It affects the artists the most. It affects the kids, the educators because so much of what we do is seen as extra or superfluous or not essential,” Crownover said.

Saba is determined that this closure is only an interruption and San Diego Junior Theatre will live on to celebrate its 73rd season. He has also applied for a similar crisis in its fourth year. In 1948, a polio outbreak in San Diego forced the theater to shutter in July, the height of their programming while children under 10 were banned from playgrounds, movie theaters, and other gatherings.

“That’s probably the closest thing but we persevered through that and we were in our infancy at that time,” Saba said.

Even when social distancing ends, Saba doubts that many people will want to be in small classrooms or crowded theaters for a while which is why they are preparing for a protracted crisis. Once it is safe again, he predicts a resurgence in theater and other live performances because people will crave the feel of warm bodies in a room together.

“A lot of people don’t give that credit. We say there’s an energy in the audience even before the play starts. You’re having a relationship not with actors on stage, but with sharing the experience in a room,” he said.

Saba is determined that this closure is only an interruption and San Diego Junior Theatre will live on to celebrate its 73rd season. He has also applied for the federal Paycheck Protection Program in order to rehire his staff and pay them through the pandemic.

— Kendra Sitton can be reached at kendra@sdnews.com. —
Positives and challenges as school district’s online learning plan begins

Roughly 30 different instructional classes have been offered daily to assist teachers in operating their new online classrooms, drilling down into programs including SeeSaw, Canvas, and Google Classroom. Training in the various software allows a teacher to identify what program matches best with their classroom-teaching style, and with the needs of their students.

The district-wide effort is being led by resource teachers from the Instructional Technology Department, as well as 20 classroom teachers. This “teachers-training-teachers” approach allows for efficient instruction and sharing of best practices in a more familiar setting.

A parent of two Mission Bay High students, a junior and a freshman, who did not want to be named, said the homeschooling experience has been probably more hands-off than others. One of my kids is on Zoom most mornings and some afternoons, and when he isn’t, he is pretty inundated with schoolwork, so he usually is.”

The parent said it hasn’t been too long since he had to summer school for his eldest boy, for whom, “Life has just continued from home instead of steadily in the classroom. But for her younger son, “It is a different story. He has had a bit of work from some teachers via the Canvas/Google classroom/Schoolify apps and others. But he has not had to spend much on his own due to next-to-no communication.”

“It has been frustrating there are days when he doesn’t have much at all. Hopefully, that will change in the coming days as the teachers get up to speed. This is a new experience for all of them and all, they seem to be happy and adapting.”

Keast pointed out distance learning has other phases. “I don’t think there’s an advantage because when you have class time, a lot of students get left behind, they just can’t keep up,” he said. “Another main advantage is that I can riddle my online assignments with hyperlinks to make sure they understand things. It’s a much more comprehensive way to address skill-building activities because nothing gets left out.”

Keast added Keast of online instruction: “Overall, having a database of online learning resources, which are subject-specific, can provide the amount of teaching time – and decrease paperwork – that you do. Kids don’t have to haul in all those awkward backpack full of books and binders. That’s unsustainable – and it’s over.”

The drawbacks of online education.

“Suddenly, there is a class divide with access to devices (computers),” said Keast, adding, “The district made a smart decision to make computers available to all our kids.”

— Dave Schwab can be reached at reporter@sdsnews.com, o
In-person Pride events canceled

San Diego Pride announced Thursday that the board and staff decided to cancel all in-person Pride events scheduled for July. The annual San Diego Pride Parade is the largest single-day civic event in the region and is among the largest Prides in the United States, typically attracting over 250,000 people. In addition to the parade, the LGBT community gathered for other events, including She Fest, the Pride Rally, a festival and the Pride 5k. “This pandemic has impacted all of us. We have had to change how we live our lives and Pride is no different,” said Sue Hartman, Board Co-Chair. “This was not an easy decision, but everyone’s health and safety are paramount. Rest assured, our community will find ways to celebrate Pride together again.”

For decades San Diego Pride has brought hundreds of thousands of people together to celebrate, mourn, and protest while raising millions of dollars to support the LGBTQ community locally, nationally, and globally. The commitment of San Diego Pride’s board, staff, volunteers, and community partners is to continue that legacy of work in ways that are virtual and safe until we can be together again. These additional adaptations to programming will be rolled out in the coming weeks and months.

“We recognize how deeply meaningful Pride is to our community. Pride brings us together in times of protest and times of celebration. Pride helps connect us to community and our found family. Pride gives us access to life-saving direct services and provides grant funding to our local and global LGBTQ community,” said Fernando Z. López, Executive Director. “In San Diego, we are privileged to have a Pride organization that does that meaningful education, organizing, advocacy, and philanthropic work all year long, not just one weekend a year. Our programs have continued on in virtual space and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.”

“Pride is not canceled. In-person mass gatherings are canceled. Nothing can strip away our pride. Nothing can deny us the pride our community will find ways to raise our Pride flags, celebrate the vibrancy of our community, and bring to light the issues that our movement still faces,” López added.

Many elected officials weighed in on the decision, including San Diego’s cohort of LGBTQ politicians. While many described the decision as difficult, they said they fully supported San Diego Pride for putting the health and safety of the LGBT community first.

San Diego Pride already announced plans to take part in InterPride, a 24-hour virtual event for the global community happening on June 27.

A look at the parade (Photo by Jules Shane)
California Tower tours restart, briefly

For a few brief weeks, the California Tower was reopened. Located inside the Museum of Man, it just underwent a seismic retrofit that finished in February after a year of work from the city of San Diego. Until the coronavirus pandemic prompted the closure of local museums, museum staff conducted 10 tours a day, taking a dozen people up 150 stairs to view Balboa Park from a new vantage point. Staff gave three to four tours a day so as to not be too worn out.

The tower is 198 feet tall but the final staircase leading to a small dome is closed permanently. The tour goes up several regular staircases before going up an antiquated spiral staircase at the end. On each story after going up a staircase, the tour guide talked about people groups significant to San Diego's history. The tour guide discussed San Diego's Chinatown, which was destroyed to make way for Balboa Park, the Chicano movement that protested for Chicano Park, and the Kumeyaay Nation who once covered the whole region.

The chimes heard in the park are located inside the tower. According to a museum tour guide, a musician comes in once a month to record new music to play on the 100-chime electric carillon. The musician records three songs, which are played at noon each day for that month.

While the Museum of Man and the California Tower are closed for now, here's a peak at what a future visit would hold.

The California Tower is an iconic San Diego site and is one of the most photographed places in the region. However, it is most often photographed from the outside. These photos take you inside.»

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