Soroptimists honor fighters against human trafficking

By DAVE SCHWAB | La Mesa Courier

[Editor’s note: This article is part of an ongoing series on human trafficking in San Diego County.]

San Diegans battling human trafficking for sex and labor were recognized Nov. 27 at La Mesa Soroptimist's 62nd annual pre-Thanksgiving community breakfast at the Handlery Hotel.

Those working to stop human trafficking and assist its victims were thanked and honored for their work. Honorees included: Kathi Hardy, executive director of Freedom from Exploitation Inc. and director of operations at Survivor Leader Network of San Diego; Kiley Lizama, program manager with I Care: Catherine Hamo-Schrock, program director of kNOW MORE; Ami Carpenter and Jaime Gates, professors and co-principle investigators from University of San Diego overseeing research study on human trafficking; Sayupa Ulloa, outreach leader of PETALS (human trafficking ministry) at Rock Church; and Generate Hope.

Soroptimist International of La Mesa's Lisa Moore thanked the gathering, acknowledging potential candidates for the city manager position before the city's Public Works Department, most notably during the streetscape project that transformed the aging downtown Village. He started working for the city of La Mesa in 1999 as an engineering project manager.

The city did conduct a brief nationwide search for other potential candidates for the city manager position before deciding unanimously to promote Humora to the job. Humora's salary will be determined at a meeting later this month.

HUMORA NAMED
CITY MANAGER

At a closed session meeting on Jan. 18, La Mesa City Council voted to promote Greg Humora to city manager. Humora was the assistant city manager under former City Manager Yvonne Garrett, who retired at the end of December 2019.

In addition to serving as assistant city manager, Humora also led the city's Public Works Department, most notably during the streetscape project that transformed the aging downtown Village. He started working for the city of La Mesa in 1999 as an engineering project manager.

The city did conduct a brief nationwide search for other potential candidates for the city manager position before deciding unanimously to promote Humora to the job. Humora's salary will be determined at a meeting later this month.

COUNTY DISTRICT 2 CANDIDATES FORM

A forum for the candidates seeking to fill the District 2 county supervisor seat will be held Wednesday, Jan. 29, at Murdock Elementary School in La Mesa. The forum is sponsored by the Grossmont-Mt.
The former Ship 1774 location at 7298 University Ave. won “Honorable Mention” at the Coronado Flower Show.

• By July 10, 1950, VFW Ship #1774 hosted a bathing beauty contest; the proceeds went to the Relief Fund. Bathing suits were part of the awards.

MEMBERS NEEDED

Over the years, membership at VFW La Mesa has declined and the group is always looking for new vets to join.

“Our membership seems to be declining with the loss of our older members, and the youth are not yet ready or able to participate in the activities of a veteran’s organization for various reasons,” Porath said.

Some are struggling with jobs, the cost of living in San Diego, and state legislative relief to equally and fully recognize state non-profit status vs. federal did not occur (some posts are closing because they can no longer afford California property tax assessments) and other costs of doing business, he added.

Besides being a social place to hang out, have a meal, and get some of the needed support a veteran family requires, Porath said there’s much more to what the La Mesa Veterans Club does. For example, the organizations of the La Mesa Veterans Club sponsors Boys and Girls State, a program that sends boys and girls to Sacramento for one week where they learn government.

The VFW also sponsors one of 21 American Legion baseball teams; assists veterans with their filing of claims; assists with various personal issues of the veteran and/or family; sponsors Christmas for some children who have one or more parents deployed; provides low-cost meals and entertainment for eligible persons; provides scholarship programs for school grades eight to 12; provides awards to JROTC cadets; provides some school education programs; participates in parades and patriotic events; assists with Stand-Down in San Diego and the North County; maintains a Vietnam memorial; and overall maintains a veterans facility to operate within the city of La Mesa that serves the needs of veterans and their families.

In other words, it does a lot and is happy to do so. New members are always welcome, Porath stressed.

For more information, visit vfwlamesa.org.

—Jill Diamond is a freelance writer based in Southern California who focuses on stories about neighborhood history.
City Council passes smoking ban

By JEFF CLEMETSON | La Mesa Courier

At its Jan. 14 meeting, La Mesa City Council voted to adopt an ordinance that bans smoking in public spaces.

The change in the municipal code prohibits smoking on public streets, sidewalks, and “unenclosed places of employment.”

The smoking ban has only limited exceptions:
- 20% of hotel or motel rooms can be designated smoking rooms.
- Retail or wholesale tobacco shops can allow smoking.
- Private smokers’ lounges, including hookah bars, are exempt.
- Also exempt are any restaurant and/or bar legally operating an outdoor dining or smoking facility continuously for adults not less than 60 days prior to the effective date of the ordinance and not located or encroaching on city property or around right of ways.

Michelle Huey was the lone speaker opposed to the new ordinance. She said the new rule “makes a bold statement that smokers are not wanted in La Mesa.” She added that the ban will adversely affect workers who smoke and will no longer be able to smoke on breaks as well as smokers who live in multi-unit apartments because they can no longer walk outside to smoke.

Several residents spoke in favor of the smoking ban, citing health studies and personal experiences with breathing in other people’s second-hand smoke.

“Linda Barber spoke in favor of the smoking ban. (Courtesy City of La Mesa)"

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IDEAL
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Since 1960

By NERESA J. WILLIAMSON | La Mesa Courier

French female playwright Yasmina Reza partnered with controversial French director, Roman Polanski, to co-write a screenplay version of her play, the black-comedy-drama, “God of Carnage,” that became the 2011 French movie “Carnage.”

Reza’s idea of carnage is being presented to local theater lovers via Lamplighters Community Theatre’s current production of its 2009 play, which opened Jan. 10. And, it is good and timely.

Verbal carnage, large and small, is written into almost every character and minute of the play—an 11-year-old brute; adults; comments about the institution of marriage; how big pharma can act immorally; social class distinctions; and more. Nothing is scared or protected—not even a hamster that was allegedly murdered by being set free into the wilds of Brooklyn where the play is set.

By ALEX O’NEVE | La Mesa Courier

‘God of Carnage’ is a timely discussion on absence of civility

When it came time to pick out a senior project, the choice was easy for Will Harris. It was everything else that was difficult.

Harris, a senior at Helix High, has spent four years in the school’s drama department so directing a play seemed like a natural choice.

“It felt right to direct,” Harris said while at a San Francisco speech tournament. “A good ending to my time at the Helix Drama Department.”

But what to do? What to do?

Considering his musical theater background, it’s natural that Harris thought about doing a musical, but that didn’t work out. He also considered doing “The Odd Couple,” since he had gone to a state speech tournament last year performing a scene from the Neil Simon comedy.

“That didn’t work because the department had done that recently,” Harris said. “But I was looking at the plays at Barnes & Noble, and the choice seemed so obvious.”

That obvious choice was George Bernard Shaw’s “Pygmalion,” the 1913 comedy that introduced the world to Henry Higgins and Eliza Doolittle.

Turns out, Harris had played Higgins in a Peter Pan Junior Theatre production back in 2017, and he was familiar with the basic premise, though the original play lacks famous songs like “The Rain in Spain” and “I Could Have Danced All Night.”

But then he said that if you are considering a director, you, You’re Perfect, Now Change.”

“My friend Shane Robles, who directed a play for his senior project last year, told me, ‘Don’t do it!’ but then he said that if you are going to do it, it’s not going to be easy.”

Drama teacher Paul Reams says he did stress to Harris that the time commitment needed to direct a play went far beyond the typical senior project.

“A typical project takes about 20 hours of work while a play needs 250 to get it right,” Reams said. “That’s 10-12 times beyond other students.”

Reams is impressed with how Harris is handling the pressure.

“He’s got an artistic sensibility and makes quality choices,” Reams said.

Harris admits he got a kick when he told Peter Pan Junior Theatre director Dr. Mark Arapostathis he was returning to Higgins for his senior project.

“I didn’t ask for advice that much. I just said, ‘Guess what I’ve decided to tackle,’” Harris laughed.

Dr. Arapostathis is proud his student got so much out of “My Fair Lady” that he wanted to dig deeper with “Pygmalion.”

“I’m proud of him because that means he researched it.”

Arapostathis said. “So many kids doing musicals don’t take the time to research the origins.”

Harris is also helping Arapostathis with PPJT’s newest play “Peter Pan.”

Although Harris hasn’t asked for advice on doing “Pygmalion,” Dr. A said throughout Harris’ time in PPJT, he would often ask questions about how a scene was staged.

“He was listening and paying attention, so I do hear when he speaks to the kids in our group it’s obvious he’s learned quite a lot on the job,” he said.

Harris jokes that he’s learned one valuable lesson as a result of doing “Pygmalion”: He doesn’t want to be a director.

“Honestly, I think I like acting more,” Harris laughed. “But it’s been an amazing experience working with everyone to make the show mine.”

“Pygmalion” will debut Jan. 10 at the Helix Mainstage Theatre and run in repertory with “I Love You, You’re Perfect, Now Change.” Tickets are $10 and can be purchased at highlandplayers.tick- eetleap.com/.

—Alex Owens is a freelance writer based in La Mesa.
Smoking Tryout

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

it was a great experience nonetheless. He was put on a shortlist should the team need extra players down the road.

“In the country where I am from, soccer is played at every corner of the streets, from the youngest to the oldest,” Ahou commented. “We get introduced to the game really early and just have fun with friends every day playing soccer. I started playing soccer at around 5 years old.”

For Ahou, the opportunity to try out and be seen by soccer pros was quite exciting.

Among those overseeing the tryout was soccer legend and California native Landon Donovan.

Donovan, who serves as executive vice president of soccer operations for the team, won a record six championships during his years in Major League Soccer (MLS).

“It was an honor to finally see Donovan talking in front of me, remembering that I was watching him on TV when he was playing in England and with the LA Galaxy,” Ahou went on to say. “I will keep working hard and I am confident this new year will bring many good surprises.”

With the rise in soccer popularity, Ahou sees San Diego as a logical city to host another team.

“To me, San Diego is a city that breathes soccer, and it will breathe soccer even stronger with a local team,” Ahou commented. “Having a pro team around will help develop this great potential and improve the quality of the players. A local pro team will do nothing but strengthen this soccer culture in San Diego.”

As Ahou rightfully sees it, his future in the game he loves looks bright.

“All the boys I played with, all the coaches and the team that works to ensure that the community it serves is preserved and enhanced. GMIA represents more than 7,000 residences in the area and I want to continue working with them.”

After the forum concludes at 8 p.m., candidates for Superior Court judge seats and the 71st and 79th Assembly District have been invited for a meet-and-greet with those attending.

GMIA is a nonprofit organization that works to ensure that the quality and character of the community it serves is preserved and enhanced. GMIA represents more than 7,000 residences in the area.

LA MESA WOMAN’S CLUB INSTALL OFFICERS

The members of La Mesa Woman’s Club (LMWC) enjoyed a catered lunch at the clubhouse and installed the new and returning board members and welcomed many new members. Betsy Quinn and Kathy Tinsley will return as co-presidents.

“Community service is the heart of our organization,” read
by Andrew R. Campomella

This National School Choice Week (Jan. 26-Feb. 1), I want to share with you one of the most compelling circuits that parents run into when choosing the right school for their child. That way, if you see it coming, you can run from it all day.

It starts with a thought like this: "Do I, as a parent, really know best about my child's education?" After all, I don't have a graduate degree in education. There's a lot of school jargon I'm not sure about. Should I let more equipped people make the calls about where and how my child is educated?"

I understand the tendency to think that way. But I work with tens of thousands of school leaders around the country — the "education experts" — every year, and here's what I believe: You know your child better than anyone else. You are the expert on your child as a whole person — how they learn, experience the world, and what they're passionate about. You are best positioned to help your student find the learning environment where their unique self will be cared for and inspired. Nobody is more invested in your child's happiness than you.

The biggest mistake you can make as a parent is not recognizing that power you hold. Not only are you best equipped to make choices for your child's education, but it can be one of your most rewarding things you ever do! When a parent finds a learning environment where their child's potential is unleashed, it can mean the difference between that child finding success and confidence or feeling like a failure.

Change that starts with parents is the single most powerful way to improve education in California. Do! When a parent finds a learning environment where their child's potential is unleashed, it can mean the difference between that child finding success and confidence or feeling like a failure.

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By DIANNE JACOB

Dianne's Corner

I was so excited! I was able to share with you one of the most compelling circuits that parents run into when choosing the right school for their child. That way, if you see it coming, you can run from it all day.

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By ANDREW R. CAMPOMELLA

The biggest mistake parents make when it comes to education

One of the most significant pieces of legislation that has helped advance the deployment of both residential and commercial solar across the United States is the solar investment tax credit. Established by Congress in 2006, the investment tax credit (ITC) grants a 30% federal tax credit for the installation of a solar power system on residential and commercial properties. A tax credit is a dollar-for-dollar reduction of the income tax you owe. For example, if you owe $1,000 in federal taxes but are eligible for a $1,000 tax credit, your net liability drops to zero. Tax credits are generally designed to encourage or reward certain types of behavior that are considered beneficial to the economy, the environment or to further any other purpose the government deems important. When you purchase a solar power system, you can claim a tax credit equal to a percentage of the cost of the project outlined by the program. This [was] 30% through Dec. 31, 2019.

Since the tax credit was implemented in 2006, two years after the founding of local solar firm Sullivan Solar Power, the solar industry has grown by more than 10,000%, with an average growth rate of 52% each year according to the Solar Energy Industry Association. The growth of the solar industry in the United States means a win for the local and national economy. It provides a new industry to supply local jobs and greater savings for consumers, which can be redistributed back into the economy. In addition to positioning the United States as a leader in global technology, investing in solar power grants political independence from foreign fossil-fuel producing countries and perhaps most importantly, promotes the development of your property source that reduces our carbon footprint and does not contribute to climate change while powering our homes.

The solar ITC was set to expire in 2016; however, Congress passed the Omnibus Appropriations Bill which garnered bipartisan support in part because it also lifted a ban on fossil fuel exports. The legislation extended the tax credit in full through the year 2019, with a step-down clause to commence from 2020-2022. The step-down clause of the solar ITC is as follows: 2020 – 26% for residential and commercial; 2021 – 22% for residential and commercial; 2022 – 10% commercial only.

There is no better time to go solar than today, when Americans can take advantage of the federal tax credit to help pay for a solar power system which will reduce or eliminate their electric bill. Southern Californians pay a premium for energy, as the Southern California Edison and San Diego Gas & Electric often fall within the top 10 most expensive utilities in the United States. A typical Southern California family can pay off their solar power system within an average of five years, equating savings of more than $80,000 within 20 years.

Daniel Sullivan is president and founder of San Diego-based Sullivan Solar. For more information, visit sullivansolarpower.com.

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Daniel Sullivan is president and founder of San Diego-based Sullivan Solar. For more information, visit sullivansolarpower.com.
Dem Club to host climate change forum

By TINA RYNBERG and JEFF BENECH

One month before the March California primary, La Mesa Foothills Democratic Club (LMFDC) wants to highlight that elections have consequences and who we place in higher office can either further our climate action goals and help stem the dire consequences of fossil fuel extraction and production, or send us on an never-ending spiral of climate caused disasters.

With the Trump era ushering in a whole administration of climate change deniers and with fossil fuel lobbyists as heads of our Environmental Protection Agency, LMFDC will sponsor a forum of experts to explore the sequences of fossil fuel extraction and production, or send us on an endless spiral of climate causing disasters.

We have invited local climate action advocates Nicole Capretz, director of the Climate Action Campaign; Steve Padilla, Chula Vista City Council member and newly appointed chair of the California Coastal Commission; Rafael Castellanos, chair of the Port of San Diego and candidate for the coast-hugging Supervisory District 1; Chris Ward, San Diego City Council member and candidate for the largely coastal 78th Assembly District; and Brian Elliott, former chair of the Sierra Club’s Political Action Committee to participate in this most important and urgent discussion. This promises to be a special teaching moment for all members and guests present.

Our large and active club represents the communities of San Carlos, Allied Gardens, Del Cerro, La Mesa, College Area, Santee, Mt. Helix, Casa de Oro, Spring Valley and other close by areas. We meet the first Wednesday of each month at the spacious and newly refurbished La Mesa Community Center. Our social time begins at 6:30 p.m. with snacks, salads, desserts and beverages provided by the club members. The business meeting starts promptly at 7 p.m.

We are starting our 2020 dues campaign with annual memberships starting at $35. Like us on Facebook and check out our interactive website at lamesafoothillsdemoclub.com.

—Tina Rynberg is president and Jeff Benesch is vice president of the La Mesa Foothills Democratic Club.

A delicious potluck buffet was enjoyed and a huge collection of gifts was gathered for Military Outreach Ministries at the Christmas holiday party at the beautiful home of California Republican Women-Navajo Canyon member Ginny Wiskey. Outgoing president Marjie Siekerka was commended and thanked for her outstanding leadership in 2019, resulting in enthusiasm and increased club membership.

We were honored to have Judge Robert Amador and Judge Daniel Lamborn install the 2020 board of directors. Waskah Whelan, who served as the club’s campaign precinct chair during the past year, was sworn in as the new president and is continuing as campaign precinct chair. Other newly elected officers were first vice president of programs, Marjie Siekerka; recording secretary, Gloria Harpenau; second vice president of membership, Wendy Wolfe; treasurer, Bonnee Proo; parliamentarian, Nancy Amador; ways and means, Diane Randolph; technology, Sally Steele; and corresponding secretary, Betty Landen.

The RWCNC club is off to an exciting start with Tony Krvavic, San Diego County Republican Party chairman, speaking at the Tuesday, Feb. 11, meeting at the Brigantine Restaurant in La Mesa.

The meeting will begin at 11 a.m. with check-in beginning at 10:30 a.m. A full-course lunch will be served at noon for a charge of $25. Due to the large number attending our general meeting, reservations are mandatory. Cash and checks are accepted, but no credit cards. Please make your reservation at RSWPrcnc@gmail.com. You will receive an email confirmation of your reservation. Any questions or to request a confirmation, please call Marjie at 619-990-2791.

You won’t want to miss this opportunity to hear Mr. Krvavic’s presentation which is most timely in this presidential election year. The more informed and educated we are as voters, the better job we can do educating others.

RWA, RWCNC, RSWP, Jan. 24 – Feb. 27, 2020

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SDNEWS.COM
A look at the next legislative session

By TONI G. ATKINS

Happy New Year! January is a good time to regroup, recover, and recharge after the busy holiday season. For the state Senate, January also means returning to Sacramento for the second year of our legislative session.

During the legislative recess, I enjoyed taking part in dozens of meetings and events in the 39th Senate District, which focused on everything from affordable housing to human trafficking to celebrating the achievements of local businesses and community leaders. Now, I’m eager to join my colleagues for another productive year in the state Capitol.

Our annual deliberations on the state budget begin this month after Governor Newsom announces his initial proposal. Then, the Senate Budget Committee moves forward with its review. Last year, we enacted a bold and responsible budget that included record funding for education, strong reserves in case of economic downturns, and addressed several important projects in our region. I believe this year’s budget will be equally beneficial.

Two areas where we made major investments last year — health care and housing — will again be the subject of legislation in 2020. While we increased the number of Californians with access to health care and reduced the cost of health care for middle-class Californians, the Legislature must continue to work with the governor on the path toward health care for all.

Because there is not enough affordable housing construction to meet the need, we have to fix that by being thoughtful about building homes in places that will increase access to jobs, reduce the time people have to spend in their cars, and help us meet California’s greenhouse gas reduction targets.

Our region has a strong recreation and tourism industry, and is home to the largest concentration of military facilities in the world. Because these vital sectors of our economy all face threats from climate change, especially sea level rise, I am particularly pleased that the Senate will be advancing a $4.1 billion bond measure that will help communities invest in climate resiliency — including addressing sea level rise, preparing for droughts, and preventing wildfires.

In fact, wildfire preparation will continue to be one of our highest priorities in 2020 — and beyond. In November, the Senate held a hearing to examine issues involving the power shutoffs Californians have endured during our ever-expanding fire season. Another hearing is scheduled later this month to focus on telecommunications issues that arise during wildfires. San Diego’s experience in establishing recovery and prevention protocols after the 2003 and 2007 fires was basically learned-as-we-go. Having been through that reinforces my belief that California needs a comprehensive wildfire action plan, implemented in a timely and transparent manner so Californians know what to expect, and when.

No doubt it will be a busy and challenging year ahead, but one filled with many opportunities to build California on an even better place to live. I hope 2020 will also be a year of health and happiness for you and your loved ones.

—Toni G. Atkins represents District 39 in the California Senate. Follow her on Twitter @ SenToniAtkins.

Alvarado Hospital Medical Center and others for teaming up on this critical issue.

Horse play: Thanks to a recent Board of Supervisors vote, the Lakeside Equestrian Center is a big step closer to saddling up. The board approved $4.5 million in initial funding to build the equestrian park on a 11-acre site at Willow Road and Moreno Avenue. It is expected to open in 2021.

After years of discussion and planning, the community is finally getting an equestrian facility, and it’s going to be a good one.

—Dianne Jacob is chair of the San Diego County Board of Supervisors and represents District 2. For more District 2 news, go to diannejacob.com or follow her on Facebook and Twitter. For assistance with a county issue, call 619-531-5522 or email dianne.jacob@sdcounty.ca.gov.

RWCNC
CONTINUES FROM PAGE 7

Accurate, honest information is the key to winning elections and it is our responsibility to combat the “fake news” that we are all exposed to each and every day. Be informed, be proactive and fight to give President Trump another four years and keep California great! We need to elect Republicans at every level — so get involved and do whatever you can to insure Republican victories. There will be an abundance of opportunities to volunteer and help candidates at local, state and national elections in 2020.

This election year will be exciting and will have life-changing consequences. We must fight — and vote — to prevent single-payer health care, which is just another way of saying rationed medical care with the government making the decisions. We are currently enjoying all the benefits of a record-breaking strong economy and we do not want to see it weakened by letting Democrats raise taxes and control the purse strings.

Make your reservation now to attend our February meeting and learn what Tony Kvarsic has to say about current Republican topics and the March 3 California primary election. For more information on our activities, please visit our website at RWCNavajoCanyon.org and follow us on Facebook at Republican Women of California Navajo Canyon.

—Pat Boerner writes on behalf of the California Republican Women-Navajo Canyon.
Black History Month’s best book titles

February is Black History Month. During 2019, we saw some big award winners released that focus on the African American experience. Michelle Obama’s “Becoming,” a memoir by the former first lady that chronicles the experiences that have shaped her life, from her childhood in Chicago through her setbacks and achievements in the White House, was a bestseller and in high demand at the La Mesa Branch Library. The New York Times placed it on their “100 Notable Books” list for fiction and won the Kirkus Prize for fiction, one of the richest literary prizes in the world.

Finally, we saw the release of the movie “If Beale Street Could Talk,” based on the novel by James Baldwin. This movie, about a woman in Harlem desperately scrambling to prove her fiancé innocent of a crime while carrying their first child, won an Oscar and Golden Globe. This novel was also placed on the New York Times Notable Books list for fiction and won the Best Picture Oscar winner. Finally, we saw the release of the movie “If Beale Street Could Talk,” based on the novel by James Baldwin. This movie, about a woman in Harlem desperately scrambling to prove her fiancé innocent of a crime while carrying their first child, won an Oscar and Golden Globe.

A copy can be picked up at the front desk. “Nickel Boys,” Colson Whitehead’s follow-up to his Pulitzer Prize winner for fiction, “The Underground Railroad,” chronicles the daring survival story of two slaves, races through the Underground Railroad with a relentless slave-catcher close behind. This novel was also placed on the New York Times Notable Books list for fiction and won the Kirkus Prize for fiction, one of the richest literary prizes in the world.

Driving While Black: African American Travel and the Road to Civil Rights,” by Gretchen Sorin, explores the African American mobility experience from the antebellum through the 1960s, going beyond what we saw in the Best Picture Oscar winner. Sorin recounts the freedom and restrictions the open road offered to many in a car during this era.

Walter Mosley, known for his great American noir writing, gives us another entry into his “Leonid McGill” series, with “Trouble Is What I Do.” Detective Leonid McGill is forced to confront the ghost of his felonious past when a 92-year-old Mississippi bluesman is targeted by an infamous assassin. To put any of these on request, give us a call at 619-469-2151 or visit sdcl.org.

Sorin recounts the freedom and restrictions the open road offered to many in a car during this era. Finally, we saw the release of the movie “If Beale Street Could Talk,” based on the novel by James Baldwin. This movie, about a woman in Harlem desperately scrambling to prove her fiancé innocent of a crime while carrying their first child, won an Oscar and Golden Globe.

Brown’s artwork will be on display at the Foothills Gallery, 4930 Memorial Drive, from Feb. 7 to March 4. The gallery is open Tuesday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. She invites everyone to her artist’s reception on Saturday, Feb. 8, at 1 p.m.

—Linda Michaels is editor of Footnotes, the monthly newsletter of the Foothills Art Association.
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The situation is bad but there is hope if communities get together and work cooperatively. Miller said.

“San Diego is the leader in the nation in fighting human trafficking,” he concluded. “With our help, we could be just that much better.”

The pre-Thanksgiving community breakfast is sponsored each year by Soroptimist International of La Mesa, a nonprofit volunteer service organization of women, active and retired, working together to improve the lives of women and girls.

Soroptimist, which means “best for women,” was started in Oakland, California in 1921 and now has clubs in about 124 countries and territories, including several throughout San Diego County.

In 2011, local Soroptimists formed STAT! (Soroptimists Together Against Trafficking), to assist victims and survivors.

As part of its work annually, STAT seeks out survivors of trafficking who are trying to improve their lives through education or training and presents them with Soroptimist “Live Your Dream” cash awards that recipients can use to offset any cost associated with their attaining higher education.

—Reach Dave Schwab at report-er@sdnews.com.
Ambushed for crab legs

Restaurant Review

By FRANK SABATINI JR.

I partake in buffets approximately once every 20 blue moons. And I always approach them with a buyer-beware attitude.

It’s a law of the universe that the bigger the buffet, the less hits and more misses you’ll encounter. As for the uncivil discourse we’ve all witnessed in such food lines, one only hopes to come away unscathed by aggressive elbows and proruding arms — or at least avoid accusations of such rampant behavior.

China Super Buffet in the La Mesa Springs shopping plaza is very big. Its threshold is marked by life-size cement lions, which lead into an area encompassing about seven food stations and two expansive dining rooms. The place seemingly seats a zillion people amid Chinese décor, dull carpeting, and a gaudy chandelier or two.

Yet the ratio of decent dishes to unsavory ones tilts in favor of the customer, but only when choosing wisely from the buffet’s myriad options.

My biggest disappointment was the difficulty I experienced scoring snow crab legs, which are included in the $13.99 “dinner” buffet (available from 3 to 9 p.m., Monday through Thursday until 9:30 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays, and all day on Sundays and holidays). The thought of eating them lawlessly, along with standard Chinese favorites such as orange chicken, sweet and sour shrimp, etc., is what led me into taking the plunge.

But in my 90-minute stay, I snagged only one crab leg. And it took some work.

First time up, the tray was empty except for a few shards of shell indicating a merry crab fest had indeed occurred. I checked back 10 minutes later. Same thing.

A food runner assured me a fresh batch was “soon” coming out. But she failed to say that dozens of customers lie in wait from booth to booth, and tables that are in eye shot of the station. So when the crabs make their landing, they go fast and out of your reach.

After jumping into the game with less strategy than most, I got my frigging leg. Yet by the time I wiggled back through the crowd to my booth, and then struggled to penetrate the thing without a shell cracker (bring your own), the wisp of meat I extracted was nearly cold.

Partial redemption came in the form of several items I enjoyed before and after.

From an extensive display of appetizers, the chicken dumplings featured reasonably delicate casings enveloping ground pork accented with ginger and scallions. No soy sauce needed.

Small pieces of chicken breast cooked in light batter were parked near a bowl of syrupy sweet-and-sour sauce. A predictable, pleasant pairing was struck.

The vegetable egg rolls were also enjoyable — crispy on the outside and with a warm filling of semi-crunchy carrots and cabbage inside.

Conversely, the nearby “lobster rolls” with their fried wonton shells were flavorless. They contained a mush of what I think was shredded lobster, cabbage and rice.

From stations flailing heartily face, my favorites were the butter shrimp and poached salmon. The former verged on shrimp scampi — and with an unexpect ed spicy kick. I give it a higher rating than you’d get at Red Lobster.

The salmon was as good as any served at a nice, full-service restaurant. Flaky and perfectly seasoned, it was cut into small fillets and sat prettily in a pool of cream sauce.

Both the orange and kung pao chicken were satisfying, each draped in its respective sauc es that adhere to old-school Chinese-American cooking. More exciting were two other poultry dishes — jalapeno chicken cloaked in a near-invisible glaze that was delightfully fiery, and “peanut but ter chicken” encrusted with finely minced peanuts.

That chicken was brushed also with some type ofad mixture resembling Thai peanut sauce, but sans the coconut milk.

Bravo to the sauté cook who flash-fried the chicken. They featured that coveted snap and fresh flavor; crisp but not overcooked, lightly salted and not too oily.

How pizza and roast beef ended up on this Asian buffet is a mystery. Oddly, the pizza kept disappearing as quickly as the crab legs, just as well because I wasn’t interested anymore. The roast beef, however, which you carve yourself before applying, dark gravy to it, was tender and tasty in its well-done form, albeit a mismatch to whatever else I had on my plate at the time.

Desserts were mediocre. They ranged from flabby mocha-mousse cake and mini cream puffs to flan, Jello cubes and fresh fruit.

As I drove away accounting in my head the handful of buffets I’ve willingly patronized in my adult years — the good, bad and horrible — I put China Super Buffet near the middle in terms of quality. Though had I been able to sate my appetite with a pound of steaming hot crab legs in lieu of the off-target dishes I tried, a rosti ranking could have been given.

— 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 staff er for the former San Diego Tribune.

You can reach him at fsabatini@san.rr.com.
Helix Chartered

Helix Highlights
by JENNIFER OSBORN

While many are still celebrating the start of 2020, some Helix staff members are busy preparing for the beginning of the 2020-21 school year. The enrollment process is in full swing and it is important for families to be aware of the details if they are interested in sending their child to Helix next school year.

Several information meetings will be held over the next month to offer prospective students and parents/ guardians the opportunity to meet the Class of 2024 Grade Level Team and discuss important topics such as Helix Charter High School’s mission and vision, the 5 A’s: Academics, Athletics, Arts, Activities, and Attitude; and an overview of the application process/priority enrollment.

Interested families are required to attend only one of the meetings. No reservation is necessary. Please note: Your position in the lottery is not determined by which meeting you attend. The meeting dates and places are:

- **Tuesday, Jan. 28:** 6 p.m. at Lemon Grove Academy Auditorium
- **Wednesday, Feb. 5:** 6 p.m. at Parkway Middle School Auditorium
- **Thursday, Feb. 6:** 6 p.m. at Vista La Mesa Auditorium
- **Wednesday, Feb. 19:** 5, 6, and 7 p.m. at Helix Charter High School (campus location TBD)
- **Saturday, Feb. 29:** 9, 10 and 11 a.m. at Helix Charter High School (campus location TBD)

HIMA DINNER AUCTION

The Helix Instrumental Music Association (HIMA) is celebrating 28 years of supporting instrumental music at Helix. Join them for a dinner/auction celebration on Saturday, Feb. 22, from 6–10 p.m. at the La Mesa Community Center. Your $57 ticket includes dinner, live music, cash bar, and live and silent auctions. For more information, visit the website at helixinstrumental.org.

HELIX HIGH SCHOOL FOUNDATION

The Helix High School Foundation has named Pat Albanese (Class of ‘71) as the new president of the organization. Albanese brings years of experience as part of the Helix campus. One of Albanese’s first jobs as the new president will be putting on the Highlander Open Golf Tournament. The Tournament will take place on Saturday, April 25 at Carlton Oaks Country Club, with a 1p.m. tee time for all. Live music and dinner will follow.

Sponsorship opportunities are available for as low as $100. Donations for auction items and prizes are also needed. For more information on participating as a golfer or a sponsor, visit the Foundation website at helixhighschoolfoundation.com.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENTS

Eight of the top competitors on the Helix Speech & Debate team were invited to represent Helix at one of the top competitions in the country, the MLK Invitational at James Logan High School in the Bay Area. Most of the top teams in California were there and several from other states. The students did very well, each reaching break rounds in one or more events. Results were as follows:

- **Elaine Alfaro** – Semi-finalist in Original Oratory (top 14 of 168 competitors)
- **Eva Anderson** – Semi-finalist in Program Oral Interpretation (81 competitors)
- **Owen Dahlkamp** – Quarterfinalist in Dramatic Interpretation (Top 8 of 61 competitors)
- **Elaine Alfaro** – Semi-finalist in Original Oratory (top 14 of 168 competitors)
- **Owen Dahlkamp** – Quarterfinalist in Dramatic Interpretation (104 competitors)
- **Elaine Alfaro** – Semi-finalist in Program Oral Interpretation (81 competitors)
- **Eva Anderson** – Quarterfinalist in Dramatic Interpretation (104 competitors)
- **John Garcia and Jackie Hammack** – Double Octos in Public Forum Debate (top 32 of 169 teams)
- **William Harris** – Second place in Original Prose Poetry (54 competitors)
- **William Harris** – Semi-finalist in Humorous Interpretation (Top 14 of 81 competitors)
- **Lucas Osborn** – Finalist in Student Congress (16th of 103 competitors)
- **Ashley Simmons** – Sixth place in Oratorical Interpretation (105 competitors)

PERFORMING ARTS CALENDAR

The Highland Players present two productions: “I Love You, You’re Perfect, Now Change” and “Pygmalion.” “Pygmalion”: is directed by Helix senior Will Harris, in fulfillment of Helix’s Senior Project requirement. Show dates and times are:

- “I Love You, You’re Perfect, Now Change” – Jan. 31, Feb. 4, 6, 8, 11 and 12 at 7 p.m.; Feb. 1 and 8 at 2 p.m.
- “Pygmalion” – Jan. 30, Feb. 1, 5 and 7 at 7 p.m.

For tickets and more information, visit helixdrama.weebly.com

EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION TOURS

If you are interested in finding out more about Helix Charter High School, please attend one of our Excellence in Education Tours, held twice monthly. The Tours for February are the 7th and 20th. Reserve your spot using our website, helixcharter.net.


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Grossmont wrestlers carry on tradition of excellence

In 1958, wrestling was first designated as a varsity sport. In 1958, wrestler Dave Christian placed fourth in the Southern California CIF competition. Under the coaching of Ken Maynard, the program developed its standing in San Diego County’s Metro League, placing third in 1960 and again in 1962 with a record of 10-2.

That legacy continued over the next two decades, the 1960s and 1970s, with the emergence of a family of wrestlers, the five Funke brothers — Carl, Chris, Bill, Andy, and Alex. The Funkes were a dominant presence in league and county meets, being named to Grossmont District League and CIF First teams.


Since 2017, coach Bell has been assisted by volunteer coach Mike Mendoza, Class of 1964, who was also a Foothiller wrestler and letterman. Mendoza was first an assistant coach from 1978-1985 and then he was head coach from 1986-1993. Coach Bell was one of his students.

Under coach Bell, the Foothiller teams won league championships in 2007 and 2008. Last year, under these two experienced coaches’ leadership, along with volunteer Aaron Armstrong, the team won the 2019 Valley League, moving this year into the Hills League.

This year’s team has 41 boys who compete in varsity, JV, or frosh/soph.

Six varsity seniors lead the team with Darrin White 13-1 in competition this year. Sebastian Coates, 9-3, has been successful this season, winning the Mission Hills Varsity Wrestling Tournament Jan. 4. The other seniors this season are Noah Escalante, Kade Lange, Joe Rosas, and Emiliano Gonzalez, who has the fastest pin of the year so far at 13 seconds in varsity competition. The current JV coach is Gabe Paullia, Class of 2010, who wrestled for Bell as a Grossmont student.

This year’s girls team consists of four girls, compared to previous years of only one or two girl wrestlers, with a new volunteer coaching them, Rick Sherry, who coached previously in North County for several years. The girls compete against other girls teams, often with JV competitors, and compete in varsity and novice divisions. Junior Gabby Coates, 10-2 in competition, has also competed against boys.

This winter, the team has been doing well at tournaments. On Jan. 16, the team began Hills League competition, which the coaches anticipate will be a very tightly contested competition.

To learn more about GHS past and present, visit foothillermuseum.com or visit the GHS Museum Wednesdays by appointment or on Wednesday, Feb. 5, from 12:30-3:30 p.m. or 5-6 p.m. Contact: 619-668-6140 or email ghsmuseum@guhsd.net.

Connie and Lynn Baer write on behalf of the Grossmont High School Museum.
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'Red Bike' Through Feb. 16
'Red Bike' imagines when you were 11 years old and you had a bike, one that made you dream about a world bigger than the one in which you live. This play is that memory. Ex- plore how this bike plays the same character in a wide imaginative, physical and poetic performance unlike any- thing else. 'Red Bike' is about the divide between those who have and those who long for. It captures the heart of middle America while pushing two ac- tors to their limits in a highly choreographed theatrical duet of storytelling. Thursdays 7:30 p.m.; Fridays and Saturdays 8 p.m.; Sundays 2 p.m. at the Moxie Theatre, 6683 El Cajon Blvd., Suite N. Tickets range $20-$45, available at moxietheatre.com.

Cuyamaca College Powwow
Powwow Native American history and culture will be celebrated when tribes from throughout the West con- gregate at Cuyamaca College's 6th Annual Powwow. The powwow begins at 9:30 a.m. with a traditional blessing, followed by the Ashaa Talok Bird Singers at 10 a.m.; gourd dancing at 11 a.m. and Grand En- try at noon. The celebration continues until 8 p.m. and vendors will be selling Native American arts and crafts, fry bread and In- dian tacos. Admission is free. Cuyamaca College is at 900 Rancho San Diego Parkway. For more informa- tion about Cuyamaca College, visit cuyamaca.edu.

Wednesday, Feb. 5
Wine Down Wednesday
Join La Mesa Chamber of Commerce for a special mix- er at the new Westmont Market, 9001 Murray Drive. With the opening of this beau- tiful facility, the city now has a 130,000-square-foot, three-story retirement community to house 150 residents that pro- vides both independent living and assisted living, including memory care. tantalizing hors d'oeuvres will be prepared by Natascha and her team and de- licious beverages will be served. You won't want to miss this special evening, 4:30-6:30 p.m. Am- ples parking available in front of the building and on Murray Drive in front of the parking lot. Free to chamber members. Please RSVP so the culinary team knows how much to prepare for the special evening. RSVP: rsvip@cuyamacachamber.com.

Author talk
Ladies are invited to come hear local author and regular Courier contributor Cynthia G. Robert- son speak on the topic of spiritu- al development related to her novel "Where You See Forever." Robertson will also speak about her own life's spiritual journey. The talk will be held 1 p.m. at the monthly meeting of the Unit- ed Methodist Women's fellow- ship at La Mesa United Meth- odist Church, 4890 Palm Ave., La Mesa. Call 619-466-4362 for more info.

Friday, Feb. 7
First Friday Night Market
On the first Friday of each month in Grossmont Center, lo- cated in the parking lot between Chuze Fitness and Fuddrucker's Restaurant, an outdoor, all-veg- ans eat, sweets, drinks, and goods event will be held that celebrates the vegan lifestyle. The La Mesa Chamber of Com- merce also hosts a beer garden featuring local breweries. 5-10 p.m. in Grossmont Center, 5500 Grossmont Center Drive. Admission is free.

Sunday, Feb. 9
‘The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee’ Through Feb. 23
Winner of the Tony and the Drama Desk awards for Best Book, “The 25th Annual Putnam Coun- ty Spelling Bee” has charmed audiences across the country with its effortless wit and hu- mor. Featuring a fast-paced, wildly funny and touching book by Rachel Sheinkin and a truly fresh score by William Finn, "Liam Finn, this bee is one unfor- gettable experience. Saturday at 3 p.m. and Sunday at 2 p.m. at Moxie Theatre, 6683 El Ca- jon Blvd. Suit $12.50 tickets available at bit.ly/2vq2Q6y.

News briefs
Continued on Page 5

La Mesa Courier
COMMUNITY AND ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT CALENDAR

ONGOING EVENTS

Adventures By The Book

Friday, Jan. 31
Inside the Actor’s Process: Love Scenes By Creating a character that is ‘sense aware’ of your body is one of the best ways to shine in a role. Join us as we explore the emotional context of our characters, their reactions and how they make decisions. The Brew Community Project Stagehouse Theatre presents: In a world that feels saturated with negativity, a showcase of the best parts of life is long overdue, even if sometimes the characters in these love stories betray mixed motives, less-than-stellar ideals, and imperfect behavior. This be- hind-the-scenes look at how the theatrical artist engages with love stories includes vignettes featuring contemporary lovers, classic lovers, and everything in-between. What makes love stories so magnetic? The times may change, but more than anything else, our need to find someone else, to find someone to connect with never- ever does. 7:30-9 p.m. Friday and Saturday; an additional 2-4 p.m. performance on Saturday at the Stagehouse Theatre, 8800 Grossmont College Drive, El Cajon. $10 tickets available at bit.ly/2u995Ii.

Saturday, Feb. 1
Wine & Words: A Wine Tasting Experience
The Brew Community Market brings the community togeth- er by creating this diverse ven- ue of local artisans, craft home goods, hand-made jewelry, both soaps, scented candles, and more. The Brew Communi- ty Market is located in the park- ing lot to the side of the Brew Coffee Spot building, 6101 Lake Murray Blvd. in La Mesa, and hosts up to 25 different vendors.

Saturday, Feb. 22
Tom Griesgbaber concert
Tom Griesgbaber is a hon- ors graduate of the renowned Berklee College of Music in Boston. He was already proficient as an electrical guitar- ist when he decided to take up the Chapman Stick. The Stick has six guitar strings and six bass strings. It looks like a wide guitar neck, with no guitar body. The strings are tapped rather than plucked, allowing the play- er to create separate sounds in each hand with a variety of gui- tar and bass-like sounds. Tom has taken things further, adding an outlet so he can incorporate looping and synth effects. The Chapman Stick was developed in the early 1970s by Emmett Chapman. Griesgbaber is one of the most respected and active performers on the Stick and has been the opening act for many famous musicians, including Al Di Meola, Larry Carlton, Tow- er of Power, Asia, and the Dixie Dregs. Tom performs regularly with his group, Agent 22, and as a duo with Bert Lams of the California Guitar Trio. Tom will perform again on Feb. 22, 3-4 p.m. at Mission Trails Church, 4890 Zion Ave., San Diego. The con- cert is free. There is plenty of free parking.

2 MILLION EBOOK CHECKOUTS FROM COUNTY LIBRARIES

Diego County Library announced Jan. 14 that they achieved a record-breaking two mil- lion digital book checkouts in 2019. This ac- complishment illustrates the continued growth and importance of li- brary lending of ebooks and audiobooks along with the creative ways the library has served its community with digi- tal services. San Diego County Library is one of 73 systems around the world – including stand- alone libraries and con- sortia – that surpassed one million checkouts through Rakuten OverDrive, a digital read- ing platform and its app Apple.

Visit sdc.overdrive.com or download the Libby app to get started and borrow ebooks and audiobooks anytime, anywhere.
Local chorus celebrating 25 years

In February, the California Note Catchers, a four-part women’s harmony chorus, will be celebrating its 25th anniversary.

The California Note Catchers is a nonprofit chorus that was chartered in 1995. They are one of more than 80 international chapters in Harmony Inc. and currently the furthest South/West. The chorus comes together each week to sing on Monday nights in La Mesa. They meet in the social hall of the La Mesa First United Methodist Church, 4690 Palm Ave.

As a nonprofit 501(c)(3), they support local charities and other organizations with monetary contributions, as well as quartet and chorus performances throughout San Diego.

California Note Catchers is a primarily educational organization and dedicated to helping preserve the uniquely American style of music that we call barbershop, by nurturing it and teaching it to current and future generations.

Feb. 9-15 is Harmony Awareness Week. To learn more about the chorus or to book a performance, email california note catchers@gmail.com or call 619-464-3727.

—Rebecca J. Williamson is a local freelance writer who covers a wide variety of news, feature and entertainment stories.
February is for Lovers... Home Lovers!
LauraLothianRealEstate.com

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7964 Pasadena Ave.,
OPEN HOUSE - SUN, JAN 26TH, 2-4 P.M.
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IN ESCROW!

MT. HELIX

JUST SOLD!

MT. HELIX
Sold at 1st Open House!

JUST SOLD!

MT. HELIX
Sold at 1st Open House!

JUST SOLD!

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MT. HELIX
MT. HELIX
MT. HELIX
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MT. HELIX
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LAKE MURRAY
LA MESA
LA MESA VILLAGE
SANTEE
TREVI HILLS WINERY
SANTEE
ROLANDO VILLAGE
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