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The Guy Who Didn't Like Musicals



If you're into musicals and have not seen one recently, do you have any plans for the week of Feb. 24? Patrick Henry High School's Theatre Department will be performing The Guy Who Didn't Like Musicals for a five-night run (Feb. 24-28). All shows begin at 6 p.m. Under the direction of PHHS Theatre Teacher and Director Jeff Russell, the show promises to entertain. For ticket information, visit: https://tix.com/ticket-sales/phhs/7097. See story on Page 5. *(Courtesy photos)*





How are SDSU students balancing working and courses?

By DOMINIQUE ROCHA

Extracurricular activities are no stranger to college students.

Along with the usual shuffle of sports, Greek Life, socializing and classes, some students also have to add work into the mix.

For some San Diego State University students, working while in school is a necessity.

Danita Nagara, a junior at SDSU, says working during the semester is how she supports herself. "I'm financially independent so I use the money to pay for everything I need and want," Nagara said. Nagara works as a salon consultant at a tanning salon.

Having a job can help students be a little more financially independent.

Amari Barradas who works as a warehouse employee for the UPS store on campus says working began as a way to earn some extra cash. "When I first started working in my sophomore year, it was just to have some spending money," Barradas said.

In the early years of college, some students are less worried about financial burdens and work to have money for enjoyment.

"Now that I am living off campus, I use the majority of the money for bills and groceries,"

SEE **STUDENTS WORKING,** Page 2



Some students at San Diego State University find it a necessity to work while in school. *(Photo credit: Dave Thomas)*

Students working

CONTINUED FROM **Page 1**

Barradas continued. "The money I spend on leisure is almost non-existent now."

For others, taking on a job is worth it for the experience. Students work for a number of reasons, but some work to learn valuable life skills.

Joshua Silla, a journalism major at SDSU, works as a host at the nearby restaurant Eureka!

"I always say that all my jobs inform my people-centered journalism," Silla said. Although his job may not be directly linked to his major, Silla still gains field experience from it.

No matter the reason to work, balancing both coursework and a job can be a challenge.

Students have to find a way to manage all their obligations without feeling overwhelmed.

"I learned to balance my work and school life through time management and strategic planning," Mellissa Magdowski said.

Magdowski works as an expo/host at Texas Roadhouse. "They are both skills I will need in the real world."

Although some students struggle to find the balance between work life and school life, having a job is still a positive experience.

Meilani Menton Porter, who works at the SDSU Bookstore, says she likes to work for the social aspect.



Danita Nagara *(Courtesy photo)*



Amari Barradas *(Courtesy photo)*



Joshua Silla *(Courtesy photo)*



Meilani Menton Porter *(Courtesy photo)*



Mellissa Magdowski *(Courtesy photo)*

"I have met some of my friends through work and we are pretty close now because of it," Menton Porter said. "I get to interact with a lot of people my age."

The hard work can feel rewarding and many students find work adds a sense of purpose to their days.

"It makes me happy to get up in the morning, wash my hair in the dark and take an hour-long bus to work," Silla said.

Whether some SDSU students are working out of necessity, for the skills, or just for the experience, managing it all can be tricky.

Students make it work either way.



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PHHS Women in Medicine Club empowers young females

By DAVE THOMAS

Given the importance of the medical field to everyone's lives, it is critical to ensure that young women have opportunities in the world of medicine and access to needed medical products and procedures.

At Patrick Henry High School, the Women in Medicine Club is doing its part to better ensure young women have the tools they need to not only be healthy but pursue medical careers down the road should they choose to do so.

Leah Silverman, who teaches biology and honors physiology at the school, is the advisor for WMC. The club recently organized an event to gather pads, tampons, and other products related to menstruation for those in need of such things.

"A couple of the senior students (Gracie Levine, Zoe Colling, and Bailey Huot) approached me at the beginning of this year to be the advisor for Women in Medicine," Silverman stated. "It was founded this year at PHHS but is an internationally recognized organization (parent website (https://youngwomeninmed.org/) that seeks to empower young women to enter the medical field and supports health equity. The students lead/plan every meeting and planned this drive independently – I only offered suggestions."

According to Silverman, WMC President Gracie Levine brought up the idea during one of the meetings. "From what I understand, it was something a few of them had wanted to do since the beginning of the year," Silverman said. When asked what the response from club members to the idea was, Silverman noted, "They were enthusiastic! The club partnered with ASB (Associated Student Body) to put collection bins in every classroom and club members went to all classes to do quick announcements about the drive."

Levine, who created the school's club by joining the larger Young Women in Medicine organization and applying to create a local chapter, said the effort has been well worth it.

"The club has created a great community of girls who want to pursue careers in the medical field and I love being able to give back to my community through the club," Levine commented.

Colling noted that she was asked by a friend if she'd be interested in being a part of the board due to her interest in physical therapy, and she gladly agreed. "The club has been a great way to meet other girls who have the same love for STEM (Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), talk about volunteer opportunities and more," Colling stated.

As for the project to collect items tied to menstruation, Levine said the club created a total of 122 menstrual product kits to be donated to Father Joe's Villages.

"This project took months of planning and coordinating but every second of work is entirely worth it," Levine remarked. "We first held a school-wide drive to collect menstrual products and then used those products to create kits to donate. We have also created gifts for hospice patients through this club and we plan on doing more exciting things in the future."

Colling echoed those sentiments, noting, "With the help of ASB, we organized a school-wide menstrual product drive which was very successful thanks to the students and teachers on campus who donated. With our donations, we were able to put together more than 100 care packages that included pads and tampons that will be donated to Father Joe's Village."

Succeeding in the field of medicine and elsewhere

Making sure that young women have as many opportunities to succeed as their male counterparts in the field of medicine and elsewhere is important. That said, some young females still face challenges that males do not always have to deal with.

"As a girl, I have faced a lot of scrutiny from boys in my STEM classes," Levine went on to say. "Many people have assumed that I don't belong in a STEM space simply because of my gender. Most boys will never encounter

SEE **WOMEN IN MEDICINE CLUB,** Page 10



Left to right: Zoe Colling, Bailey Huot, Gracie Levine, Yasamin Hourmezian, Vian Pham, Carysma Castro. *(Courtesy photo)*





These two photos are of the same site at the north end of 55th Street on SDSU's main campus. One photo shows the profile of some of the existing 2-story student housing units, including historic Mixquic Hall, as seen by residents living in neighboring College View Estates. The other is a rendering of what the view will look like if 6 high-rises up to 13-stories are approved to house 4,500 students as part of SDSU's proposed Evolve Student Housing Project. Public comments on the Draft EIR will be accepted until 5 p.m. on Feb. 17. *(Courtesy photos)*

SDSU proposes student housing project in severe fire zone

By KAREN AUSTIN



College Area residents attended a recent on-campus meeting to learn about SDSU's plans for a proposed 4,500 bed housing development in six high-rises (up to 13-stories) in a severe fire zone below their homes. Following the devastating LA fires and their own mandatory evacuation during the Montezuma Fire last October, "Emergency Preparedness and Wildfire" issues are top of mind. Public comments will be accepted until 5 p.m. on Feb. 17 *(See end of article)*.

San Diego State University (SDSU) is proposing a huge student housing project, which has the potential to impact the surrounding community, not just the campus.

SDSU's Evolve Student Housing Project (Evolve) is slated to add 5,220 student beds in high-rises at two locations.

About 40 community members attended an in-person meeting in Aztec Hall on Jan. 27 to learn more about the project. The "Peninsula Component" of Evolve, is to be located at the northern terminus of 55th Street.

The project calls for demolition of 13 existing apartment buildings to make way for approximately 4,500 new student beds during phased construction between 2025 and 2030. It would consist of (1) 9-story building and (5) up to 13-story high-rises, including dining and auxiliary uses. This area is currently zoned for multi-family buildings with a 60' height limit, which is considerably less than what is being proposed.

Evolve also includes the "University Towers East Component" which is planned to replace the parking lot immediately east of the existing University Towers building at Montezuma Road and 55th Street. It would provide an additional 720 beds.

Kara Peterson, director of Planning for San Diego State University, gave an overview of project alternatives as presented in the Draft Environmental Impact Report. A document required as part of the California Environmental Quality Act when a project could significantly impact wildlife, air quality, natural resources, traffic, and cultural heritage.

According to Peterson, "We study the project's impacts, determine their significance and propose mitigations for impacts that were identified as significant or potentially significant."

While the community supports more student housing on campus, there are concerns that this level of density, especially on 55th Street, is problematic, if not dangerous. There are also some in the community wanting this level of dense housing to be built at SDSU's Mission Valley campus.

After the formal presentation, community members had the chance to meet with project consultants to learn about various aspects of the project. Nearly ALL attendees sat at a table to further discuss "Emergency Preparedness and Wildfires."

Residents were clearly aware that the proposed site of the Peninsula Component is located in a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (VHFHSZ), deemed high-risk for wildfires due to factors such as vegetation, fuel load, slope, fire weather and other conditions. They expressed their concerns, and fears and asked what the SPECIFIC plans are for emergency preparedness and response (e.g., medical, fire, earthquake, and even an active shooter, as was the case during the Montezuma Fire).

There were also questions about the infrastructure for firefighting and evacuation routes for the 8,000 people who would live in the proposed and existing dorms, as well as residents living in adjacent neighborhoods.

This past Halloween, many of these same residents evacuated from their homes in Talmadge, Alvarado Estates, College View Estates, and other parts of College Area, due to the 40-acre Montezuma Fire. This resulted in hours spent in traffic trying to evacuate the area, many people reportedly inching their way along an evacuation route through the campus. Residents want to make sure that experience is not repeated and are questioning why SDSU wants to build high-density development in a severe fire zone.

Jean Hoeger, who has lived in neighboring College View Estates since 1986, said, "You just needed to see the news coverage showing people abandoning their cars and running for their lives during the Palisades Fire, to get that our own failed evacuation could have been so much worse. Everyone knows we completely lucked out with no wind and no competing fires, but it might not be that way the next time. It's critical that the Evolve Project isn't rubber-stamped."

At the end of the presentation, Peterson stated, "We have to consider all written comments in our analysis of the project, so any comments that are submitted by Feb. 17 will also be included in the Final EIR for this project."

Public comments will be accepted in writing until 5 p.m. on Feb. 17, and can be sent via email to: evolvecomments@sdsu.edu or via U.S. mail to Kara Peterson, Director of Planning, SDSU Planning Design and Construction, 5500 Campanile Drive, San Diego, CA. 92182.

See: https://bfa.sdsu.edu/campus/facilities/planning/docs/sdsu_evolve_student_housing_eir_acc_010325.pdf

See: https://bfa.sdsu.edu/campus/facilities/planning/evolve-student-housing-project-draft-eir-appendices

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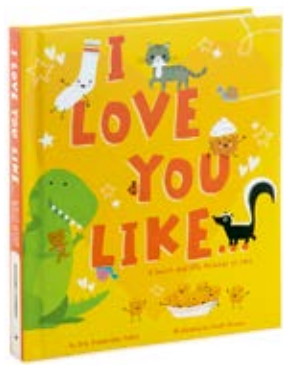


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College-Rolando Library can make doing taxes less taxing



(Photo credit: Pixabay.com)

It's tax time and AARP volunteers are here to help.

This year, once again, the widely known free AARP Tax-Aide program will be available at the College-Rolando Library (6600 Montezuma Road).

The program is open to anyone, with priority given to low and middle-income taxpayers and those persons aged 50 and over. The volunteer tax preparers have been trained and are certified by the IRS.

Tax preparation assistance at The College-Rolando Library will continue through April 10. Returns will be processed during the following hours on a first come, first served basis:

Tuesdays (11:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.) and Thursdays (9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.).

In order to insure that your returns can be properly completed, please bring (1) proof of identification (CA driver's license) for each person whose taxes are being prepared; (2) social security cards for you, your spouse, and all dependents; (3) your last year's tax return; (4) checkbook (if you would like to have any return direct deposited or any amounts due direct debited); (5) and all support documents to file your 2024 taxes. Reviewing your return from last year will give you clues to the information needed for filing this year's returns.

If you are married, filing jointly, you and your spouse must both be present when having returns prepared. If both spouses are not present, volunteers will be unable to assist with your returns.

Don't wait until the last moment.

The staff there can help you identify any additional documents you may need to complete the process.

Editor's note: This copy provided by Jan Hintzman, for the Friends of the College-Rolando Library.

San Diego Unified building teacher pipeline through partnership with SDSU and others

San Diego Unified School District has experienced great success as 26 participants entered its TEACH-LEAD San Diego Teacher Residency Program (TRP) last fall, and the Board of Education approved new contracts for its ongoing partnership with San Diego State University (SDSU), the University of California, San Diego (UCSD) and the University of San Diego (USD).

Tuesday night, the Board ratified contracts with SDSU and USD. The contract with UCSD was ratified late last year.

The agreements by the Board underscore the District's focus to further strengthen its teacher pipeline program.

"Developing our own educators to teach and lead within San Diego Unified, builds a stronger, more culturally responsive district that reflects the vibrant diversity of our students and community," said Fabi Bagula, Ph.D., San Diego Unified School District superintendent (interim). "We've already seen wonderfully talented and incredibly prepared Residents come through our doors this school year, and this agreement lays the groundwork for the next cohort. I am pleased this Residency program is flourishing thanks to our partnerships with these outstanding universities."

Many of the Residents are pursuing Dual Credentials (Special Education/Multiple Subject or Single Subject), Single or Multiple Subject (w/Bilingual Authorization), or Special Education (Mild/Moderate Support Needs).

The program offers both financial and personalized pathway resources to individuals beginning or continuing their journey towards a career as a teacher.

Each academic year, SDSU, UCSD and USD will work collaboratively to identify and select prospective students interested in attending their university's respective credential program and participating in the TRP.

The universities will work with the district to ensure that Teacher Residents are matched with a Mentor Teacher and that the Teacher Resident has the opportunity, over the course of a

SEE **SDSU PIPELINE,** Page 10



As a resident of the College Area, what changes do you want to see take place over time? *(Photo by Karen Austin)*

First draft of College Area Community Plan Update ready for comment by Feb. 14

By KAREN AUSTIN

The first draft of the College Area Community Plan Update is now ready for public comment.

Last updated in 1989, it's the land use plan for the future growth of College Area for the next 30 years. This includes elements on housing, infrastructure, mobility, parks and public spaces, and more.

The community plan envisions, "a college town with vibrant mixed-use corridors and nodes that connect to neighborhoods and the University and enhance the community."

College Area residents are encouraged to take part in ongoing discussions to address specific aspects of the plan, including proposed areas for increased housing density and a plea to add a Public Safety Element to focus on emergency preparedness and land-use issues like those related to evacuation planning and firefighting infrastructure.

The future of College Area and even your own neighborhood street is depending on you.

To review the Plan, go to: plancollegearea.org. The City welcomes feedback on the first draft before midnight on Feb. 14.

Comments can be submitted using an online form at: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf49P_F4jzvoxYxXQkpxQz67avSKW7SZRqlfftI7NB--SyRqQ/viewform or by emailing your comments to: plancollegearea@sandiego.gov. No final recommendations or decisions are made at this stage.

Community member feedback at this stage is valued and will inform the second draft.

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The Guy Who Didn't Like Musicals plays at PHHS Feb. 24-28

By DAVE THOMAS



PHHS theatre students are set to entertain you Feb. 24-28 with their performance of The Guy Who Didn't Like Musicals. *(Courtesy photo)*

If you're into musicals and have not seen one recently, do you have any plans for the week of Feb. 24?

Patrick Henry High School's Theatre Department will be performing *The Guy Who Didn't Like Musicals* for a five-night run (Feb. 24-28). All shows begin at 6 p.m.

Under the direction of PHHS Theatre Teacher and Director Jeff Russell, the show promises to entertain.

"It is a show that was created and first performed by a production company named Team Starkid," Russell stated. "They have actually released quite a few original musicals. This is actually our second show from Team Starkid. In 2024 we produced the Trail to Oregon, which is a show based on the Oregon Trail computer game from the 1990's. Their shows are fun, quirky, and have really great energy - which I believe matches the energies and attitudes of the students in our theatre company."

According to Russell, the musical was cast in October and the team started rehearsals then as well.

"In order to accommodate for my schedule as well as the needs of many of our students, we actually rehearse before school Tuesday through Friday each week from 7:30 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.," Russell noted. "In addition, there is a dedicated team of students that is working on the set construction and painting for the show. They meet after school on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays to work on anything from building and painting to designing and programming the lighting for the show. We have also hired a choreographer, Erica Kahn, and a vocal director, Kayla Gonzales, who come in one to two mornings each week to work on dance and singing for the show."

Given the busy schedules countless students have in and out of the classroom, one might think it is hard to attract teens to become part of a theatre group on campus. Some kids find being part of such a group quite rewarding.

"One of the major things that draws a student into school and keeps them engaged and coming back every day is having something to be a part of," Russell remarked. "Theatre is not necessarily the answer for every student, but it can be the answer for many. Not only are they having the chance to engage in something incredibly creative and challenging, but they are becoming a part of an inclusive community that values their contributions. It has always been important to me as a director to build a group dynamic where the cast and crew members are not there for their own self aggrandizement or their egos, but are there because they want to be a part of something. Our group has done a really good job fostering that attitude and it is important that it continues."

As anyone who has been part of such a group over time can attest to, a lot goes into putting together and performing such shows.

"Being on stage in theatre or working as a crew member is a lot like engaging in one of the biggest and most complicated group projects imaginable," Russell continued. "These experiences will serve the students in the future when they are being asked to make a contribution as well as valuing and supporting the contributions of others around them. If we could get everyone to cooperate the way these kids do, then my worries about the future would be over."

Students love performing at PHHS

Speaking of those students, several of them noted that being part of something in a group setting is rather rewarding.

"I have participated in traditional productions at PHHS since ninth grade, but this is my first musical," Matthew En stated. "What I enjoy most is working with our director, Mr. Russell, being part of a community of highly talented actors, and having the opportunity to showcase the 'weird' side of my personality. The biggest challenge in memorizing lines is practicing alone in an empty space or rehearsing in a full classroom. Since I often play comedic roles with punchlines, I'm responsible for making the audience laugh. The challenge lies in adapting to the varying demographics that attend our shows."

En, who said after graduating from PHHS he plans to pursue a minor in theatre or drama, hopefully at San Diego State University or Oregon State University, hopes other students will give theatre a try.

"My biggest piece of advice, as cliché as it sounds, is to have fun," En commented. "Enjoy spending time with friends, embracing the randomness of different scenes, singing along to musical albums between classes, and spontaneously dancing to scores you and your peers have choreographed."

Fellow student Darcy Siniavsky noted, "I've been in the Patrick Henry theatre program since the beginning of ninth, which isn't very long considering this is my first year in high school. But in the productions I've been involved in, I greatly appreciate the community, especially since everyone is so kind and accepting. I love being on stage with my friends, and the inside jokes are the cherry on top."

For Siniavsky like some other students involved, knowing your lines is critical to the success of any show.

"Remembering your lines is definitely stressful, because it's the only thing that you can either do or not do, no halfway," Siniavsky remarked. "But if you study, it becomes easier and less terrifying. Live crowds always make me a bit nervous and jittery before the show, but when I get into the flow of the scene, it's like they aren't even there."

Siniavsky, who said she would really like to pursue community theatre or any theatre course that college offers, said she wants to balance her life, though, so it might not happen as often.

No matter what Siniavsky's plans are down the road, she is living the moment with PHHS theatre, advising others to consider joining.

Consider getting into high school theatre

"Please get into theatre," Siniavsky stated. "I know talking on stage may seem daunting, but there are people to help you along the way. I used to be very socially awkward and didn't know how to talk to people or recognize my self worth, but when you realize that when you're up there and everybody's laughing with you and cheering, all of the bad stuff just melts away. There are responsibilities, but that can prepare you for events later in life. It can't hurt to try it out, and everyone is welcome. Also, our teacher is amazing and hilarious."

Student Isabelle Chase has been involved in PHHS theatre production several years and loves it.

"I have been involved in productions here at PHHS for all three years that I've been here so far, and I'm planning on it again next year," Chase remarked. "The people in this department are amazing, and working with all of them makes me actually want to get to school at 7:30 in the morning. Mr. Russell, our director, always manages to create a positive environment that is welcoming to everyone, and I always look forward to being able to work with my fellow cast members, many of whom I now consider my closest friends, so I'd say that the people are my favorite part of being involved with the productions here."

Like others in such performances, Chase notes that remembering lines is critical to the success of any production.

"Remembering your lines is one of the biggest challenges in live theater, because most everyone else is relying on you for their lines as well," Chase said. "However, unplanned improvising can save, and even sometimes improve a show. In our production of Trail to Oregon last year, many moments were improvised that made the audience, and us, laugh. Sometimes, you know all of your lines, but then the stress of being in front of 100 people on stage gets to you, and your mind goes blank. My biggest piece of advice is to just trust yourself and try not to stress too much if you forget something, we all do it, and your fellow castmates are there to help you out."

Chase, who also wants to continue performing when she gets to college, hopes fellow students will give theatre a try.

"For any other PHHS students who would like to get involved, please know that we would love to have you here," Chase stated. "Some advice that I would give you is kind of cheesy, but just don't be afraid to be yourself. We welcome everyone, no matter who you are. Just make a promise to yourself that you'll put in the time and effort, and I promise you'll have an amazing experience."

Zia Murphy has been involved with theatre at the school since her freshman year and gets much out of it.

"My first introduction to high school performances was when we did a 2022 stage-adapted play version of the horror movie 'Scream.' The most enjoyable part above everything else is the family and lifelong memories you make," Murphy stated. "The thing with theatre acting is that you only get a few shots to get your lines and blocking right, it's not like movie acting where you can do multiple takes behind a camera and they can edit out whatever goes wrong. It's always extra nerve-wracking knowing you'll be watched live, but that always motivates me to try extra hard."

With hopes to pursue an acting career one day, Murphy hopes other students will give theatre a try during their time at PHHS.

"Don't let the fear of being embarrassed get in the way of having fun, that's something that my acting teachers always told me," Murphy commented. "Most people refrain from doing this sort of thing because of stage fright, or worrying that they'll look stupid if they go for it. My advice is to stop worrying about what others will think and just do it for the fun of it."

When it comes to having fun, those producing the show and those attending will have plenty of it.

For ticket information, visit: https://tix.com/ticket-sales/phhs/7097.



Keep a level playing field for girls and women

Editor's Desk



By DAVE THOMAS

I played sports as a youth well through my adult years.

When we played sanctioned sports, whether tennis, basketball, baseball, or other such activities, I always competed against other biological boys and men.

Away from such officially sanctioned sports, I competed against women in tennis and a few other activities. Did I feel I had a physical advantage over them? The simple answer would be yes. Does that mean I always came out the winner? The simple answer would be no.

That said, there has been much debate in recent years over biologically born men who are transitioning to women playing in women's sports.

We have seen it on the high school level, in collegiate action, and elsewhere. As someone who loves watching women's sports, it bothers me seeing males posing as females competing against biologically born and to this day females.

My motto for many years has been you are free to do whatever you want as long as it does not hurt others. When your advantage in being a physical male even if you do not identify as one makes for an unfair playing field, then we have an issue.

While recent times have seen an unfair playing field in various women's sports, things look to be changing.

Last Wednesday (Feb. 5) marked National Girls and Women in Sports Day.

This special day on the calendar is set aside to shine a light on all the girls and women making their mark in the world of sports. A number of local high schools were planning to honor these achievements as were various colleges including San Diego State University. The SDSU women's basketball team highlighted this special day last Saturday in their matchup with Wyoming.



Wyoming and San Diego State University squared off last Saturday afternoon in a Mountain West Conference women's basketball contest. The Cowgirls left town with a 64-51 win over SDSU. The loss dropped SDSU's MWC record to 6-6 (17-8 overall) heading into play this past Wednesday at UNLV. *(Photo credit: Dave Thomas)*

Given this special day and for some the week more notice on this subject took place when President Trump signed an executive order that prohibits transgender women and girls from competing in the world of female sports. Known as "No Men in Women's Sports Executive Order," the order was of course met with some outcry.

At the end of the day, biological women should compete

SEE **EDITOR'S DESK,** Page 7

The myth of the magical morning routine

Patrick Henry Student Takes



By ELLA SELNICK

Like me, you might fall victim to a not-so-occasional doomscroll when you really should be studying.

Far too often, I find myself in the depths of Instagram reels instead of doing something productive. My scrolling sessions typically end in lowered self esteem after needlessly comparing myself to content I see online.

Take what we label the "perfect" morning routine, for example: you must be up before the sunrise, meditate or journal, complete a 10-step skincare routine, and eat a perfectly balanced breakfast–all before nine a.m.

As a student with AP classes and a job, my mornings look nothing like this.

Most days, I sleep in until the very last possible moment, and then I scavenge the fridge for something to hold me over until lunch. My elaborate skincare routine consists of exactly two products. I get some time to stretch if I'm lucky. But meditation? Completely out of the question!

We may recognize the shallow and superficial nature of social media, yet many of us still fall for its tricks. You may recall thinking at some point, I'm not productive enough or I won't be successful if I don't wake up earlier. And after a sufficiently mind-numbing, ego-crushing internet binge, an uncomfortable question lingers: will I fit in better if my life looks like theirs?

I notice many teenagers also share a desire to live like the picture-perfect snippets of the lives we see online. Society pushing ideas of the "perfect" lifestyle isn't anything new; we've grown up with magazines and billboards and television commanding, "Do this! Eat this! Lose this!", convincing us our lives are incomplete without whatever they're selling.

Unattainable standards at the swipe of a finger

But social media magnifies the effects of, say, a TV advertisement by exposing us to unattainable standards at the swipe of a finger.

SEE **MORNING ROUTINE,** Page 8



(Courtesy images)

Phony package delivery texts on the rise: Can you spot the scams?

Scam alerts



By JOE DUCEY

Did you get a text about a package delivery coming to the house? If you didn't, someone you know probably did.

It is one of the biggest scams going on right now.

The text is a notice about a delivery issue. You're asked to respond and click on a link to find out more. Could you tell the real texts from the fakes?

Take a look at three common package delivery texts reported by consumers. Two are scams. Can you spot which text is real?

The **first text** involves a payment problem with UPS and comes from a 714 area code:

"Hi Olivia. Your shipment requires a delivery fee. Proceed to pay now to avoid delivery delay. Visit https:ups-express.click."

The **second text** supposedly comes from the US Postal Service with reply options:

"You have successfully subscribed to USPS Text Tracking. Reply HELP 4 help. Reply STOP to cancel. USPS Tracking 93463620807027*******"

The **third text** is about a shipping issue with FedEx and comes from an area code beginning with a 67.

"FedEx: Your package has been delayed due to an issue with your shipping address. Please update your information here: (link included)"

So which text is real and why?

The first text from UPS... is fake.

SEE **SCAM ALERTS,** Page 8

Letter to Editor

To keep it special, let's keep it local. I read the *Mission Times Courier* for local news that I'm not likely to get elsewhere.

I urge you to skip the political beyond our neighborhoods. A whole page was devoted in the January-February issue to commentary about the incoming president. There's plenty of that in the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, national newspapers and other news outlets. While it may be important and meaningful, it's divisive, it's not relevant neighborhood-wise, and it certainly doesn't do anything to foster positive neighborhood feelings.

Controversy about local issues? Sure, run it. That too could be divisive, but can have positive effects: it helps us understand things — and people — in our immediate area.

Best to focus on what makes a neighborhood paper unique.

Roni Breite
San Carlos

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For breaking news and investigative story ideas contact the editor by phone or email.

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Prebys Foundation honors leaders for making a difference in San Diego

Prebys Foundation has announced the recipients of its 2025 Prebys Leadership Awards, recognizing five exceptional leaders from organizations across San Diego County.

These individuals have demonstrated a strong track record of creating conditions that support well-being — including mental health, healing, access to care, and human expression — throughout the region. Each honoree will receive $100,000 to support their work in the fields of arts and culture, healthcare, medical research, and youth success.

This year's recipients include Dr. Paula Aristizabal, pediatric oncologist of UC San Diego and Rady Children's Hospital, who is a leader in healthcare, dedicated to improving outcomes for children with cancer by breaking down barriers for Hispanic children and their families; Afira Arrastia-DeVries, president and CEO of the Monarch School Project, who leads the only K-12 public institution dedicated to providing a welcoming environment to unhoused students while support teachers across the country to learn how to better serve these youth and their families; Andrew Carey, the executive director of the US-Mexico Border Philanthropy Partnership, leads a visionary team dedicated to cross-border collaboration with the mission of improving the lives of communities along the US-Mexico border; Ben McCue the executive director of Outdoor Outreach who has made remarkable strides in the field of outdoor education and environmental stewardship providing youth with opportunities for growth, development, and to find themselves; Chris Rubio the artistic director of Arms Wide Open a groundbreaking theater group dedicated to transforming lives and breaking down barriers for children on the autism spectrum and many others with special needs.

"Each of these leaders represents the type of leadership our community and country need — grounded in purpose, belonging, and opportunity, with the skills to innovate, scale their work, and collaborate," said Prebys Foundation CEO Grant Oliphant. "These award recipients hold a vision that makes San Diego healthier, more welcoming, and a place where growth, healing, and dignity are accessible to all. Prebys Foundation is proud to honor these leaders and support them in building a more connected and caring region where residents thrive."

More than 200 local leaders were nominated by fellow San Diegans for this prestigious award.

"The talent and dedication in our region are immense," said Oliphant. "We are fortunate to have a deep bench of visionary and committed leaders. Through this award, along with our investments in leadership development and nonprofit capacity, we aim to support the individuals and organizations that help San Diego stay healthy, obtain essential resources, and foster a strong, caring community."

Editor's Desk

CONTINUED FROM Page 6

against biological women in the pool, the basketball and tennis courts, the softball diamond, the fields where field hockey is played, and various other venues.

I started my journalism career some 35 years ago as a reporter for a weekly publication in Pennsylvania. Not long after starting, I was covering boys' and girls' high school sports on a regular basis. The idea back then that girls would face an unfair playing field was not even a thought. Fast-forward several decades and it has been an issue in a number of sports in various parts of the country and even the world for that matter.

When it comes right down to it, girls and women playing sports are some of the most incredible athletes you will ever come across.

As such, we should always make sure they are not put at a disadvantage before they even suit up.

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Benjamin Library serves a key purpose in the community

Allied Gardens/Grantville



By SHAIN HAUG

The Benjamin Library serves Allied Gardens and the increasing population of Grantville.

At 6,900 square feet it is less than half the size that is needed for these communities and less than half the size that Mr. Edwin A. Benjamin contemplated would be needed when he contributed the building to the city. It will be a great tribute to his generosity if we are to complete his dream. But there is much to be done.

The Tierrasanta Branch Library received a renovation and modest expansion in 2019 and closed for maintenance in April 2024, reopening in September 2024. It received a new roof, ceiling, lighting, and HVAC system that will serve the Tierrasanta Library and its patrons for years to come.

The San Carlos Library expansion secured $4.7 million in the City's Fiscal-Year-2025 budget and $5 million from Navajo Developer Impact Funds to fund the new San Carlos Branch Library.

Councilmember Raul Campillo in his newsletter said, "This $4.7m, together with existing funding that I secured in years past, represents the completed funding necessary to perform design, permitting, and initial construction activities such as removal of hazardous material and contaminated soils."

On the other hand, Benjamin Library is presently strained to capacity without any plan for improvement and with no plan for funding beyond the general discussion found in the San Diego Public Library Master Plan/ Vision 2040.

Until the 2015 Grantville Revise of the Navajo Community plan the Grantville area was developed with light industry services. The revise changed the zoning to mutifamily dwellings with expectation of some 8000 residents in the long term. The apartment complexes of Verge, Vora, and Gravity were developed in accordance with that zoning. But under the Complete Communities plan the city allows developers to vastly exceed the zoning limitations. For instance, the development at the old Souplantation strip mall will have over 400 residential units rather than the 50 or so under existing zoning. This is the future of Grantville.



The Benjamin Library looks to grow. *(Photo credit: https://sandiego.gov/public-library/locations/allied-gardens-benjamin-library)*

Neither the 2015 Grantville Revise nor Complete Communities provides for schools, parks, fire stations, public amenities, and libraries in Grantville. The burdens of the increase of population will be met by the public facilities of Allied Gardens.

The time has come to anticipate the increased demand.

Rather than wait the 20 years that it took to get the San Carlos Library expansion now is the time to begin gathering support for a new 25,000 sq. ft., state of the art, net zero energy, Allied Gardens-Grantville facility.

Campillo suggested that the project would have greater value, and greater prospect of being realized, if it included a senior center and a child development facility as adjuncts to the library. But he was clear that we cannot expect the city to make a move, that any initiative must begin from the grass-roots.

The basic work on the design and funding of a new Allied Gardens-Grantville Library can only begin with us. This is a project for the community.

It must be a project by the community. We need architects, structural engineers, land use lawyers, financial consultants, folks who know the way around Land Use Code, and those with contacts that can help us get the development impact fees that will arise from the Grantville developments.

It is a tall order, but we are certain the expertise is right here in Allied Gardens. It needs to be activated.

We can begin with the general guidance found in San Diego Public Library Master Plan/ Vision 2040 and the excellent summary prepared by Kevin Sullivan of the AGGCC Board.

Join us. Go to http://aggccouncil.org/ click on the "Contact Us" link to let us add you to the AGGCC contact list and to let us know you will join this team.

Scam alerts

CONTINUED FROM **Page 6**

UPS says legitimate texts come from the numbers "94601", "69877", or "48515"

They say real texts clearly state the delivery status and estimated time and they will never ask for payment or personal information through a link.

The third text from FedEx is also fake.

FedEx says a real text would address you by name, list package specifics and won't ask for action through a link.

They advise checking tracking numbers with the official FedEx website.

And the fake text sender area code of 67 is likely from out of the United States.

So, it's the third example from USPS that is legitimate.

While it asks for a reply, there is no link to click.

USPS says legitimate postal service texts will never contain a link.

And legit texts will always include tracking numbers.

Be careful what you click on

The Better Business Bureau is seeing so many of these scams, I wouldn't click on any package delivery texts.

Instead, if you have an account with the company, log in and check for issues.

You can also find the real website online and contact customer service there.

Check out more ways to protect yourself from scams at joeknowsbetter.com.

https://bbb.org/local/1126/joe-knows-better

Find out all the ways Better Business Bureau protects you at bbb.org where you can check ScamTracker for scams in your area and trust BBB Accredited businesses when hiring.

Morning routine

CONTINUED FROM **Page 6**

Consider the "clean girl" aesthetic. Now, despite its name, the trend isn't actually about basic hygiene practices. Clean girls should look put together without showing any effort of doing so–ah yes, the age-old, misogynistic idea that women should be 'presentable'. Their daily regimen includes wearing makeup, (but not too much!) matching workout sets (no sweating allowed!) and layers upon layers of skin care (God forbid you get wrinkles!). They post sixty-second clips of their lives with their beds made, their hair slicked back, their lattes always perfect. Perfect, perfect, perfect.

Also popular on TikTok is the concept of adding the suffix "-core" to a given word in order to create a romanticized lifestyle surrounding it.

Core terms dictate everything, from your fashion and what your house looks like to your personality and the way you act. "Cottagecore," for instance, emphasizes an idealistic lifestyle rooted in nature, separated from the chaos of fast-paced, urban life. The concept of cottagecore fosters an internet community wherein people can bond over their passion for gardening, floral attire, and underconsumption.

Objectively, is there anything problematic about multi-step skincare regimens or embracing your inner woodland creature? Absolutely not. On their own, popular items are fun; I'm a pretty big fan of gorgeous latte art and my floral dress collection. These popular things, however, often become components of internet subcultures on which we base our identities. The "it" lifestyle dominates your TikTok page for a good three months–until a different one gets more views.

Idolizing others as role models for the perfect life

When we see the nit-picked, highly edited videos of peoples' lives, it's too easy to idolize them as role models for the perfect life. Yet, influencers are merely the faces of certain trends, and it's their job to convince us the life they present online is the life we should emulate.

Many will argue we've taken such a liking to lifestyles on the internet–such as cottagecore–because they cultivate communities based on hobbies, food, and fashion. I begin to wonder, however, if labels and aesthetics actually provide a sense of connection and belonging, or if they just add yet another set of unattainable standards we must adhere to.

Adjusting our lives to fit certain genres or aesthetics rarely works.

Have you ever bought the same clothes as the fashion school girls or copied the ideal gym bro workout? Me too. But I didn't always buy what I thought looked good on myself or exercise for the betterment of my health; I was conforming to the trends I thought would help me fit in with what I saw online, and you might be too.

Despite my tendency to scroll when I should be studying, I think my life is fulfilling even though it doesn't always resemble that of people online.

Their perfect, visually appealing breakfast–after their photos have been taken, edited, and posted–is probably cold. Prioritizing my AP classes as opposed to deep cleaning my room is an effort toward my future, and time I don't spend on an elaborate skincare routine is time I spend making breakfast with my mother.

Besides, most of us likely need that extra hour of sleep–otherwise we'll reach levels of cranky that no amount of meditation will solve.

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Coffee is heated but the conversation is not

San Carlos Area Council



By MICKEY ZEICHICK

Feb. 3, we held our first meeting of the San Carlos Area Council Coffee Klatch with Mickey. The coffee was heated but the conversation was not.

Anthony Hackett from Councilman Campillo's office was there to guide us along as this is new territory for our group. It was casual as we chatted and expressed concerns regarding the homeless situation in our city and our corner of the city. While we do have some homeless people we are not as impacted as other neighborhoods but we need to do better everywhere in our city and county.

We discussed street repairs, that don't last more than a year or two. We addressed zoning and how it is changing our neighborhoods so dramatically.

After a "hard" day's work we want to come home to our families and build solid memories and traditions. But what happens when our neighbor wants to build an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) against their property line (no setback) and when their contractor needs to do certain types of work on their ADU but needs to access the work using a portion of our yard? Puts us in a difficult situation; we want to be good neighbors, but it is annoying. And what happens if they get injured while in our yard? We also talked about sewer, water, and trash costs.

We learned that Judy Pilch "Mrs. P" passed away in January.

You may remember (I hope you do) her husband John Pilch who was involved with everything in our city and our corner of the city; few people are as dedicated as John was. (You may remember he passed away in 2016.)

That brings up the topic of the funds in our SCAC account that were donated in the memory of John Pilch and to be used for setting the American Flags along Navajo Road on special occasions, e.g. Veteran's Day, Independence Day, Flag Day, Memorial Day, etc. I will ask to have this taken over and will hand over the funds to that entity to be used for the flags.

At our March 3 meeting, we will present the Friends of the San Carlos Branch Library with a check from the money that was donated in memory of Jack and Kitty Mones for the "new" San Carlos Branch Library. Jack and Kitty were long-time and very active members in the San Carlos Area Council and Navajo Planners.

The next meeting of the SCAC Coffee Klatch with Mickey will be at 5 to 6 p.m. Monday, March 3, at the San Carlos Branch Library on Jackson Drive.

Please email me at sancarlosareacouncilpres@gmail.com for more information.

Signature push continues to make noticeable improvements to city property

Friends of Del Cerro



By JAY WILSON

Friends of Del Cerro (FODC) continues to gather petition signatures, to request the City of San Diego help us make noticeable improvements to city property in our community, which are neglected.

FODC will have future fundraisers to help the City of San Diego with cost-sharing improvements. If you are interested in investing in improvements with trees on Del Cerro Blvd., College Avenue and also improvements for the Princess Del Cerro Park, please contact the FODC board by going to friendsofdelcerro.org and click on "Contact".

The Friends of Del Cerro's Enhance Del Cerro committee recently met again with city staff from the Gas Tax Fund.

We were informed how we can now submit requests for right of entry permits to accomplish some of our plans to enhance our area, such as the median on Del Cerro Blvd. between College Avenue and Madra. One possible project is to replace the trees on this median with appropriate, city approved evergreen trees.

Through Councilmember Raul Campillo's office, the city's Community Projects Programs and Services Department has awarded the Friends of Del Cerro a $5,000 grant. A portion of the funds will be used to purchase new Neighborhood Watch signs and fund an intern to help locate city property items in Del Cerro and submit them to Get It Done.

We are making certain the Del Cerro community receives all the maintenance services the city is supposed to provide, such as checking the irrigation systems to ensure their systems are functioning properly in our medians and verifying which city department is responsible for the various city owned property, in Del Cerro.

Women in Medicine Club

CONTINUED FROM **Page 2**

that kind of challenge. Our club is amazing because the environment is super friendly and inviting and everyone is passionate about medicine and creating a safe space to pursue their interests."

For Colling, the feeling has been the same.

"I have been asked many times if I am smart enough to be successful in a STEM career," Colling pointed out. "Unlike me and many of my female peers, most men won't have their intelligence or capabilities questioned just because of their gender. I want to create a safe space for girls to come together and share their experiences and explore their interests further because most of us, unfortunately, have this shared experience. The community created through the club has been amazing, everyone is very friendly and eager to learn about ways they can help in their community."

With intelligent and determined young women like this spearheading the effort, females pursuing medical careers and other choices will have more support and confidence in their corner.

SDSU pipeline

CONTINUED FROM **Page 4**

full academic year, to observe, co-plan, and co-teach lessons guided by a high-quality Mentor teacher.

The universities will offer coaching sessions to candidates, including support to access financial aid, scholarships, and application assistance to enroll in that particular university's credentialing program. Residents receive a total stipend of $37,500 over the residency year.

SEE FULL STORY AT:
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Epic Gardening breaks ground with the San Carlos Community Garden

In the garden



By KELLY WOOD

The San Carlos Community Garden's (SCCG) mission is *Growing Community*, and while growing food, flowers and herbs play a big part of this mission, educating and developing gardeners is equally important.

The SCCG is excited to announce its partnership with Epic Gardening, one of the world's most followed gardening brands with over six million followers across its channels and an extensive online library of how-to gardening tutorials. Its online store (epicgardening.com) offers best-in-class gardening products, including its flagship product, Birdies Raised Beds.

SCCG was selected by Epic Gardening as a demonstration garden for its Birdie Beds and high-quality seeds from Botanical Interests, which the company acquired in 2023.

Kris Moriarty, director of Customer Experience & Special Projects for Epic Gardening, was instrumental in creating this partnership with SCCG. "We're happy to announce our partnership with the San Carlos Community Garden," said Moriarty. "Together we're cultivating a greener, healthier community by providing resources, education, and support to inspire gardeners of all levels. At Epic Gardening, we exist to help you grow, and this collaboration allows us to extend that vision locally."

"We are always looking for ways to give back to our gardeners and the community," said Gayle Mills, co-chair of SCCG Board of Directors. "Our partnership with Epic Gardening is more than we could have ever imagined and will be a great resource to our current and future gardeners."

Chia-Ming Ro, owner of coastalhomestead.com and one of Epic Gardening's content curators, has helped create a gardening plan for Epic Gardening's plot at SCCG.

"You might not realize it, but it's still winter and that means it's still a great time to plant and grow winter veggies," said Ro. "In the weeks ahead, we'll be planting (from seed), plants that are also good for transitioning into spring. So, lot's of veggies like radishes, carrots, leafy greens and Asian greens like Swiss chard, Bok Choy, and Fennel. We'll also plant flowers to attract pollinators and help with pest control; and since it's bare-root season, we'll add some blueberries too."

"It's hard to beat the knowledge we'll gain by having such great access to Epic Gardening and their team, but we're also fortunate to have experienced gardeners, like Scott Sherman, who has been with us for many growing seasons and has built quite the reputation for his peppers, turnips, and cauliflower," said Mills. "And, I hear he makes a mean cauliflower mac and cheese."



Scott Sherman with prize-winning produce. *(Courtesy photos)*

Sherman, a resident of Allied Gardens, has been a member of SCCG since leasing his plot in 2013.

"I've seen SCCG grow from its humble beginnings into the jewel it has become," said Sherman. "I really like the life lessons gardening teaches to children. It teaches them about planting seeds, caring for seedlings, nurturing and growing the seedlings into mature plants and how and when to harvest the results. But it really teaches them that with hard work and patience and perseverance you can literally enjoy the fruits of your labors."



The Epic Gardening Team at the site of their soon to be SCCG demonstration garden (Left to right), Paul Ruiz, Chia Ming Ro, Ian Ware.

Eliana and Bryce Newall, of East Lake, joined the garden in December 2024.

"We live in a home with no yard and have been growing what we can from pots on our small patio, which can be challenging, especially for growing larger produce. We've always wanted to join a community garden and discovered SCCG by my sister who lives close by. We attended SCCG's Produce Swap a few times and were really impressed with all the friendly people involved, and all the neat programs that they offer," said Eliana.

In just a few months, Eliana and Bryce have produced a beautiful bounty of organic veggies including cabbage, cauliflower, and broccoli. "Now I'm ready to lease a second plot and start growing carrots," said Eliana. "And, I can't wait to attend yoga in the garden."

"Not only is it a fantastic place to grow organic, healthy, fresh produce; it's also a great spot to meet and engage with your neighbors," added Sherman. "I highly recommend people come and visit SCCG and become part of our community. You'll be glad you did."

Learn more about the SCCG at: sancarloscommunitygarden.com.

San Carlos artist wins Best of Theme Award

Wanda Honeycutt, an artist and resident of San Carlos, has won the Best of Theme award in the February 2025 San Diego Watercolor Society (SDWS) Member's gallery exhibition "Vibrations". Her work was selected for this honor out of 259 submissions.



(Image courtesy of San Diego Watercolor Society)

Honeycutt's painting titled "Adira" was selected by prominent local artist Richard Hawk for the honor.

Hawk commented, "My interpretation of the theme "vibration" in this painting comes from a sense of the unseen. The labyrinthine pattern elements hint at layers of meaning, implied profundity in this compelling figure. The dominance of blue is of a higher vibrational frequency. Very engaging."

Honeycutt has been a regular in the SDWS member exhibitions, as well as a frequent award winner.

For this award, her extraordinary abilities with strong composition as well as technical expertise, color choices, and a spiritual sense in the figure have been highlighted.

Honeycutt's art education began in college and has continued post-grad by taking classes and workshops with prominent water media artists. Her paintings have been shown, given awards, and sold in galleries throughout San Diego and many are held in private collections in several foreign countries, and throughout the United States.

Honeycutt is an intuitive painter.

Many times, she begins a painting by freely applying paint to the canvas or paper without a clear idea of the outcome. She then intuitively proceeds by allowing her internal compass to be influenced by a connection to something bigger than herself - a connection to the "more" of life. She delights in allowing the joy of painting to guide her in the process. Honeycutt considers her painting process to be a predominantly right brain endeavor involving her emotions, creativity, imagination, and intuition. She also taps into left brain training in the principles of good art design. When people wonder where her ideas come from, Honeycutt responds that they are from allowing her heart and mind to meld with the divine.

More of her art can be found at http://wandahoneycutt.com

The SDWS Gallery Exhibit will run through Saturday March 1. Paintings can be viewed and purchased at the gallery and on the SDWS website at https://sdws.org/galleryart.php?cat=7067.



Inside Eco Ambassadors: Mission Trails' teen program

Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation



By TAYLOR CROWLEY





Eco Ambassadors opens up the world of science to local teenagers. *(Courtesy photos)*

Eco Ambassadors, a popular program for science-loving teenagers, is now in its fifth cohort.

Each season, 20 students from all over San Diego County are selected to participate in the program, where they learn from environmental experts and gain hands-on field experience at Mission Trails.

Eco Ambassadors was created by and is managed by the nonprofit Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation and is available free to the community thanks to support from San Diego Gas and Electric (SDG&E).

Miles Marsh, an Eco Ambassador alumnus and Helix Charter High School student, reflected on his experience of the program: "It has helped me come into my own as a person and I feel more comfortable interacting with others my age. It's led me to understand what I want to do with my life, which is becoming a park ranger, and has helped me to find out what classes and studies align with that field."

During each of the program sessions, which typically take place on Sundays, students hear from guest speakers from a range of environment-related fields, including Mark Berninger, Natural Resources Manager for the City's Open Space Division; Dustin Harrison, Environmental Scientist with the San Diego River Conservancy, a state agency; Carrie Bowers, SDG&E Fire Science Meteorologist; and Allison Bray, SD County Environmental Health Specialist. After the discussion portion of the program, students take to the trails to put their new knowledge and skills to work.

"My favorite part has got to be the hikes we go on during each session; seeing all the birds in the park is such a special experience," said Marsh, "Mission Trails is one of the coolest places in all of San Diego. Every Sunday I am so grateful and excited to go hike around."

The 80 teens who have "graduated" so far from the Eco Ambassadors program have learned about potential career paths, built community, and acquired knowledge in various fields of study, preparing them for college or the workforce.

Applications to the Eco Ambassadors program are accepted on a rolling basis.

This summer, the program will take place for one week, from June 16-20, for a full week of learning and exploration at Mission Trails. We encourage all interested high school students in San Diego County to apply. Learn more and apply at: mtrp.org.

Additionally, the MTRP Foundation will host four weeks of summer camp.

Makers in Nature is for children of ages 7-11 and will be offered the weeks June 2-6, June 9-13, June 23-27 and June 30-July 3. Campers will experiment with different art mediums and create sustainable art made from recycled materials. This summer camp is a must for crafty, nature-loving kiddos.

Learn more and register at: mtrp.org.

Local kids engineer victory in California Southern FLL Challenge Championship







The team, "The Garage Engineers," made up of four sixth graders - three boys, Liam Ryu, Jamie Seo, Nico Rualo, from Pershing Middle School and one girl, Kylie O'Connor, from Lewis Middle School – recently won the California Southern FLL Challenge Championship at Capistrano Valley High School in Mission Viejo. They earned second place in the Robot Game performance and took home the overall first place title as the 2024-25 Submerged Champions out of 50 teams. Proud parents noted that they amazed us with their dedication and hard work. The team is advancing to the Western Edge Invitational, an international competition with 90 teams from all over the world, in Long Beach, taking place May 31-June 1. *(Courtesy photos)*

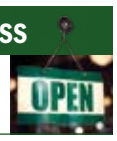
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Mission Trails Financial can help you zero in on retirement

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By DAVE THOMAS



Brig Kline



Bryan Pridmore



Mission Trails Financial is a phone call or email away from helping you navigate your retirement plans. *(Courtesy photos)*

There are not many things in life scarier than not having enough money to retire.

With many people living paycheck to paycheck, saving for retirement can seem like an uphill battle. Having zero funds set aside for retirement can be a recipe for disaster.

According to a report published on kiplinger.com, one-fifth of adults ages 50 and older have zero retirement savings. Meantime, 61% stated they have fears of not having enough money set aside when it comes time to retire.

Fortunately, there are financial professionals literally right in your backyard waiting to help you better manage your funds so that retirement down the road is not such a scary thing.

One such business is Mission Trails Financial.

Mission Times Courier recently caught up with two of the business's financial pros (Bryan Pridmore and Brig Kline) for an email Q&A.

MTC: Year your business started, location, and its social connections (Facebook, X, Instagram, etc.).

Kline: We started Mission Trails Financial in the summer of 2015 and are located across the street from Cowles Mountain Park entrance off Navajo Road. You can see our sign on Navajo before Golfcrest. Our social media footprint includes LinkedIn (https://linkedin.com/company/missiontf/) and Facebook (https://facebook.com/MissionTF).

MTC: Talk a little bit about what your business has to offer.

Pridmore: We offer tailored comprehensive financial planning largely through investments. We are fee-based and have the CFP® designation to be fiduciaries for our clients. We develop a comprehensive financial plan that fits within the client's lifestyle and believes that all individuals have the right to work with a financial advisor, regardless of how much they currently have saved. Setting up a Roth IRA or brokerage account at a young age can have long-lasting impacts. We also help people keep track of old 401(k)s when they are transitioning jobs. Another popular service is working with business 401(k) where there are two or more employees who want access to a financial advisor.

MTC: What sets your business apart from others in the local financial industry?

Kline: We highly value financial education and meet with our clients more frequently than a typical advisor. Our focus is building a relationship and trust with our clients knowing they are not traveling their financial path alone.

MTC: What are some things you advise clients and potential clients to do when it comes to having a healthy financial portfolio?

Kline: Having a healthy financial plan is not all about numbers or striving after the biggest retirement nest egg. Your enjoyment of life and your retirement should be the main driver of your financial plan. Over the decades we've seen folks unfortunately retire too late. Most people are healthier when they are younger. If the numbers say you can retire then we show you how to take that step to enjoy what you have worked so hard for.

MTC: What are some of the personal financial challenges facing young and old people today when it comes to planning for future retirement?

Pridmore: People of all ages see endless options with investments that are a mouse click away. Our job at Mission Trails Financial is to cut through the noise of overwhelming choices by providing clear steps and regular updates. Our favorite part of our job is updating a retirement plan annually to see the progress. Whether young or old, having a professional guide you through financial decisions can significantly ease the stress of planning for retirement.

Editor's note: If you have a Mission Times Courier area small business you think might make for an interesting story, email: dave@sdnews.com for consideration.

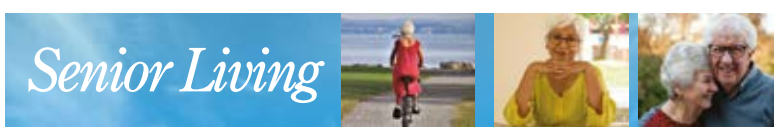
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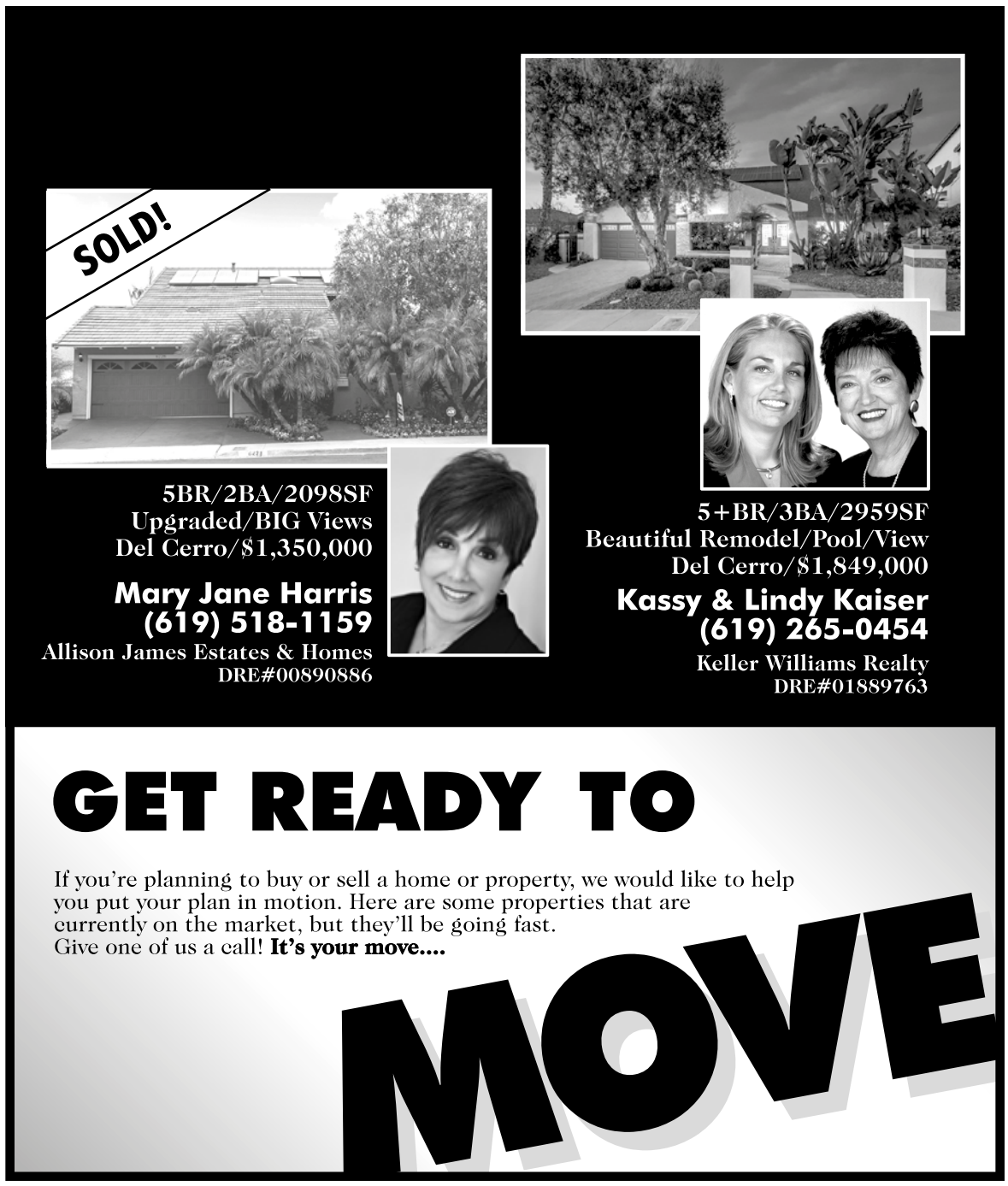
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Crusaders Soccer Club completes first round of tryouts for different ages

By JAY WILSON

The Crusaders Soccer Club has completed initial tryouts for competitive players born between 2016 and 2011, the week of Feb. 10.

Tryouts for players born in 2019 through 2017 were held in December. Tryouts for high school aged players will be in April.

If you have a player born between 2019 through 2007 who is interested in playing competitive soccer, go to the Crusaders Soccer website at crusaderssoccer.org, click on ABOUT US and then Coaches & Staff. Click on Bio and you can read about each coach and the team(s) they are coaching. Do not hesitate to contact them.

Crusaders Soccer is still competing in the SoCal State Cup Tournament.

One team is the 2015 boys, coached by Mark Dirkes. As a result of his team's wins the weekends of Jan. 25-26 and Feb. 8-9, the team advanced to the round of 16 in the SoCal State Cup tournament. Their next game is the weekend of Feb. 22-23.

The Competitive program continues its rapid expansion. There are now 35 competitive teams, an increase of over 50%.

Victor Melendez, the director of Coaching, stated, "Our growth is the result of hard work by everyone; coaches and our assistant directors, who also coach a competitive team(s); Erick Melendez and Seth Tunick, Kate Maietta, college director, Justin Robinett, women's program director."

Modesto Guariniello, our director of our Recreational program, commented, "Our recreational spring season begins on March 2 and continues through Sunday, April 29, with no games on Easter Sunday. I am working closely with our diligent volunteer division coordinators as they populate the 54 recreational teams ranging in birth years 2012 through 2021. I am also looking forward to working with all our volunteer recreational coaches for our spring season and I am expanding our coaching clinics. Stop by virtually any of the grass fields in the Navajo area on a Sunday and take in a recreational soccer game."

For more information about all the Crusaders Soccer Club programs, go to crusaderssoccer.org.



Crusaders Soccer is still competing in the SoCal State Cup tournament. One team is the 2015 boys, coached by Mark Dirkes. Their next game is the weekend of Feb. 22-23. *(Courtesy photo)*

Patrick Henry High girls' water polo surfaces in CIF playoffs

The Patrick Henry High girls' water polo team heads into the CIF playoffs on Saturday with the number four seed in Division I.

After a first-round bye, Patrick Henry was to take on either Coronado or Mt. Carmel (depending on results earlier in the week) in its first matchup at the Coggan Family Aquatic Complex.

PHHS ended Eastern League play last week with a record of 7-2.

Earlier this season, Patrick Henry took second place in the Warriors Winter Classic in Orange County.



(Photo courtesy of Patrick Henry High School)

Patrick Henry High winter teams winding down season









With the winter sports season in its final weeks, Patrick Henry High student photographer Bailey Cawelti caught up recently with several teams in action on the hardwood and soccer field.

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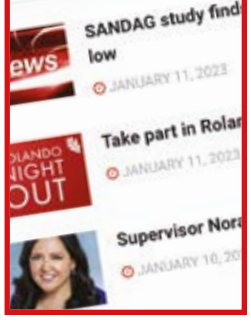
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Women make up 11.8% of the San Diego metro's construction workforce

Construction has long been a male-dominated field.

According to recently released data from the U.S. Census Bureau, only 11.5% of payroll employees in the construction industry are women. However, a promising shift is underway.

In recent years, the Department of Labor's Women in Apprenticeship and Nontraditional Occupations (WANTO) grant program has allocated millions of dollars to bolster women's participation in industries like construction. And with the construction industry facing a massive worker shortage—estimated to exceed half a million workers—recruiting women into construction roles has become not just a priority, but a necessity for sustaining growth and meeting demand.

The share of women in construction has steadily increased over the past several years, marking progress in diversifying the industry. While women remain underrepresented in the workforce, the data reveals a gradual yet consistent upward trend in female employment within the construction sector.

Prior to 2016, women comprised approximately 9% of the construction workforce. This figure held relatively steady for over a decade, fluctuating slightly between 8.9% and 9.5% from 2003 to 2015.

However, since 2016, the share of female employees in construction has climbed nearly every year, reaching 11.1% in 2022 and continuing to rise to 11.5% by 2023. This growth reflects both industry efforts to address workforce shortages and initiatives aimed at increasing diversity, such as targeted training programs and grants.

> Key takeaway from report: In the San Diego metro, about 89,000 men work full time in the construction sector, compared to just 11,983 women. Still, women represent 11.8% of the San Diego metro's construction workforce, which is larger than the national share of 11.5%.

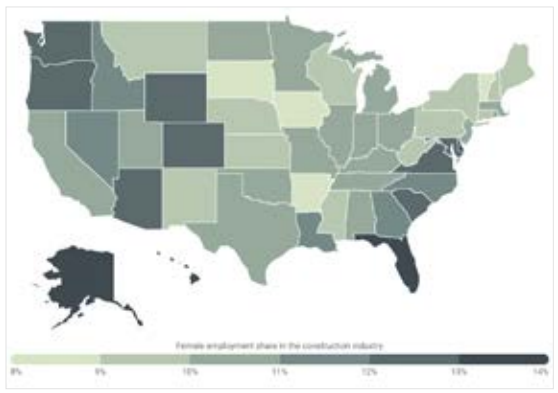
Nationwide, over 1.3 million women are employed in the construction sector, compared to more than 10 million men. This gender disparity is evident not only in overall employment numbers but also in the types of roles occupied by men and women. Women are far more likely to work in office and administrative positions, while men dominate field-based roles.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, women make up nearly 80% of the construction industry's office and administrative roles. They also are more highly concentrated in professional, sales, and management roles compared to other occupations in the sector.

However, female representation is significantly lower in roles traditionally associated with fieldwork. Only 4.5% of transportation positions and 4.1% of construction and extraction roles are filled by women. Representation is even lower in maintenance and repair jobs, as well as production roles, where women account for just 2.0% and 3.5% of workers, respectively.

A major benefit for women in the construction industry is that they tend to command higher wages than female workers in other fields. The median annual wage for full-time female construction industry workers is $54,044, exceeding the median of $52,458 for women across all industries. This wage advantage highlights the potential of construction as a lucrative career path for women.

Interestingly, the opposite is true for men in construction, who typically earn less than their counterparts in other sectors. Male workers in the construction industry have a median annual wage of $56,805, compared to $64,705 for male workers across all industries.



Geographic Differences in Female Employment in the Construction Industry *(Photo source: Construction Coverage analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data)*

Another noteworthy aspect of wages in construction is the narrower gender pay gap. While the national gender pay gap across all industries sits at approximately 18.9%, the gap in construction is significantly smaller at just 4.9%.

While the construction industry remains male-dominated nationally, the underrepresentation of women in construction is less pronounced in certain parts of the country. This variation highlights regional differences in workforce dynamics, compensation levels, and diversity efforts within the industry.

Alaska and Hawaii lead the nation in female construction employment, with women making up 13.8% and 13.4% of the industry's workforce, respectively. These states likely benefit from the relatively high wages offered in the construction sector, which can be an attractive factor for women entering the field. States in the Pacific Northwest, such as Washington (12.7%) and Oregon (12.5%), and parts of the South Atlantic, including Florida (13.3%) and Maryland (12.4%), also report female representation above the national average of 11.5%.

Similar trends can be observed at the metropolitan level.

Metros like Jacksonville, FL (17.4%), Orlando, FL (16.1%), and New Orleans, LA (14.4%) rank among the top metros for female construction employment. At the opposite end of the spectrum, several locations in Texas, California, and the Northeast report concentrations of women in construction below 9.5%. In McAllen, TX, just 6.7% of construction industry workers are female—the lowest of any major U.S. metropolitan area.

The analysis was conducted by Construction Coverage, a website that provides construction insurance guides, using data from the U.S. Census Bureau.

For more information, visit: https://constructioncoverage.com/research/cities-with-the-most-women-in-construction.

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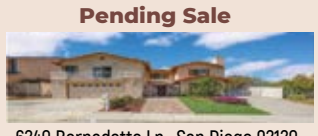
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Wrestling nationally and in San Carlos keeps on growing

By SAM LITVIN



KT Wrestling Youth Club.

Just a few years ago, wrestling was a dying sport.

The number of kids wrestling was decreasing and popularity was waning. So much so that the Olympic Committee planned to cut the sport from the Olympics. The sport rallied and saved itself.

Since then, two things helped the sport grow: Women's wrestling and growth in popularity of Jiu Jitsu due to the popularity of MMA. This increase popularity lead to CIF adopting girls wrestling as a separate sport and then added boys and girls wrestling to Middle School athletics.

This year, Patrick Henry High School wrestling has also grown as a result. The team grew to 38 wrestlers including seven girls.

The girls are lead by sophomore captain Violet Gray who is 7-7 this year with a 4.3 GPA but out due to a shoulder injury towards late season. Sophomore Aubrey Lund is 9-4 and looking to place at CIF again while freshman Maverick Garcia is 10-7 with a fourth-place at City Championships and five wins against boys, including Consolation Runner-Up at the Boys La Costa Canyon Freshman Championships.

The boys are having a great season too with a third place at City Championships, having four wrestlers in the finals including junior and State Qualifier Ethan Vinoray, currently ranked Top 10 in San Diego County.

Also a finalist was team captain junior Abdullah Alshami and senior and team captain Reid Muscat.

Also a finalist at City Championships was a freshman, Caleb Arenz who wrestled in the middle school program and was the middle school champion last year. Muscat and Arenz are undefeated in the league. The team produced two City Championship placers who wrestled their first year including sophomore Eli Roy, third, and senior Zakariah Safi who placed fourth.

The team this year is 9-6 in duals and in preparation for CIF Championships and States with the goal of having qualifiers and wrestlers at the state level again. That is after a rough setback for Vinoray who had an injury mid-season.

Big Future/Kumeyaay Trails Wrestling Club

Patrick Henry also hosts a wrestling club by the name of Kumeyaay Trails to honor the Kumeyaay warriors who once lived in the area.

This fall it opened up to kids seven and older. About 10 kids joined in fall and the club is already full with 20 kids between 7-12 signed up. The club expanded in the spring to include youth wrestlers between ages 12-14 which is run by Coach Jores Peters.

One of the issues in wrestling is that while there are opportunities for kids, there were no opportunities for graduates of high school to wrestle. The fact that San Diego Unified does not allow volunteers under 21 meant that San Diego faced a shortage of officials and coaches. That is only a few of the wrestlers would go to wrestle in college and without other opportunities to continue to wrestle they would drop out from the sport.

For this reason, Patrick Henry decided to open up a non-profit wrestling club for those who are 18 and up.

The adult program is run by Michael Joseph, a Patrick Henry alumni, who wrestled in Minnesota at Division II level and was the assistant coach at Palomar College under Brody Barrios.

KT Wrestling can be found at KTWrestlingclub.org.

Why wrestle?

Those who wrestle find the sport to be more than a sport.

It is a community. It offers the smallest and the largest an opportunity. It is the ultimate growth mindset as those who start as beginners have no limits on how far they can go. It is a sport that welcomes girls and boys, and there is a place for young and old.

The new movie by Matt Damon about a college wrestler, Anthony Robles who won NCAA D1 Championships without a leg, only further exemplifies that this is a sport for everyone.

And that's really what Patrick Henry wrestling provides, a place for everyone.

Editor's note: Sam Litvin is the head wrestling coach at Patrick Henry High School.



Freshman team with three placers at the La Costa Freshman Championships. *(Courtesy photos)*

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