District showdown

Santa Maria and Lompoc candidates for city council prepare for first district elections [8]

BY JOE PAYNE

NEWS BLM considers fracking on the Central Coast [7]
MUSIC Blues masters jam at Cold Spring Tavern [23]
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While national politicians fret over the race for Congress, local representatives and candidates are vying for coveted city seats. And in the case of Santa Maria and Lompoc, the race for city council is colored by a voting system new to both cities: district elections. For this week’s cover story, I spoke with incumbents and candidates alike to hear their platforms and why they hope to win a district seat on their respective city councils [8].

Also this week, the Bureau of Land Management considered areas to frack and drill on the Central Coast [7], a legendary blues duo performs regularly at a historic location [23], a local painter explores identity with a romantic-realist style [26], a Santa Barbara author explores death and dying in a new book [28], and get a taste of some elevated tacos in Lompoc [34].

Joe Payne, managing editor
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Political Watch

Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-California) faced criticism in mid-September after reports that she had received a letter in late July regarding an alleged attempt at sexual assault by Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh against a then-unnamed accuser. Feinstein’s critics among Democrats and liberals chastised her for not sharing the letter initially with the Senate Judiciary Committee and for sending it to the FBI only after reports of the letter’s existence began to make headlines, whereas Republicans and conservatives questioned the timing of the allegation and Feinstein’s decision to forward it to the FBI. On Sept. 13, Feinstein issued a brief statement acknowledging the letter, but that “the individual strongly requested confidentiality,” and she wanted to “honor that decision.” After the accuser, California college professor Christine Blasey Ford, came forward and revealed her identity, The Washington Post, Feinstein issued another statement, saying, “It has always been Mrs. Ford’s decision whether to come forward publicly. For any woman, sharing an experience involving sexual assault—particularly when it involves a politically connected man with influence, authority, and power—is extraordinarily difficult. … I hope the attacks and shaming of her will stop and this will be treated with the seriousness it deserves.” Feinstein joined Senate Democrats in signing a letter to White House Counsel Don McGahn requesting the FBI reopen Kavanaugh’s background investigation and a letter to Chairman Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) to postpone the scheduled confirmation vote pending a Senate hearing on the matter. Grassley postponed the vote and scheduled an open hearing for Sept. 24.

• The office of Rep. Salud Carbajal (D-Santa Barbara) announced that he would host his second annual Citizenship Recognition Ceremonies in Santa Barbara and Santa Maria on Sept. 22. “For many immigrants, including myself, attaining U.S. citizenship is the realization of a dream held by all those who came to the United States in search of a better life for themselves and their families,” Carbajal stated. “Our nation’s greatness is strengthened in this shared rite of passage.” The Santa Maria ceremony is at 5:30 p.m. at the Santa Maria Public Library’s' La Vigna Plaza, 421 S. McClelland St.

• Gov. Jerry Brown signed a law authored by 35th District Assembleymben Jordan Cunningham (R-San Luis Obispo) into law on Sept. 17 that permits schools the authority to arrest students for crimes committed on campus. The bill, AB 1868, provides the additional component to California school districts’ plans for sexual health education. According to a release from Cunningham’s office, the added curriculum “will be a critical fight against human trafficking, as traffickers increasingly target minors using social media.” The technological era has connected us in ways we couldn’t have imagined, but it also comes with dangers,” Cunningham stated. “Our kids need to be educated about the legal, social, physical, and emotional pitfalls that come with access to powerful technology.” According to the release, Cunningham authored the bill after a situation in San Luis Obispo County where “a group of students were trading nude photographs in exchange for drugs.” Gov. Brown also signed a law authored by 37th District Assembleymben Monique Limón (D-Santa Barbara) that day as well, AB 1650, which limits the out-of-pocket costs for oral anti-cancer medications to more than $250 per month for patients. “The bill ensures patients do not have to choose between the cost of treatment and their quality of life,” Limón posted to her official Twitter page.

• State Assembleymben Monique Limón (D-Santa Barbara) attended Gov. Jerry Brown’s Global Climate Action Summit in San Francisco the week of Sept. 12, participating as a panelist on the discussion. California Stories: Grounded Perspectives on Climate Policies and Action. “It’s a privilege to be among international and national delegations, scientists, and business and academic leaders at the Global Climate Action Summit to find innovative and tangible ways to move our communities forward to achieve and maintain safe waterways, cleaner air, and a healthier environment for our future,” Limón stated before the panel.

Founder of Flutes Across the World indicted on child sex charges

The founder and leader of a music program that contracted for years with Santa Ynez Valley's Circle V Ranch Camp was recently indicted and charged with several sexual crimes against children.

John Zeretzke, a former Ventura-based music teacher who founded Flutes Across the World, an educational program he led for years at Circle V Ranch Camp, was arrested Sept. 13 by the U.S. Postal Inspection Service and the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department, according to a press release from the U.S. Attorney’s Office. The five-count indictment alleges that in November 2015 and continuing into May 2016, Zeretzke, 60, attempted to persuade a 15-year-old girl to have sex with him online, and allegedly sent the girl multiple sexually explicit photos of himself via Facebook. In February 2017, Zeretzke, allegedly persuaded another minor to produce child pornography. Later that year, the indictment claims that Zeretzke traveled to the Philippines—where he often donated musical instruments to children through Flutes Across the World—with the intent to engage in sexual conduct with other minor victims between the ages of 12 and 16. The indictment also alleges that Zeretzke twice received child pornography online in 2017.

Flutes Across the World, according to Chris Sariego, director of public relations at St. Vincent de Paul of Los Angeles, the organization that owns and runs Circle V Ranch Camp, provided music education to campers ages 7 to 13 during one-week sessions from 2011 to 2015. Each camper learned to sand, shape, decorate and then play two recorder-style flutes, Sariego wrote in an email to the Sun. Campers kept one flute and lent the other to a child in need, usually in a foreign country. Zeretzke typically worked directly with the campers.

“Circle V staff have not received any official notifications or inquiries by any authorities at this time regarding Flutes Across the World activities at Circle V Ranch Camp,” Zerigo wrote in a statement released on Sept. 13. “There have been no complaints or concerns about [Flutes Across the World] and John Zeretzke from any campers, counselors, or parents to Circle V staff.”

Still, Sariego said Zeretzke will not be allowed back to Circle V, and he said St. Vincent de Paul has no plans to contract with the program again “at this time.”

Assistant United States Attorney Justin Rhoades, who is prosecuting Zeretzke’s case, said that while none of Zeretzke’s alleged crimes are related to his work or any children in Southern California, his trial will be conducted through Flutes Across the World and John Zeretzke from any campers, counselors, or parents to Circle V staff.

Although Rhoades wouldn’t say how long authorities have been investigating Zeretzke, he did say the case began with a cyber tip to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, which was then referred to the U.S. Postal Service. A warrant search was conducted in Zeretzke’s house last September. Rhoades said, just weeks before the U.S. Postal Service and California Department of Justice launched an investigation to determine whether any of the flutes delivered to schools through the program had been contaminated with semen.

It is unclear if that investigation was related to current charges against Zeretzke.

Zeretzke was arraigned on the indictment Sept. 13 in United States District Court in downtown Los Angeles, and Rhoades said he was released on Sept. 17 after family and friends paid his $20,000 bail. Among other conditions, Zeretzke is on electronic monitoring, and Rhoades said his trial date is tentatively scheduled for Nov. 6.

—Kasey Bubmash

Lompoc Police

Chief gives update on homeless triage center

Just a few days after opening an emergency shelter for displaced homeless in Lompoc, the city’s police chief called on its citizens to do more.

On Sept. 14, Police Chief Pat Walsh issued a statement that said 55 people had checked into the triage center at River Park. The center provides services to homeless individuals who formerly lived in the Santa Ynez Riverbed on the city’s eastern and northern edges.

Santa Barbara County’s departments of Behavioral Wellness and Public Health, as well as Social Services, Animal Control, and the Public Defender’s Office have been on hand to help the homeless transition into housing and social programs. Nonprofits the Good Samaritan Shelter, Planting the Seed, and Northern Santa Barbara County United Way’s Home for Good are also staffing the emergency shelter.

Walsh praised the county and nonprofits for their efforts during the process. However, more can be done, he said, and called on the community to help house some of the homeless at the center.

“Housing is in short supply and many of these individuals are desperate for housing,” Walsh added. “Many are older, some are veterans, and if given the chance they would be good tenants.”

Walsh noted that a lot of people in the triage center had some form of financial assistance for rent, whether it was through Social Security or U.S. Department of Housing and Development (HUD) vouchers.

I would ask that the community search their hearts and consider opening their homes,” he said. “This is a hard choice, but if you find yourself in a position to do this, please consider. You may be the catalyst to helping someone find their footing.”

The triage center is currently taking donations for certain essential items. All donations should be brought to the Good Samaritan Shelter (2052 Sweeney Road, Lompoc) with a label “for triage center.”

Items highlighted by social workers were: small flashlights, batteries, feminine care products, gloves and stocking caps, new socks, and blankets.

The shelter is expected to be open through the month of September and potentially two months after that. It is unclear what services will be available for those that are unable to find housing by that time.

As for the cleanup of the riverbed, which Chief Walsh told the Sun consisted of “decades of debris,” the work is expected to take a while.

Walsh said community members had offered to help with the effort, but that the department declined to accept due to the “many hazards” in the riverbed.

“The amount of trash and debris is just too great,” he added.

—Spencer Cole

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CIRCLE V RANCH: John Zeretzke, founder of Flutes Across the World, leads Circle V Ranch campers through a flute crafting session in August 2014. Zeretzke was arrested on child pornography charges, among others, on Sept. 13.
**Final Warning:** Santa Barbara County staff stressed to cannabis operators at a meeting on Sept. 17 that failing to get their business into compliance would most likely result in law enforcement action against them.

**NEWS**

**County urges cannabis operators to enter legal market**

In a meeting designed to provide an update for cannabis operators, Santa Barbara County’s pot czar gave a stern warning: Get up to date with your documents or face the consequences.

“Our goal is keeping people in compliance until they don’t want to be in compliance anymore, and then we have enforcement,” Deput CEO Dennis Bozanich said on Sept. 17 in Santa Barbara. Bozanich is the lead public official in Santa Barbara County when it comes to cannabis. It’s a job he’s held since 2016, when California voters approved Proposition 64 and legalized recreational marijuana.

At the county-run meeting held in Santa Maria, Bozanich and staff stressed to cannabis business owners that if they do not start working to acquire county issued licenses, they may miss out on getting approved for the state iteration.

If that were to happen, then the grow site, processing facility, or whatever type of cannabis related business the person owned would be vulnerable to law enforcement action because they would technically be a black market operation.

Currently, only 40 percent of cannabis operators in Santa Barbara County with temporary state licenses have approached staff for an annual county land-use permit. It’s a number that Bozanich called “disappointing,” and he expressed frustration with the apparent lack of cooperation from a large chunk of the local cannabis community.

All temporary licenses issued by the state are set to expire on Dec. 31 of this year. The pathway set by the county for legalization involves cannabis operators acquiring a county issued land-use permit and business license. The marijuana business owner then takes those documents to the state for an annual license.

“This is a pathway to keep you in compliance so we don’t have to do enforcement,” Bozanich said.

Finding ways to encourage black- and gray-market cannabis into the legal pipeline has been a challenge for county staff over the past year. Many marijuana growers have foregone the legal process entirely in an attempt avoid what they see as overburdensome taxes, licenses, permits, and other regulatory measures.

Meanwhile, law enforcement in Santa Barbara County hasn’t been aggressive as it would technically be a black market operation.

At the meeting on Sept. 17, Bozanich said the enforcement action was partly driven to help cannabis businesses already in compliance. He told the Sun it was unfair for black market growers to reap the benefits of a tax- and regulatory-free system while their legal counterparts suffered losses for getting above board.

The county plans to broaden its action in the coming months toward shutting down illegal sites.

“There is more planned,” Bozanich said. “We are firmly committed to doing this going forward.”

—Spencer Cole

**Catherine Farley named Hancock’s newest police chief**

At the beginning of this year, it was unclear whether the Allan Hancock College Police Department would continue to exist. Now, the department has a new permanent chief.

Catherine Farley, who currently serves as UC Santa Barbara’s assistant police chief, was appointed to Hancock’s highest ranking public safety position on Sept. 11 at a Hancock Community College District Board meeting, where trustees voted unanimously to hire her.

Farley could not be reached for a comment, and Hancock spokesman Phil Hamer said he could not speak to Farley’s background in public safety or qualifications.

The new chief will make $131,922 a year, Hamer said, and she will take over the troubled department on Nov. 1.

Trustees voted to keep the police department and increase its funding at a meeting on Jan. 16, after a report conducted by a former interim campus police chief, Paul Grohowski, found the department to be inadequately staffed, trained, and funded. He also reported outdated equipment, technology, procedures, and facilities.

Grohowski recommended contracting with another larger law enforcement agency, preferably the Santa Barbara County Sheriff’s Office, because of its jurisdiction over the entire county. The consolidation would have effectively dissolved the Hancock Police Department as it functions now.

But Grohowski suddenly resigned on July 31, after only seven months on the job, and was replaced by another interim chief, Ronald Schram, who was also tasked with assessing the department’s proficiency. Schram’s report illustrated a much less dire situation and included several cost effective solutions to many of the department’s issues.

At the meeting on Jan. 16, Schram, who was replaced as interim chief by Chris Naratates after his contract with Hancock ended in December 2017, blamed a lack of stable leadership for most of the department’s issues. He said finding a permanent police chief should become the board’s top priority.

—Kasey Bubnash
Prolonged process
BLM, facing criticism, says any potential drilling, fracking projects on public lands await long road to approval

BY SPENCER COLE

A spot over oil drilling on public lands pitted local environmental groups and a collection of California lawmakers against a federal agency in early September.

Critics of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) say it gave too short of notice to the public about its 30-day comment period for potential projects involving hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, in eight counties across the state, including Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo.

"It’s definitely a curtailed process, what we’re seeing here," Los Padres ForestWatch Executive Director Jeff Kuyper said. He told the Sun his nonprofit had to ask the agency to hand over a higher resolution map, with richer detail, so people could even identify which lands had been targeted.

"There wasn’t even a public hearing for this," Kuyper added.

The deadline for public input ended on Sept. 7. Some opponents to the BLM’s move and the fossil fuel industry said the decision to open public lands for hydraulic fracturing is going to take at least another year.

"This does not open 1.6 million acres of new public land for hydraulic fracturing," she said, adding that even though the comment period had closed, the BLM would still need to complete its environmental review draft document by February of 2018. After that, it has to show those results to the public, take further comment, and then hypothetically find an interested oil or gas company, which would kick-start more review periods along with public meetings and additional time for comment.

And finding interest may be hard because most of the Central Coast is designated by the BLM to have "moderate potential" for oil and gas development and pales in comparison to neighboring counties like Kern.

"So there’s still several layers where more analysis would be done kind of on a step-down basis," Baker explained. She said that whatever happened, "There will be more opportunities for people to feel like their input is heard."

This is not the first time environmental groups like Los Padres ForestWatch and The Center for Biological Diversity have sparred with the BLM. In 2014, the two nonprofits filed a lawsuit against the agency’s Bakerfield office following its release of its approved resource management plan.

It is that action that forced the agency to take input on the environmental impacts of hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, a process that involves injecting a chemical-water mixture at high speeds into bedrock to extract oil and natural gas. Environmentalists say the practice pollutes drinking water. Industry experts argue it’s an effective way of harvesting material that energy companies could otherwise not access.

And even though the BLM made good on its part of the settlement by taking in comments about the controversial process, Los Padres ForestWatch Director Kuyper didn’t rule out additional legal action against the agency, this time over the shortened comment period.

"If we get into a situation where they’re saying, ‘Hey, we’re gonna do the smallest, most limited amount of public comment possible, and we’re gonna approve this as quickly as possible, using the smallest number of pages possible,’ that’s just a recipe for a disaster, and they’re basically begging for this to land back in court again," he said. "If they were willing to add an additional 30 to 50 days—which is all we were asking for in our request for a time extension—in the grand scheme of things, that’s not going to negatively impact the overall timing of this process, which is going to take at least another year."
Tally of two cities
Santa Maria and Lompoc candidates prepare for first district-based city council elections
by Joe Payne
More than 50 senior citizens sat in rows listening intently as candidates presented their platforms, speaking in six-minute chunks with a wood-grain patterned wall and bingo board serving as a backdrop.

The Sept. 10 forum at the Casa Grande Mobile Estates clubhouse in Santa Maria was like many candidates forums of years past, ending with an ice cream social, conversation, and handshakes, but one aspect was wholly new when it was time for Santa Maria City Council candidate Michael Moats to introduce himself. “I won’t try to explain all the changes that have occurred with the districts.”

The Nov. 6 election represents the first in Santa Maria’s history with a district-based system for voting on City Council seats, leaving behind the at-large system that’s been in place since the city was founded more than a century ago.

Santa Maria was divided into four districts after the city faced a potential lawsuit under the California Voting Rights Act (CVRA) after the 2016 election. Citing the failure of Santa Barbara to successfully defend against a similar lawsuit, the Santa Maria City Council decided to move the city into four districts in 2017, though, according to a current council member, it wasn’t their desire to do so.

“I was not in favor of districting the city. In fact, I don’t think anyone on the council was in favor of districting the city,” Councilmember Dr. Michael Moats told the Sun at the Sept. 10 forum. “The decision to do that was forced on us by a lawsuit that was brought on us by a disgruntled candidate who didn’t perform to our expectations and had that thought that was due to racial profiling.”

That candidate was Hector Sanchez, who lives in the northern part of Santa Maria. Districts 3 and 4 in the southern part of town are up for election in November, and both incumbents for this years’ race, including Moats, are facing challengers who are running largely grassroots campaigns, something that district elections allow by design, Sanchez told the Sun.

“The city had outdated politics, it was clear, and the only way to change that is to have local representation,” Sanchez said. “We have that at the congressional level, state Senate level, of course we should have that at the city level. And more and more cities are doing it.”

Lompoc faced the same decision in 2017 and divided the city of 40,000-plus residents into districts for the 2018 election. Each city is facing similar citywide issues: Lack of affordable housing, need for economic development, and the budget crunch due to the fallout from increasing rates from the California Public Employees’ Retirement System (CalPERS). While candidates all scrabble to voice their vision on how to address those needs, the new district configuration sees challengers canvassing their portions of town, hoping to unseat incumbents and change “business as usual” on their respective city councils.

Not-so-safe seat
Current Santa Maria City Councilmember Michael Moats was last elected to the City Council in 2016, so he technically has two years left in his term.

But Moats, who lives in District 3, the city’s southwest portion, wouldn’t be able to run for re-election until 2022 to coincide with the district’s next cycle. He’s running now to secure the seat and stay on the council through that time. Even if he loses, Moats told the Sun, he will still get to serve out the remainder of his term, so essentially he has a “safe seat.”

“Well, either way I’m going to continue on the City Council,” he said. “Of course, one always prefers to win.”

Moats is running on a platform familiar to his supporters: fiscal responsibility in Santa Maria.

Moats pointed to the citywide issue of the “budget crisis” spurred by increases in pension costs and voiced his support for the city’s proposed Measure U to increase the sales tax to 1 percent in Santa Maria, when asked what issue most affects his district.

“The city has a looming $8 million budget deficit, and it has a structural and non-sustainable problem with CalPERS, which constantly tries to drain more money out of our city coffers for pensions for people who are already retired,” he said. “If Measure U gets passed, a lot of these problems will go away. If Measure U doesn’t pass, there’s going to be significant belt-tightening in the city, and that will affect all four districts.”

Other issues are affecting Santa Marians as well, Moats said, such as the lack of “non-subsidized affordable housing.” He said the council should “encourage the developers to give us some high-density apartments, mostly apartments.”

Moats’ seat isn’t totally safe, though. He’s facing two challengers in the District 3 race. At the Sept. 10 forum event, after Moats spoke, it was 29-year-old nonprofit administrator and candidate Gloria Soto’s turn at the podium.

Soto opened with her background growing up in Santa Maria as the child of immigrant farmworkers. They taught her “hard work and dedication,” she said, but they also struggled with issues that many Santa Marians face, like housing and keeping up with the cost of living. She and her family also got support from several organizations in the city, she said, allowing her the “privilege” to run for City Council.

“I take that very, very seriously,” she said. “This isn’t about having fun. This isn’t about seeing if I could get re-elected. This isn’t about being part of a social elite club. This is about serving every single constituent and making sure that their voices and their concerns are heard.”

In a later interview with the Sun, Soto said she hopes to bring diversity to Santa Maria’s City Council, not because she’s a young Latina woman, but because of her “lived experience.” Her background informs her platform, she said, with a focus on affordable and inclusionary housing, “My lived experience, it’s the reality of a lot of Santa Marians,” she said. “When we think about the future of our city, we have to do better.”

Soto is an administrator for Planned Parenthood in Santa Maria, and she has also served on the boards of The Fund for Santa Barbara and the local chapter of the Future Leaders of America. She was involved in the Future Leaders and FFA while a student at Pioneer Valley High School.

Her platform includes the housing focus; an “active transportation plan” for the city, making it more walkable and bike-friendly; and more mixed-use development, especially downtown. She said she doesn’t want to see the city “grow out, out, out.”

Raymond Acosta has lived in Santa Maria since he was a kid and has worked as a retail service manager at FoodMaxx in town for nearly 30 years. He decided to run for City Council after talking to hundreds of Santa Marians at his job.

“I just think we need to kind of go in a different direction,” he said. “I think a lot of the concerns that have been raised haven’t been dealt with seriously enough.”

Acosta said he supports many of the concerns at the front of other candidates’ minds, like affordable housing and funding for public safety. But Acosta questioned where that funding should come from.

“It’s the taxation that we’re bringing to our residents,” he said. “There’s a lot of unnecessary things that we’ve been paying for that we shouldn’t be paying for.”

Local officials need to “take a stand” over the taxation, he said, adding that the city needs to be “more affordable.” Acosta said he may support Measure U, but only because public safety is important for Santa Maria.

Acosta said that he doesn’t want to see the city enter into unnecessary bond measures, he wants to see property taxes lowered, and moves like those could help locals who are struggling to make ends meet.

“You got a family, I got a family, we got a budget, and I know how to manage my budget and keep my people taken care of,” he said. “The people that are running this stuff, they’ve got to do a better job of it.”

District 4 showdown
Santa Maria’s Carriage District includes some of the city’s most historic homes, including those of current and former government employees and representatives. Blue and red signs punctuate the neighborhood’s streets—blue for current Councilmember Etta Waterfield and red for her challenger, Rafael Gutierrez.

Waterfield and Gutierrez are battling it out for a district that encompasses affluent Santa Maria neighborhoods, the downtown portion that includes the mall, and new development off the freeway. They’ve crafted disparate campaigns that focus on their respective visions for the city.

For Waterfield, who grew up in a law

SANTA MARIA

PHOTO BY JAYSON MELLOM

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PHOTO COURTESY OF RAFAEL GUTIERREZ

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PHOTO COURTESY OF RAFAEL GUTIERREZ

DISTRICT 3: Current Santa Maria City Councilmember Michael Moats (pictured, left) is facing two challengers for his District 3 seat. nonprofit administrator Gloria Soto (center) and retail manager Raymond Acosta (right).

PHOTO BY JAYSON MELLOM

PHOTO COURTESY OF RAFAEL GUTIERREZ

DISTRICT 4: Santa Maria City Councilmember Etta Waterfield (pictured, left) is running her re-election campaign on a platform of strong public safety. Her challenger for the District 4 seat is Rafael “Rafa” Gutierrez (right), an attorney running with a focus on downtown redevelopment and revitalization.

DISTRICT 4: Santa Maria City Councilmember Etta Waterfield (pictured, left) is running her re-election campaign on a platform of strong public safety. Her challenger for the District 4 seat is Rafael “Rafa” Gutierrez (right), an attorney running with a focus on downtown redevelopment and revitalization.
enforcement family and founded the Santa Maria Police Council, public safety comes first.

"You just want to make sure that you've got a safe community," Waterfield told the Santa Maria Police Council, public safety is a priority.

It's important that Measure U passes, Waterfield argued, so that the Santa Maria Police Department and other city agencies get needed funding. Without Measure U, its current iteration, the police department wouldn't have had resources necessary for Operation Matador, which arrested several members of MS-13 for a spate of homicides in Santa Maria across 2015 and 2016.

Waterfield also said Santa Maria needs more affordable housing but pointed to a cost of a project slated for Main and Depot streets as a concern. She said they would include around 60 units, but will cost $37 million to build.

"It costs $37 million to build affordable housing," she said. "Now is that an oxymoron or what?"

She said that the current cost was due to the state mandating the city can't avoid. That was the same reason the city moved forward with an ordinance on accessory housing units earlier this year, which has the potential to adversely impact neighborhoods, she said.

"You have to know who you're voting for," she said. "We get yelled at, but we have to have creativity in how we build ordinances to make sure that we're not breaking any laws, state or federal."

For Gutierrez, a local attorney, his focus is on the economic development of Santa Maria, specifically in the downtown area.

Gutierrez said he'd like to see downtown redevelop with a focus on mixed-use housing, being more friendly to pedestrians and cyclists, and becoming the "heart" of Santa Maria. A focus on the downtown will help the local business owners there while attracting companies to town that offer higher-wage jobs, he argued.

Projects like Enos Ranch have helped attract shoppers and revenue, Gutierrez said, but they also pull focus away from the downtown and all the locally owned businesses there.

"The rents over there are not affordable enough for the local business owner, so what are we doing?" he said. "The backbone of a city's economy is always going to be the small businesses, the locally owned businesses."

Santa Maria is in need of change, Gutierrez said, and "potential." He said he'd like to see the police department focus on community policing, a four-year university come to town, and council members hold regular office hours to speak with city residents.

"I'm not running because I want that on my resume, like some people. I'm not running because I have a lot of time on my hands," she said. "I'm a small-business owner, a professional, and I have to keep a balance. The reason I can run this time around is because I have the ability to have a flexible schedule and dedicate time between my practice and my duties as a City Council member."  

Lompoc's first district-based election also includes challengers to current Councilmembers Victor Vega and Dirk Starbuck, who represent District 2 and District 3, respectively.

For Robert Cuthbert, who is challenging Starbuck for District 3, the prospect of district elections was part of what spurred him to run for Lompoc City Council this year. He has run for the office before and sat on the city's Public Safety Commission for 10 years, but he said that district elections may give him a better chance to win a seat on the council.

"Creating districts throughout California means working-class people, minorities, and people who normally wouldn't have the money to spend for an entire city in the open citywide election [can run]," Cuthbert said. "I've got 75 percent less people I have to contact, I can have more quality interactions with the voters, and it's controllable."

Cuthbert is frustrated with the current City Council, which he said needs to focus more on economic development. He said that Councilmembers Vega, Starbuck, and Jim Mosby "seem to vote as a cohort," and questioned some of their decisions, but added that he knows Starbuck and "appreciate[s] him as a person."

Councilmembers Starbuck and Vega did not reply to the Sun's interview requests for this story.

"The city is going downhill and we need to move forward," Cuthbert said. "Really, look at that budget in the sense of what we are paying for and what is the value of it? And this is the same City Council that wanted to open a drag strip here in town, and that's a $100 million or $200 million project in the city of Lompoc."

Vega's challenger, Shirley Sherman, is running for City Council for the very first time. She became a U.S. citizen in March of this year, and was pretty pumped about that," and decided Lompoc was her home for good.

"It just felt like I have a civic duty to make things better for people because our community needs a lot of help," Sherman said, "I don't have a political agenda in the sense that I've been in office before, but I think I'm as capable as anybody on this Earth."

Sherman, who was born in the U.K., grew up in Canada, and moved to the U.S. in 2003, said that Lompoc "has a lot of potential."

She has spent a good amount of time walking around Santa Maria, looking at buildings downtown, and she said that there are "absentee landlords."

"We're seeing broken windows, we're seeing dirt where there should be grass; kids shouldn't play on dirt, kids should play on grass," she said.

"Things like that. We have issues with safety in our neighborhoods. We have a lack of police that are able to do their duty effectively. We're six positions short right now, and that doesn't help the issues facing our community right now."

Running for a city council seat this year, that of mayor, Sherman admitted she "has a lot to learn" about the City Council and Lompoc, but "got bit by the bug" to run after seeing issues that affect her and her neighbors. And after watching the current City Council, she said it's in need of "more voices."

"God bless Mayor Bob Lingl; he's tried to promote certain things and it's three people that make this city and that gridlock needs to disappear," she said. "There needs to be a fresh face, a new opinion, common sense—that's what I am."  

But Osborne pointed to Mosby's and others' decision to allow the recreational cannabis industry in town, which she supported, and then disallow it, "initially as an example of a frustrating back-and-forth that can happen on the current council."

Ethics, accountability, and responsibility are central to her philosophy as a council member, along with being clear about the council's role.

It's what she will bring to council's top seat as mayor, she said, as well as a focus on community pride. There's been a lot of "negative self-talk" in Lompoc by city residents, and she wants to make it a place locals are proud of.

"I really feel like Lompoc keeps just hanging right down the precipice of greatness because of the fact that there's nobody really saying, 'Here's where we want Lompoc to go,'" she said. "And to do that we need to make investments in ourselves and really rally to the idea that we're a great community."

Managing Editor Joe Payne can be reached at jpayne@santamariasun.com.
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**Spotlight on: Flower Carriage**

**Susana Cardel, owner**

BY SPENCER COLE

Susana Cardel never thought she’d own a flower shop.

But after 10 years of being the sole owner of the Flower Carriage at 2255 S. Broadway, she said she looks back on her decision to purchase the store as a good one.

“It’s a big deal,” Cardel told the Sun. On Oct. 19, she will host a ribbon cutting with the Santa Maria Chamber of Commerce to celebrate her decade of ownership.

“We’re very excited to be a part of this community,” she said.

Which is fortunate for those seeking select arrangements of flowers, or help planning a wedding, because Cardel almost didn’t even make it up to America at all.

Initially, after graduating high school, she went to work for a utility company owned by the Mexican government in Baja, where she was born.

A lot of family, especially on her mother’s side, already worked for the feds in some way, she said, except for her father, who was American. But one day, an elderly woman came in who was on a fixed income. She had a small house, with no fridge, but somehow a bill numbering in the millions of pesos.

“How am I supposed to pay this,” she stammered to Cardel through tears. “There was nothing I could do,” Cardel told the Sun. “But that’s when I really saw the corruption.”

She then decided to leave her government job with its guaranteed benefits, and moved in with an aunt in Brawley. There, Cardel attended Imperial Valley College before taking a retail job near Calexico. And when the owners of the store told her about a management position in Santa Barbara, she jumped at the opportunity.

“All of my family was in Mexico,” Cardel explained, “so they didn’t really approve.”

She told her mom she’d be back in a year.

Cardel bounced around the state from there, moving from the Bay Area and back before eventually ending up in Santa Maria, where she opened a wedding and special event planning company.

But the income was week-to-week at best, so in 2008, in a time when many across the country were scrambling to react to the financial crisis and ensuing recession, Cardel took the plunge and bought her flower shop.

“The economy was completely down,” she said, adding that most people during that period were trying to buy houses with low down payments instead. “But I thought, what if I buy a business and make money to buy the house that I want?”

The first few years were hard, according to Cardel, but eventually the company caught steam.

Cardel now owns a home in Orcutt and can’t help but reflect on how far she’s come.

“Ten years sounds like a lot of time, but it’s also been lots of fun,” she said.

Last year, the Flower Carriage had its 40th anniversary. The event reminded Cardel that her decade of stewardship is just continuing a tradition bigger than business.

“I’m proud to be owner of this place that’s been here for so long and to be able to provide a quality service for people here that need it,” she said. “It means something.”

Staff Writer Spencer Cole wrote this week’s Biz Spotlight. Information should be sent to the Sun via fax, mail, or email at spotlight@santamariasun.com.
Transitions-Mental Health brings suicide prevention program to Santa Maria

BY KASEY BUBNASH

"I’m not smart." "I’m not good enough." I can’t."

Those are the sentences written in boldly drawn thought bubbles stemming from a distressed stick figure's mind. His brain inside is clouded and chaotic, his stomach is filled with butterflies, and his heart is heavy and black.

The drawing is one student’s idea of what anxiety looks like, and its key characteristics are repeated in similar drawings by students throughout San Luis Obispo County, students who participated in Transitions-Mental Health Association’s new suicide prevention training program.

Transitions-Mental Health, a nonprofit that provides mental health services to families across the Central Coast, launched the program last year in San Luis Obispo with a $100,000 grant from the Gertrude and Leonard Fairbanks Foundation. The goal? To give kids $100,000 worth of help from a nonprofit that provides mental health services to families across the Central Coast.

And this time, it’s coming to the Santa Maria Joint Union High School District. It was incredibly successful, according to Transitions Development Director Michael Kaplan, who said the nonprofit recently won another $65,000 grant to continue the program.

And this time, it’s coming to the Santa Maria Joint Union High School District. "I quickly realized there was a real need and enthusiasm for this program [in Santa Maria]," Kaplan said, adding that Transitions will start the program at Santa Maria’s high schools in October.

Although Kaplan said he’s still waiting to hear back on a federal grant that would help fund the program’s expansion to Northern Santa Barbara County, local administrators wanted so badly to participate, "I was not going to tell them no."

Through the program’s two adult training sessions, faculty, counselors, and administrators learn how to spot kids with unmet mental health needs and connect them with necessary resources. Both sessions meet student suicide prevention guidelines mandated by the state.

Teachers, Kaplan said, are often unintentionally placed on the front lines of the battle against childhood mental illness. Educators don’t need to become psychiatrists, he said, but they should know simple ways to identify and help struggling students.

"I think [the training] is important right now because the topic has come out of the shadows," Kaplan said. "People are ready to talk about mental health and mental illness and not treat it like a secret. But there is a lot of misinformation out there."

Roughly three-quarters of people with mental illnesses experience their first symptoms before age 24, according to the 2016 California Health Report. Half become mentally ill by age 14. Santa Maria’s schools face similar challenges.

Each year, the Santa Barbara County Department of Behavioral Wellness serves more than 3,000 children who are severely emotionally disturbed, according to the county’s 2017 Children’s Scorecard. Although the county entirely lacks youth psychiatric crisis beds and facilities, youth inpatient admissions through Behavioral Wellness rose from 45 in 2010 to 100 in 2015.

The death of Righetti High School student Kiya McBride, who killed herself in November 2017, is also still fresh in the minds of many community members.

With 23 school counselors, three crisis intervention consultants, four school community liaisons, seven school psychologists, and additional mental health resources provided by several organizations, the Santa Maria Joint Union High School District is working hard to keep its students healthy.

But John Davis, assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction, said it’s vital for teachers and students to know the warning signs of mental illness and suicide.

"In that sense these trainings could literally be a ‘lifesaver’," Davis wrote in a statement to the Sun, "and certainly a worthwhile endeavor for our district."

When it comes to training students, Amy Waddle likes to keep it real, relatable, and fun.

Waddle, a professional public speaker who partners with Transitions to train students, said she teaches kids how to identify struggling friends, how to reach out, and ways to be encouraging and get help.

"It’s nothing new and it’s fairly simple subject matter, but Waddle said Transitions’ curriculum makes it easy for students to feel connected and supported.

In the exercise where students are asked to draw what anxiety feels like to them, Waddle said that most of the drawings turn out fairly similar. "And as kids look around at the other drawings, they feel less alone.

"It’s sad but it’s also kind of beautiful," Waddle said. "They don’t know it yet but they’re just like everybody else."

Staff Writer Kasey Bubnash writes School Scene each week. Information can be sent to the Sun via mail, fax, or email at mail@santamariasun.com.
Online Poll

What do you think of the Enos Ranch development in Santa Maria?

41% Love it!
30% Welcome to Little Oxnard!
18% Will judge when finished.
11% Hate it!

46 Votes

Vote online at www.santamariasun.com.

Opinion

BY MICHAEL SMITH

Platinum-selling millionnaire rapper Post Malone muses on his latest album, Beerbongs and Bentleys, “Politicians and their lies, tell me what’s the point in pickin’ sides.” Former San Francisco 49ers quarterback and Nike luminary Colin Kaepernick admitted in late 2016 that he had not even bothered to vote in the presidential election, despite spending a year protesting police violence against African-Americans by kneeling during the playing of the national anthem. The protests seem to have cost Kaepernick his NFL career. I realize it is quite easy to lapse into apathy and not really care about the political future of the United States, but that’s what charlatans and con men such as Donald Trump are counting on. Americans have often flirted with demagogues—Huey Long, Joseph McCarthy, and George Wallace come to mind—but we never actually elected one president like we did in 2016. Because this appears to be a pivotal moment in American history, I urge millennials and anyone else who cares about our democracy to get out and vote for Democratic candidates across the country this November. Not long ago, I would have supported Republicans, but that time has passed as the party has descended into racism, paranoia and feverish conspiracy theories, not to mention the fact they are spending borrowed money like drunken sailors, in direct contradiction to what they have preached for decades.

I was quite proud to cast my vote in 1980—against Jimmy Carter in ’68, ’72, and ’76—for Republican Ronald Reagan, who promised to improve the lackluster economy and assert American strength in the world. Reagan’s policies led to economic expansion and the fall of the Soviet Union. I also voted for his successor, George H.W. Bush, who promised to extend Reagan’s championing of free market theories to include the rest of the world. Not surprisingly, America’s economy flourished and its position in the world was amplified.

Unfortunately, although an honorable man, George W. Bush’s policies at home and abroad sacrificed much of his predecessors’ successes. His wars in the Middle East have cost America nearly $3 trillion and still counting. And, while not totally his fault, he also presided over the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression when the floor fell out of financial markets in 2008. Add to that Bush’s $4 trillion proposal to privatize Social Security—think of the wealth that would have been lost in the 2008 market crash—and I began to grow disenchanted with the Republicans. It didn’t help when Republican conspiracy theorists floated absurd ideas such as the Sandy Hook slaughter had been a hoax perpetrated by anti-gun advocates or the assertion by Trump that Barack Obama was not an American citizen. In order to get my vote, Republicans need to return to their roots and once again stand for free markets—Trump’s tariff war is already beginning to hollow out the agricultural center of this nation, a global economy, and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) was the right step toward furthering our trade goals in Asia while at the same time isolating China; common sense immigration laws—let’s allow for asylum seekers to enter the country to contribute to our economy; and fiscal responsibility—there’s absolutely no reason to bail out farmers with $12 billion in aid when the problem can be solved by ceasing tariffs against our trading partners. Moreover, Republicans have added more than $1 trillion to the deficit because of unnecessary tax cuts. A positive economy, which we have experienced at least since 2014, should be a catalyst to decrease the deficit. To their shame, Republicans have forgotten their core principles. It’s not surprising that deficit hawks such as Bob Corker in the Senate and Paul Ryan in the House are retreating in the wake of further deficits and a president who espouses policies antithetical to their long-standing beliefs that deficits are a drag on the economy.

For these reasons, I cannot support any Republican candidates this year. And, while I’m sure that Justin Fared—Republican running for the House of Representatives—is a fine young man, he might think about a run for city council or board of supervisors before aspiring to hold a seat in Congress. Although I don’t agree with Democrats on every issue, I cannot abide a Republican Party that is driving this nation to division, bankruptcy, and a loss of worldwide respect. Michael Smith is a resident of Santa Maria. Send your thoughts to letters@santamariasun.com.

Letters

Congressional leaders must support environmental program

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) provides critical funding for California’s open spaces, parks, rivers, and wildlife habitats. Unfortunately, this vital program is set to expire at the end of September. Without congressional reauthorization, up to $900 million in annual spending for our environment and local communities will be lost. In a year of headlines dominated by the rollback of essential environmental policies, the LWCF is a program that demands fierce protection. LWCF has enjoyed bipartisan support since its establishment in 1964. The idea is simple: LWCF uses revenues from the depletion of one natural resource—outer continental shelf oil and gas—to support the conservation of another precious resource, our land and water. However, funding for LWCF sunsets on Sept. 30 if Congress does not reauthorize the program.

At the National Heritage Institute (NHI), we are committed to restoring and preserving natural functions in major river basins to maintain their water-dependent ecosystems and the services they provide in sustaining and enriching human life. Our mission is inextricably linked to LWCF, which for more than five decades has provided grants to create natural preserves, restore habitats, and build parks and recreational spaces for families to enjoy.

Let’s take a look at how LWCF has provided critical support in California through the lens of river stewardship:

The Tuolumne River Regional Park in Modesto is one recent project that received half a million dollars in 2013 to construct trailways, a pedestrian bridge, and fishing. Shortly before that, LWCF funds were also used for the acquisition of approximately 230 acres of open space and native habitat within the Santa Maria riverbed for the creation of a self-guided, interpretive trail system.

This is only a small taste of the benefits from LWCF, which has proven to be an unquestionable success. And while our divided politics make it difficult to agree on many issues, the LWCF is an example of where both sides of the aisle can surely see that LWCF benefits us all.

Letters continued page 13
Fear of access?

Journalists are in the business of asking questions. So when someone—especially those in a public office or agency—won’t bother to answer, it ruffles our feathers. It could be about something as simple as being the only candidate who didn’t speak to the Sun for the story, you have to wonder why.

Well, maybe they’re still upset about a cover story that ran last year by Staff Writer Spencer Cole (“Failure to communicate,” Sept. 14) about the budget gridlock at the time. Starbuck, Vega, and Councilmember Jim Mosby didn’t come out looking too good in that story, which included winks across the dias and calls to terminate the city manager.

But hey, that didn’t stop Mosby from getting back for the current story, even after ignoring requests for comment on several stories since “Failure to communicate.” He must really want to be mayor of Lompoc.

Politicians are under no obligation to speak with us, other than, you know, being accountable to their constituents, who we serve. But when a public agency stone walls us, especially regarding public information, it’s just downright wrong.

Allan Hancock College just lost its public information officer, Andrew Masuda (farewell, Andrew!), and the college’s temp gave us the runaround for some very basic information on incoming police chief for the community college, Catherine Farley (see page 6). We finally got the chief’s resume but not till way past our deadline.

Look, I get it—staff changes, somebody’s out sick, meetings all morning, but Hancock’s PR department doesn’t have a fact sheet on a new college hire to send out before deadline?

When the fill-in guy was initially asked he said he wasn’t “comfortable sharing the chief’s qualifications. Seriously? We’re asking for Farley’s work history, not her Social Security number!

This reeks of the PR bureaucracy that I complained about months ago ("Policy and PR," April 19) regarding a story about Hancock’s sexual harassment policy ("Level of tolerance," April 19) after allegations of abuse and retaliation.

We got a similar runaround then to the point that the Sun filed a Public Records Act request and our editors eventually sat down with Hancock’s PR team (Andrew was there) to air out the situation.

And Hancock has even asked us to refer to PR when interviewing their students! You don’t own your students, Hancock, they’re private citizens attending a public school and can talk to whoever they want. The problem of stonewalling public information officers (or PIOs for short) isn’t unique to Hancock or the Central Coast, it’s an issue that has stymied quality journalism across the country.

The Poynter Institute recently reported on studies sponsored by the Society of Professional Journalists that surveyed journalists across the U.S. who, guess what, have less access to government agencies because of, guess who, PIOs.

Doesn’t anyone wonder why public institutions don’t feel accountable to the public? Journalists will continue to hit walls pursuing stories, but we know how to dig under them. But what about those stuck behind the wall?

Well, we also protect the identities of whistleblowers, if they reach out to us. ☺

The Canary’s beady eyes are narrowed. Blow the whistle to canary@santamariasun.com.

LETTERS

From page 12

is worth preserving. Congress should once and for all support this profound investment in our natural resources, environment, and communities before time runs out.

Dr. Gerald Meral
director of California Water Program
National Heritage Institute

The Russians are coming!

It’s happening again! The Russians are trying to “influence” the next election in our country. Strike that, “overturn” our election. No, hang on a minute, they’re trying to “ruin” our election, except in the case of Democrats winning.

Then, to quote, paraphrase, or obfuscate President Obama (when they all thought Hillary would win) “… Ha ha ha ha, the Russians couldn’t possibly affect our elections,” which quickly turned into the Russians hacked the DNC, and Trump helped them, and he hired prostitutes to urinate on Russian hotel beds.

We fear not, Facebook is on guard. They’ve already sniffed Russian intervention or influence. Strike all that “Russians trying to ruin our election.” Of “Zucks on the battlefront! Challenging are you “friend or foe,” “fish or fowl,” “citizen or Russian.” Local talk show host Andy Caldwell ran afoul with his Facebook page and was challenged to prove he was American. “Show us a copy of your driver’s license and passport and pictures of identifying birthmarks,” they demanded. Thank God he had birthmarks. Pity the children who ran afoul of Planned Parenthood.

So, now you need to show ID to drive or fly or buy alcohol and now post and you can post political (I’m thinking only conservatives) mentions, references, belches, or gas on Facebook unless you show ID. That’ll show them.

In the meantime, the FBI has, after 13 years announced a break in the theft of Judy Garland’s ruby slippers. Well done lads, Scotland Yard sends you their praise. Meanwhile, after a year and a half they still haven’t found any collusion between the Russians and Trump right in the middle of Hillary’s Russian collusion with the Steele dossier. I’m not sure what the equivalent to “tone deaf” is when you can’t smell a red herring, but fish or foul the real problem is with all this ID business. Why are we not requiring that voters show ID? Do you Democrats trust that all Republican voters are citizens? They could be Russians, really.

Jan Lipski
Vandenberg Village

FEMA money for barbed wire camps?

So, FEMA just transferred $92-plus million out of its coffers, as a major hurricane approaches the central eastern coast, to build internment camps for people seeking asylum. Welcome to Amerika.

Libby Breen
Orcutt
35th State Assembly District
Election Forum

Monday, September 24, 2018
Doors at 6pm · Forum begins at 6:30pm
San Luis Obispo Board of Supervisors Chambers
1055 Monterey St., San Luis Obispo

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

· The forum will be live streaming on the New Times Facebook page
· Audience questions may be submitted during the forum
· Email questions in advance to New Times editor Camillia Lanham at clanham@newtimesslolo.com or submit them via Twitter to @NewTimesSLO
CALLING ALL BIKES
The Vivid Cycle Club hosts Coffee and Go every Tuesday and Thursday morning at Vivid Financial Management, located at 340 E. Clark Ave, Orcutt. Bikers meet for coffee at 5:15 a.m. and depart at 5:30 a.m. Bike rides usually end by 7:15 a.m. A club membership costs $60 and includes a Vivid Cycling Club kit and other perks. More info: vividmycyclingclub.com.

SPECIAL EVENTS
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FIFTH ANNUAL ST. MARY’S BOOGIE ON DOWN WITH RIPTIDE BIG BAND
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The Sun and New Times now share their community listings for a complete Central Coast calendar running from northern Santa Barbara County through SLO County. Submit events online by following the link on the calendar widget at santamariasun.com. Submissions require logging in with your Google, Facebook, or Twitter account. You can also email calendar@santamariasun.com. Deadline is one week before the issue date. Submissions are subject to editing and approval. Contact Calendar Editor Caleb Wible-blood directly at cwiseblood@newtimesslo.com.

SOUTH COAST SLO COUNTY

3RD ANNUAL SHOWDOWN CORNHOLE TOURNAMENT: Proceeds benefit the Atascadero High Greybeards. Features breakfast, lunch, raffles, a costume contest, and a Jenga challenge. Sept. 22-23, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Entry info online. visitatascadero.com/events. Sunken Gardens, 6505 El Camino Real, Atascadero.

FALL FAMILY FUN FEST Features family-friendly activities including crafts, a 32-foot inflatable obstacle course, seasonal treats, face painting, opportunities to meet firefighters and police officers, and more. Sept. 22, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Free. 805-237-3988. pcriy.com. Centennial Park, 600 Nickerson Dr., Paso Robles.

FOURTH ANNUAL HARVEST HOEDOWN Presented by IGGPRX. Features a barbecue, live music by the Mother Corn Shuckers, wine tasting featuring member wineries, a baking contest, and more. Sept. 29, 6-10 p.m. Starts at $35. 805-591-4204. iggrpa.com/events. The Loading Chute, 6350 Webster Rd., Creston.

SLO COMIX FAIR SLO Library’s first comic book convention. Features comics, snacks, and activities. Special guests include Irene Flores and the 501st Legion, who will “patrol” the event in costume. Costumes are encouraged. All ages are welcome. Sept. 29, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Free. 805-781-5989. slolibrary.org. San Luis Obispo Library, 11245 Los Osos Valley Rd., San Luis Obispo.

RAISE THE WOOF: BENEFITING SBC ANIMAL CARE FOUNDATION Guests can enjoy standup comedy, a 3-course dinner, beer, wine, soda, a silent auction and drawing, and more. Featuring live music by the Clark Street Flyers. Sept. 22, 5-10 p.m. $75; $125 per couple. $420 for private table of 6. 805-298-2968. wooffaire.com, Masonic Lodge, 700 E. Lakeview Blvd., Santa Maria.
SWINGIN’ BY THE SEA A fundraising event to support the Chapman Estate property. Features plein air artists-in-action, artwork, unique Estate-silenced auction, docent tours, food and beverage samplings from local vendors, and only experiences for auction, docent tours, food and beverage samplings from local vendors, and live music. **Sept. 22**, 6:10 p.m. $40. 805-543-3786. greenerpastures@sanctuary.org/events.html. Odd Fellows Hall, 520 Dana St., San Luis Obispo.

**WOMEN’S LEGACY FUND LUNCHEON** More than 800 local women and men are expected to attend the Women’s Legacy Fund luncheon. Reservations can be made online. **Sept. 27**, 12:15 p.m. $50. 805-543-2323. cfsloco.org. Alex Madonna Expo Center, 100 Madonna Rd., San Luis Obispo.


**LA PLAGA FESTIVAL** Featuring food, drinks, music, and more. **Sept. 28**, Noon-1:45 p.m. $50. 805-434-1626. La Plaga Festival, 500 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria, 805-937-9750.

**WOMEN’S LEGACY FUND LUNCHEON** More than 800 local women and men are expected to attend the Women’s Legacy Fund luncheon. Reservations can be made online. **Sept. 27**, Noon-1:45 p.m. $50. 805-543-2323. cfsloco.org. Alex Madonna Expo Center, 100 Madonna Rd., San Luis Obispo.

**SIMPLIFIED SISTERS** Celebrating 10 years! Our community-wide event with hundreds of scarecrows displayed through Cambria & San Simeon. **Oct. 1-31st**

Celebrating 10 years! Our community-wide event with hundreds of scarecrows displayed through Cambria & San Simeon.

**OctoberFest - October 20th**

There’s nothing like beer and brats to make for a wonderful time. So when you’re checking out the scarecrows in Cambria, consider these other possibilities for a fun weekend!

Enjoy OctoberFest, Saturday October 20th at Pinedorado Grounds, 1100 Main Street from 12:pm-5pm, lots of fun for the entire family!

Cambria Scarecrow Festival, Inc.
PO Box 1223 • Cambria, CA 93428 • 805-395-2399
cambriascarecrows.com

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**SAN LUIS OBISPO**

**24TH DENIM AND DIAMONDS** The Templeton Education Foundation presents this event to raise funds for Templeton schools. **Sept. 22**, 5:10 p.m. $80 per single ticket; $1,000 per table. eventbrite.com. Hummingbird House, 4015 Almond Dr., Templeton, 805-226-8575.

**25TH SILVER ANNIVERSARY GOLF TOURNAMENT** Proceeds to benefit the SLO County Builders Exchange Scholarship Fund. Admission includes green fees, golf cart, range balls, a breakfast burrito, a barbecue lunch, beverages, and a goodie bag. **Sept. 21**, 7:15 a.m.-4 p.m. $130 per person; limited to 144 players. 805-503-8902. slocbe.com, Morro Bay Golf Course, 201 State Park Rd., Morro Bay.

**TUNEFUL TRIO** The Santa Maria Recreation and Parks Department and the Santa Maria Valley Senior Club host Boogie on Down on Sept. 23 from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. at the Elwin Mussel Senior Center, 100 Madonna Rd, San Luis Obispo.

**SOUTH COAST SLO COUNTY**

**INTRODUCTORY BALLET 2** Wednesdays, 6 p.m. and Fridays everybodycandance webs.com. Everybody Can Dance, 628 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria, 805-937-6753.

**INTRODUCTORY BALLET 3** Wednesdays, 6 p.m. everybodycandance webs.com. Everybody Can Dance, 628 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria, 805-937-6753.

**INTRODUCTORY BALLET 1** Tuesdays, 5 p.m. everybodycandance webs.com. Everybody Can Dance, 628 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria, 805-937-6753.

**LATIN DANCE CLASS: SALSA, BACHATA, AND MORE** Instructors and styles vary from week to week. **Thursdays, 8-10 p.m. $10. facebook.com/dancingamor. Everybody Can Dance, 628 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria, 805-937-6753.

**CLASSIC STAGE** Located at 510 Park Ave., Santa Maria. This dance party features live music by the In Time Trio (pictures) and Riptide Big Band. Admission is free. More info: (770) 813-5186.

**CLASS STUDIO FOR HOMESCHOOL** Includes drawing, painting, sewing, weaving, mixed media, printmaking, and 3-dimensional building in a safe, non-competitive environment. **Fridays, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. $15 per hour.**

**INTRODUCTORY BALLET 1** Tuesdays, 5 p.m. everybodycandance webs.com. Everybody Can Dance, 628 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria, 805-937-6753.

**WOMEN’S LEGACY FUND LUNCHEON** More than 800 local women and men are expected to attend the Women’s Legacy Fund luncheon. Reservations can be made online. **Sept. 27**, 12:15 p.m. $50. 805-543-2323. cfsloco.org. Alex Madonna Expo Center, 100 Madonna Rd., San Luis Obispo.
SCARY MARY

The Great American Melodrama presents Scary Poppins, a musical spoof of Mary Poppins, Sept. 22 through Oct. 11. Performances are Wednesday through Saturday from 7 to 9:30 p.m. Tickets range from $21 to $28. The Great American Melodrama is located at 1863 Front St., Oceano. More info: (805) 489-2499 or americanelamodrama.com.
COLOR AND MOTION: AN ARTISTS PERSPECTIVE See the work of local artist Kathy Badran on display at the Terry Dvoraczky office of Ameriprise Financial. This exhibit is one of a continuing series of shows to spotlight local art and artists. ongoing 805-938-8724, amfirst.com, Ameriprise Financial, 2605 S Miller St., Suite 104, Santa Maria.

SOUTH COAST SLO COUNTY ART BY SLOPE AT DANA ADOBE A collection that culminates art and history to educate the community. Fridays, through Sept. 30 805-929-5679. danaadobe.org, DANA Adobe Cultural Center, 671 S. Oakglen Ave., Nipomo.

FROM ARTISTS, FOR ARTISTS, BY ARTISTS Featuring fine art oils and pastels from Corynn Wolf, acrylics from Ryan Adams, and works from various mediums by Marc Wolf ongoing Free. 805-773-6563. Puffers of Pismo, 781 Price St., Pismo Beach, puffersofpismo.com/.


CULTURE & LIFESTYLE LECTURES & LEARNING SANTA YNEZ VALLEY ALMA ROSA PRESENTS WINE TALK WEDNESDAYS An informational series that host speakers that discuss different aspects of the local wine industry. Fourth Wednesday of every month, 6:30-8:30 p.m. Free. 805-688-9909. almarosawinery.com. Alma Rosa Tasting Room, 181 C Industrial Way, Buellton.

TODAY AND CONVERSATION The Solvang Library screens an 18-minute talk from the TED Talks series. Afterwards, the audience explores the topic together over tea and coffee. Third Thursday of every month, 11:30 am to noon. Free. 805-688-4214. Solvang Library, 1745 Mission Drive, Solvang.

LOMPOC/VANDENBERG COMMUNITY FOOD CENTER The center is a food pantry offering nutritional classes. Wednesdays, 3-5 p.m. Free. 805-967-5741, Ext. 107. El Camino Community Center, W. Laurel Avenue and N. I St., Lompoc.

SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS BI-LINGO Informal conversation to practice Spanish speaking skills. Fourth Thursday of every month, 4:30-5:30 p.m. Free. Santa Maria Public Library, 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria, 805-925-0994.

SOUTH COAST SLO COUNTY ART SLO REP presents its production of the Tony-winning comedy by Yasmina Reza, translated by Christopher Hampton, that focuses on the meaning of art and friendship. Wednesdays-Saturdays, 7:30 p.m. through Oct. 11 $21-$28. 805-489-2499. americanelodrama.com. Great American Melodrama, 1863 Front St., Oceano.

SCARY POPPINS The Great American Melodrama presents this musical spoof of The Great American Melodrama, 1863 Front St., Oceano.

SAN LUIS OBISPO POINT SLO LIGHTHOUSE TOURS Docents lead guests on a one-hour tour of the historic site, the buildings, and up to the Lighthouse tower. Please arrive 15 minutes early. All proceeds go directly to the site’s restoration. Wednesdays, 12 & 2 p.m. and Saturdays, 12 & 2 p.m. $17-$22. 805-540-5771. pointsanluislighthouse.org. Point San Luis Lighthouse, 1 Lighthouse Rd., Avila Beach.

CLUBS & MEETINGS SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS ANIME CLUB FOR TEENS A club for teens interested in anime and manga. Sept. 21, 4-5:30 p.m. 7SistersBrewing.com. 7SistersBrewing.com.

ON THE ROAD: MARATHON READING 60 readers will read the entire scroll version of Jack Kerouac’s On the Road. Also features music, recollections, critique, burlesque, and refreshments.

SEPT. 20 – SEPT. 27, 2018
www.santamariasun.com

ARTS from page 17

RELAX AND UNWIND
Hidden Canyon Ranch hosts one of its Yoga and Wine Tasting events on Sept. 22 from 10 a.m. to noon. This beginner/intermediate class, led by Sarah Allred of Hunny Fly Yoga, is followed by tasting of Roark Wine Company wines. Hidden Canyon Ranch is located at 5425 Campbell Road, Lompoc. More info: hiddencanyonranch.com.

THE GREAT AMERICAN MELODRAMA
Great American Melodrama, 1863 Front St., Oceano.

SAN LUIS OBISPO ARTS AND LIFESTYLE
One day a man was walking along the beach when he noticed a boy picking something up and gently throwing it into the ocean. Approaching the boy, he asked, “What are you doing?”

The youth replied, “Throwing starfish back into the ocean. The surf is up and the tide is going out. If I don’t throw them back, they’ll die.”

“Son,” the man said, “don’t you realize there are miles and miles of beach and hundreds of starfish? You can’t possibly make a difference!”

After listening politely, the boy bent down, picked up another starfish, and threw it back into the surf. Then, smiling at the man, he said,

“I just made a difference for that one.”

Original Story by Loren Eisley

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Artwalk
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Indoor / Outdoor Show
Sat. & Sun., Sept. 22 & 23
10:00 AM–5:00 PM

Sales from this unique showcase support Museum programs and the local arts community.

Free with paid Museum Admission
MUSEUM MEMBERS FREE

Sponsored in part by Scott Newhall, Union Bank, Richard Banks, Dr. Richard Ross, Susan & Mark Bradley, Waterhouse Gallery, Santa Barbara Independent, Santa Maria Sun, KCWR, KJEE, KTYD, KLJE, KEYT, SB Noozhawk, and Montecito Journal.

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**MIND & BODY**

**SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS**

**BASIC YOGA 101 WORKSHOP** Build strength and increase flexibility during this series. Includes basic standing postures and sun salutations. Learn about yoga, meditation, and alignment Tuesday, 7-8 p.m. through Sept. 25 $49. 805-680-6542. yoga4mankind.org/event-workshops/. Yoga for Mankind, 130 N Broadway, Suite B, Orcutt.

**CANDLELIGHT RESTORATIVE YOGA** Release and open your body with breath, props, and meditation. Thursday, 8:30-9:45 a.m. Yoga for Mankind, 130 N Broadway, Suite B, Orcutt.

**GENTLE YOGA** Tuesdays, Thursdays, 8:30 a.m. oasiscurt.org. Oasis Senior Center, 420 Soares Ave., Orcutt, 805-937-9750.

**MEDITATION GROUP** Features a 20 minute meditation followed by a brief discussion. Meetings take place in the sanctuary. All are welcome. Thursdays, 11 a.m. noon Free. 805-937-3025. Unity Chapel of Light Church, 1165 Stubblefield Rd., Orcutt, unity santamaria.net.

**REFLEXOLOGY AT OASIS** Tuesdays, 9 a.m. oasiscurt.org. Oasis Senior Center, 420 Soares Ave., Orcutt, 805-937-9750.

**TAI CHI AT OASIS** Tuesdays, Thursdays, 9:45 a.m. oasiscurt.org. Oasis Senior Center, 420 Soares Ave., Orcutt, their website.

**SOUTH COAST SLO COUNTY**

**BEGINNER’S CHI GONG AND YOGA** For adults and youth ages 11 and up. Includes stand up exercises, breathing techniques, and more. Sundays, 9:45 a.m. Free. 805-534-1600. Morrocco Method Headquarters, 800 Farroll Rd., Grover Beach, morroccomethod.com.

**KUNDALINI YOGA** Gentle yoga classes with a focus on meditation and chanting in the Kundalini Yoga (as taught by Yogi Bhajan). All levels of experience welcome. Thursdays, 6:30-7:45 p.m. through Dec. 31 $12 per class; $40 for 4 classes. Yoga for Mankind, 130 N Broadway, Suite B, Orcutt.

**QI GONG CLASSES**


**KUNDALINI YOGA** Gentle yoga classes with a focus on meditation and chanting in the Kundalini Yoga (as taught by Yogi Bhajan). All levels of experience welcome. Thursdays, 6:30-7:45 p.m. through Dec. 31 $12 per class; $40 for 4 classes. 626-864-4810. yogamankind.org/event-workshops/. Yoga for Mankind, 130 N Broadway, Suite B, Orcutt.

**MINDFUL MEETUP: FOR RESILIENCE AND WELL-BEING** Experience how the practices of mindfulness, self-compassion, and self-care are the essential life skills to transform your well-being. Subscribe online for updates. Sept. 27 6 p.m. 805-270-5523. mindfulkindfulyouniversity.com/meetup/. Coffee Bean, 354 Five Cities Dr., Pismo Beach.

**MINDFUL YOGA: GENTLE, RESTORATIVE, AND SLOW FLOW** Weekdays, Saturdays, 9-10:15 a.m. $10 donation. White Heron Sangha Meditation Center, 6615 Bay Laurel Place, Avila Beach, whiteheronsangha.org.


**QI GONG FOR LESS STRESS AND MORE ENERGY** Use the gentle standing movements of qi gong to lower stress and increase flexibility. Mondays, 9-10 a.m. through Oct. 15 $57 for series; $10 per class. 805-440-4561. balancedlivingayurveda.com. Ocean Community Center, 1425 19th St., Oceano.

**QI GONG: STANDING MOVEMENTS** Use gentle standing movements to lower stress and increase flexibility. Wednesdays, 4-5 p.m. through Oct. $54 for the series; $10 drop in fee. 805-440-4561. balancedlivingayurveda.com. Shell Beach Veterans Memorial Building, 230 Leward Ave., Pismo Beach.

**SENIOR BODY FITNESS** Please bring your own weights and bands. Mondays, 11 a.m.-noon $1 per class. 805-598-7108. Cortina Apartments, 241 Courtland St., Arroyo Grande.

**SILVER SNACKERS ZUMBA** Appropriate for all ages and fitness levels. An easy-to-follow dance fitness class. Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, 9-10 a.m. Free for members; $6 to drop in. 805-441-7932. Oceano Community Center, 1425 19th St., Oceano, adult.slochamberschools.org.

**WATER EXERCISE FOR ALL AGES** These classes help relieve joint pain, enhance your breathing, and increase your range of motion. Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, 6:30-7:30 p.m. 805-481-6399. 5 Cities Swim School, 425 Traffic Way, Arroyo Grande, 5citiesswimschool.com.

**OUTDOORS**

**SOUTH COAST SLO COUNTY**

**SLO COUNTY PUGS ON THE BEACH** Socially friendly dogs and their humans are invited to run (leash free) in the surf sand at Olde Port Beach (Avila Dog Beach). Last Sunday of every month, 2-3 p.m. Free. aggbchamber.com. Olde Port Beach, 6520 Avila Beach Dr., Avila Beach.

**SPORTS**

**SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS**

**NFL FLAG FOOTBALL** Presented by Rise and Achieve. For boys and girls ages 5 to 17. First game takes place July 7. 10 games guaranteed. ongoing 805-868-3633. riseandachieve.com. Ernest Righetti High School, 941
**SOUTH COAST SLO COUNTY**


**HOUSE OF GOD CHURCH SERVICES** Join Pastor Joseph and Amanda Anderson every Sunday for prayer, healing, and more. Sundays, 9:30-11 a.m. 805-888-7714. House of God Church, 946 Rockaway Ave., Grover Beach.

**MEDiSUSM DEVELOPMENT** Learn the basics of communicating with spirit in a safe environment with Mike Smith. Tuesdays, 6:30-7:30 p.m. $15. 805-480-2432. Halcyon Store Post Office, 936 S. Halcyon Rd., Arroyo Grande.

**REFUGEE RECOVERY** Refugee Recovery is a non-thetic. Buddhist-inspired approach to treating and recovering from addictions of all kinds. Open to people of all backgrounds and respectful of all recovery paths. Wednesdays, 7-8 p.m. Free; donations welcome. The Haven (classroom), 621 E Grand Ave, Arroyo Grande, 805-202-3440.


**YOUTH SERVICES** The City Church Central Coast holds youth services for junior high school students. Mondays, 6:30 p.m. Free. 805-929-8990. thecitycc.org. Faith Life Community Church, 726 W Tefft St, Nipomo.

**ARROYO GRANDE FARMERS MARKET** Hosts over 60 vendors. Saturdays, 8-12:30 a.m. World Market Parking Lot, 2650 Main St, San Luis Obispo.

**SOUTH COAST SLO COUNTY**

**ARROYO GRANDE GRANDMA MARKET** Includes produce, artists and musicians. Saturdays, 12-2:25 p.m. Arroyo Grande Farmers Market, Olshon Alley, Arroyo Grande.

**NIPOMO FARMERS MARKET** Includes a large variety of locally grown produce. Open year round Sundays, 11:30 a.m. 2:30 p.m. 805-929-8990. nipomofarmersmarket.com. Nipomo Farmers Market, Via Concha Road, Nipomo.

**SAN LUIS OBIOSO**

**FARMERS MARKET** Farmers Market in SLO is the largest Farmers Market in California. Thursdays, 6-10 p.m. Downtown SLO, Higuera St., San Luis Obispo.

**SLO FARMERS MARKET** Hosts over 60 vendors. Sundays, 8-12:30 a.m. World Market Parking Lot, 2650 Main St, San Luis Obispo.

**SAN LUIS OBIOSO**

**SECOND ANNUAL SIP’ N SAUNTER** Includes multiple Downtown venues. Visit site for a full and updated list of participating businesses and partners. Sept. 28, 5-8 p.m. $40-$50. 805-541-0286. downtownslo.com/ Downtown SLO, Higuera St., San Luis Obispo.

**MORRO BAY KAYAK WINE TOUR** Dinner and wine sail on the Pipers. On the outer banks of the bay. Enjoy Lone Madrone wines while watching the sunset. Sept. 22, 4-8 p.m. $110. 805-238-0845. lonemadrone.com. Lone Madrone Winery, 5800 Adelaide Rd, Paso Robles, O.

**FOOD & DRINK**

**FARMERS MARKETS**

**LOMPOC/VANDENBERG**

**LOMPOC FARMERS MARKET** Features fresh fruit and vegetables, flowers, entertainment, and activities for the whole family. Fridays, 2-6 p.m. Lompoc Farmers Market, Ocean Avenue and I Street, Lompoc.

**VANDENBERG VILLAGE FARMERS MARKET** Locally grown produce and food stuffs are available round Sundays, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Vandenberg Village Farmers’ Market, 120 Burton Mesa Blvd., Lompoc.

**SOUTH COAST SLO COUNTY**

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Mountaintop blues

Famed blues duo Tom Ball and Kenny Sultan are right at home at Cold Spring Tavern

BY JOE PAYNE

A syncopated rhythm blends with the smell of barbecue and other kinds of smoke under the eaves of the oak trees. A wailing harmonic melody flies like a bird over the earthy guitar/bass combo and shuffling beat.

It’s a familiar scene at the Cold Spring Tavern near the top of the San Marcos Pass, where blues duo Tom Ball and Kenny Sultan enjoy regular Sunday gigs with their band. The pair have been performing at the historic stagecoach stop for nearly 40 years. Ball said, around when they first started collaborating as young musicians in Santa Barbara.

They’ve enjoyed a partnership as bluesmen ever since. “Neither one of us saw that coming,” Ball laughed. “We just started playing music together and it clicked, and before we knew it it was a career.”

The duo play at Cold Spring pretty much any Sunday they’re not out of town from 1:15 to 4 p.m. with rotating bandmates. There’s always a crowd there, whether they show up or not, Ball explained, but there’s a solid core of longtime regulars who make it out often to hear them perform. Their next show is Sept. 30.

Ball and Sultan are celebrated blues artists, with credits from movies, television, and several albums over the years. Ball is known for his technically brilliant and soulful harp style, reminiscent of artists like Little Walter and Sonny Terry (Ball and Terry actually share the same birthday). Sultan’s style is known so well that Martin Guitars released a signature model in his name, a sunburst 000-18, after a 1937 he already owned. For artists like Lightnin’ Hopkins or Mississippi John Hurt exemplify a fingerstyle guitar. Artists like Lightnin’ Hopkins or Stefan Grossman down pat.

"Fishin' Blues" illustrate Sultan’s focus on the standards of fingerstyle style. Songs like “Key to the Highway” are beloved tunes, but others like "Feelin' Blues" illustrate Sultan’s focus on the standards of fingerstyle guitar. Artists like Lightnin’ Hopkins or Stefan Grossman down pat.

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Let Your Imagination Soar at the Santa Maria Valley Discovery Museum

MUSIC

LOCAL NOTES (from page 23)

SANTA BARBARA BOWL

THE THIRD MAN LIVE No outside food or drinks allowed. Sept. 29, 1-4 p.m. Free. Cold Spring Tavern, 599 Stagecoach Rd., Santa Barbara, 805-967-0066, coldspringtavern.com/entertainment.html. (2 and 3) THE YA YA FESTIVAL Enjoy live music from Dave Alvin & The Guilty Ones, Ruthie Foster, Michael On Fire, and Steve Pottz. This event also features arts and crafts, food and drink, and clothing and jewelry vendors. Sept. 22, 2-10 p.m. $60. talesfromthetavern.com/htf/concerts/. Solvang Festival Theater, 420 2nd St., Solvang, 805-928-7731.

LOMPOC/VANDENBERG

SIP MUSIC CLUB Pairing music and local wine with 4 seasonal releases each calendar year. Price includes 3 VIP access tickets to each SipMusic event, and 1 album and 1 bottle of premium wine every 3 months. ongoing $40. Lompoc Wine Factory, 321 N. D St., Lompoc, 805-243-8398, lompocwinery.com.

SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS

| AHC CONCERT BAND: POPS CONCERT THE Allen Hancock College Concert Band presents its annual Fall Pops Concert. Sept. 29, 7:30-9:30 p.m. $10; free for music students. 805-929-0552. First Baptist Church, 2970 Santa Maria Way, Santa Maria.

AMY BENTON LIVE Benton performs original country songs. Sept. 28, 4-6 p.m. Free. Presque Isle Winery, 5391 Presque Ile Dr., Santa Maria, 805-937-8110, presqueisewine.com.


CONNER CHERLAND LIVE Sept. 21, 4:30-7:30 p.m. Free. Presque Ile Winery, 5391 Presque Ile Dr., Santa Maria, 805-937-8110, presqueisewine.com.


Fun for the Entire Family!
72nd Annual Los Alamos Valley Old Days
September 28–30, 2018

Greatest Little Small Town Parade, Tri-Tip BBQ, Artisan Faire, Car Show, Dance & More

Just South of Santa Maria on Hwy 101 in Wine Country!
Old Days is sponsored by the Los Alamos Valley Men’s Club, a volunteer group of men, women & families dedicated to preserving the town’s unique Western character.

For Details & More Info:
www.facebook.com/LosAlamosValleyMensClub/
yourlavmc@gmail.com OR 805-344-3500

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The Anderson Recreation Center is your one stop for all your U.S. passport processing needs!

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Amused artist

In her stunning portraits and paintings, Zoë Nathan captures a hidden part of her subjects

BY REBECCA ROSE

Even upon a quick glance, Zoë Nathan’s portraits cling to a viewer. They are beautifully understated, gracefully executed, and filled with nuanced introspection, the artist’s work feels like an exuberant expression of the world she sees buried under the material world. In Nathan’s skilled hands, humanity becomes more clear, less blurry in the shadows of our daily existence.

Nathan is a sculptor and painter who has exhibited in numerous galleries and museums in the Santa Ynez Valley and Santa Barbara for more than 15 years. Her work has hung in museums such as the Elverhoj Museum of History and Art and at the former C Gallery in Los Alamos. In 2013, she was featured in Mark Robert Halper’s book Between See and Seen: Celebrating the Artists of Santa Barbara County. She is currently featured as part of the Elverhoj’s Past, Present, and Future, a retrospective of the museum’s 30-year history.

Her roots in art trace back to her early years, when she was drawn to painting and drawing. Nathan was admitted to Simon’s Rock College while still in her junior year of high school. After receiving her associate degree, Nathan then transferred to Sarah Lawrence College in upstate New York.

“I’ve always sketched or drawn,” she said. “I did get into [art] a little bit later.”

She was first drawn to portraiture, especially the self-portraits of famed painter and activist Frida Kahlo. Kahlo’s work explored deep issues of self-identity framed around gender, race, and class, among other topics. Her brightly colored palette was juxtaposed with jarring surrealist images that addressed the complexities of sexuality and politics, which made her one of the most iconic painters of the 20th century.

“It was such an interesting portal into the artist’s mind,” Nathan said. “She would use visual metaphors to convey her inner experience, her inner world, which involved some pain and also some love.”

Among her biggest influences, Nathan lists Austrian painter Gustav Klimt and John Singer Sargent. Sargent was a master portrait painter, and Nathan’s portraits, which linger with a viewer long after seeing them, exhibit the same kind of honesty and humanity.

“Klimt’s use of color and pattern is so lovely,” she said. “With Sargent, I think I’m striving to become more like him. He had such an eye for capturing things that were right in front of him.”

Unlike Sargent, who worked with live models, Nathan typically uses photographs she takes herself. Then, she puts the picture into Photoshop where she makes collages out of them, creating the image she will eventually paint.

Nathan also finds inspiration in the work of her fellow artists, letting those who are in the infinite quest for muses become her muse.

“I did a series of portraits of other artists with their work,” she said. “I started looking at their work and thinking, ‘Would this work as a backdrop?’”

At times haunting and moody, Nathan’s work is firmly rooted in realism, with small hints of surrealism in the mood she strikes with each piece. Her paintings have the playfulness of Klimt’s colorful masterpieces and the stoic grace of Sargent’s best works. She imparts something delicate yet powerful into her portraits, reaching beyond the subterfuge of human courtesies and drawing out deeper truths.

An art professor once categorized her style as “romantic realism,” a moniker that seems more than accurate.

“It’s not quite surreal; it’s not quite hyperrealistic,” she said of her style. “I think I am interested studying identities through my portraiture. I have back to my studies in psychology, sociology, and anthropology, and I think that informs a lot of my pieces.”

While she lives in Santa Barbara, Nathan has been in many exhibits at local galleries. She recently began working with some galleries in Los Angeles and is pursuing more opportunities for shows in that area. But Santa Ynez still holds a special meaning for her.

“I’ve just found a very lovely community of artists, gallery owners, and museum owners in the Santa Ynez Valley and Los Alamitos,” Nathan said. “I always love and appreciate all of the artists I’ve met in the area.”

Arts and Lifestyle Writer Rebecca Rose is always looking inward. Contact her at rose@santamariasun.com.

The muse

Zoë Nathan is currently featured as part of the Elverhoj Museum of History and Art’s 30-year retrospective, titled Past, Present, and Future. To see more of Nathan’s work or to contact the artist, visit zoenathan.com.
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**Grievance**

By Christine Bell

Central Coast author Christine Bell’s novel, *Grievance*, inspired her to write about the darkness and beauty of grief and its impact on family and society. Bell's story, focusing on Lily Declan, a young widow, explores the struggle of coping with the loss of a loved one and finding a place of healing.

**ARTS**

**From the Grave**

Central Coast author Christine Bell delves into the insanity of grief.

BY RYAH COOLEY

“W”

e don’t say died anymore, we say passed.” Just that one sentence shook Central Coast author Christine Bell’s world a bit when her neighbor said it in the midst of a family tragedy. The Santa Barbara-based writer realized there just isn’t space in our lives anymore for grief and mourning, which in turn inspired her novel, *Grievance*. A recent recipient of the International Thriller Writers Award, Bell’s story focuses on Lily Declan, a young widow trying to move past her grief and find a place of healing for herself and her two young sons. But when an unusual sympathy letter arrives, the life Lily has rebuilt comes under attack. On her wedding anniversary, a gift from an anonymous sender is delivered to her door. Then, a bizarre home invasion shatters her sense of security, and a mysterious Facebook memorial appears. Someone is looking to claim Lily’s love and loss as their own, but who?

Bell sat down with the Sun to discuss grief, inspiration, and writing by hand.

**Sun:** How would you describe *Grievance*?

**Christine Bell:** My elevator pitch is that it’s about a young widow stalked by the shadow of her dead husband, but really, it’s a dance about grief. It’s about what we do to keep the dead alive and what we do to keep them buried.

**Sun:** What inspired you to write *Grievance*?

**CB:** During a period of family grief, my neighbor corrected me several times during a conversation and said, “We don’t say ‘died’ anymore, we say ‘passed.’ And we don’t say ‘funeral’ anymore, we say ‘celebration of life.’” Part of me is horrified that we don’t use real words anymore, but part of me is intrigued. Maybe we can pass over the bad parts.

**Sun:** What do you want your readers to take away from your book about grief, sorrow, and mental illness?

**CB:** We’ve done away with so many of the rituals that grief almost has no place in our society. I guess writing the book was trying to find a place for it. It’s almost as if grief were no longer a natural process. It’s almost as if it were an illness.

**Sun:** How did you get into writing, and what is your process like?

**CB:** It’s what I’ve always done. This is my fourth book. I come from a family where story was important, and books were always discussed and argued about. It was never not a part of my life. I always have a feeling of a story when I sit down to write. I write by hand. I’ve written entire books by hand before I’ve put them on the computer. I love not having a screen in front of me. When I have a screen in front of me, I correct as I go.

**Sun:** What are some of your current favorite books and authors?

**CB:** I just finished *The Song Is You* by Megan Abbott. And I’m in the middle of her book *Bury Me Deep*. I often read a fiction and nonfiction book at the same time. I also just finished *The Great Wound: Confessions of a Slaveholding Family* by Kenneth Collier. I’m in a book club, and I love that because it takes me to books I would never pick on my own.

**Sun:** Why should readers pick up a copy of *Grievance*?

**CB:** It’s a good story. It will keep them up at night. It will make them wish they smoked cigarettes and drank whiskey. It's different. When I read I want to be taken to a place I've never been to before. I hope this book does that.

Shhh! New Times Arts Writer Ryah Cooley is reading at rcooley@newtimeslo.com.

**Grievance**

By Christine Bell

PHOTO COURTESY OF CHRISTINE BELL

**Read on**

Grievance by Christine Bell is available on Amazon for $10.99 for paperback and $3.99 for the Kindle version. For more information on Bell’s work, visit christinesaintbell.com.

**AWARD WINNING:** Christine Bell's novel *Grievance* recently won the International Thriller Writers Award.
Under pressure

Krider laughs in the face of a cardiac ‘episode’

BY ROB KRIDER

L
ike most men, I’m not a huge fan of going to the doctor. I don’t enjoy sitting in waiting rooms, I don’t like being poked with needles, and I’m not a big fan of having a finger placed in my tush. To avoid all of the unwanted poking and prodding, I just don’t go to the doctor. If some ailment comes up, I simply Google WebMD, I fix any deep cuts with duct tape, and I self-medicate with beer. Just think of all of the copays I have saved over the years.

So, after a decade of “taking care of myself,” which means quite the opposite, it isn’t a big surprise to anyone if I recently had an “episode” where I had to be rushed to the hospital in an ambulance. The rumor at the hospital, if they can be believed, is that I have high blood pressure. It is so high in fact that I got a bit dizzy and confused me because I was of the opinion that I had high blood pressure because I have too much stress in my life. Apparently, they wanted to test that theory with more stress, if these people can be believed. They put something in my IV that felt like my heart had been kicked by a bull. I failed that test.

After that experience, I started nodding and agreeing more and more to do anything the doctors wanted as long as I could get released from the hospital. I had my wife, whom I love, sitting by my side, giving me dirty looks, making me feel bad for not taking my health seriously. She wanted me to go to the doctor regularly, and she wanted me to stop using WebMD and beer as health insurance. I nodded and agreed with her too since all I wanted was to get out of the hospital. I was tired of needles and bull kicks to the heart and guilt.

They weren’t going to let me go. My job was to stay in bed, eat Jell-O, take my medication, and get my blood pressure down. I did this for what seemed like forever. People from work kept coming by to see how I was doing. I just held up my IV that felt like my heart had been kicked by a bull. I failed that test.

Finally, after everyone got some copay (the ambulance, the emergency room, the main hospital, the labs, the test folks, the guy who brings the bulls into the hospital), I was finally released on my own recognizance. My probation: no salt. If these guys can be believed, I started to see a trend. Everyone around me thinks I have high blood pressure. What do these numbers really represent? Maybe I’m just exceptional and that is why my numbers are so high?

They said I needed a stress test. This confused me because I was of the opinion that I had high blood pressure because I have too much stress in my life. Apparently, they wanted to test that theory with more stress, if these people can be believed. They put something in my IV that felt like my heart had been kicked by a bull. I failed that test.

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Rob swears he is living healthier, he switched to light beer. To read more from Rob Krider, go to robkrider.com.
Hustle for life

Editor's Note: Glen and Anna Starkey were out this week, so you have to deal with a review from Executive Editor Camilla Lanham and New Times Staff Writer Karen Garcia instead!

Y ann Demange (“71,” 2014) directs this film based on the true story of teenager Richard Wershe Jr., who became an undercover informant for the FBI during the height of the crack epidemic in 1980s Detroit. When the feds threaten to throw his father in jail for illegal selling guns, Rick will do whatever he can for his family. (116 min.)

Camilla: Hollywood has a flair for dramatizing stories based on real life—leaving out important details, glossing over others, and adding in spurs of half-truths to help with plot points. White Boy Rick is no exception. It’s entertaining with engaging actors, a sweet multi-generational saga also starring Antonio Banderas, New York couple Abby (Olivia Wilde) and Will (Isaac Oscar).

To further confound matters, Izard’s wife, Selena (Renée Elise), which has the power to destroy the world. Neighbor Mrs. Zimmerman (Cate Blanchett), the trio sets about learning the fundamentals of sorcery, and with the help of his clan goes awry, finds himself alone and struggling to survive. After he encounters a lone wolf, he begins to forge the bond that will develop canines into man’s best friend.

Executive Editor Camilla Lanham and New Times Staff Writer Karen Garcia wrote Sun Screen this week. Comment at gstarkey@newtimeslo.com.
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THE PREDATOR
What's it rated? R
What's it worth? Full price
Where's it showing? Movies Lompc, Parks Plaza

**PICK**
Jessica Sharer's (*Nerve*) screenplay based on Darcey Bell's crime-drama novel about nominee blogger Stephanie's (Anna Kendrick) best friend Emily's (Blake Lively) sudden disappearance.

*With* lots of delicious twists and turns, and strong performances by the two leads, the film delivers what female-centric mystery fans yearn for—an intelligent whodunit that will keep viewers guessing right up until the big reveal.

—Glenn Starkey

THE WIFE
What's it rated? R
What's it worth? Full price
Where's it showing? Parks Plaza

**PICK**
Ends director Jane Anderson's (*How to Make an American quilt*) screenplay based on Meg Wolitzer's novel about Joan Castleman (Glenn Close), wife of famed author John Brimley, the dude asking you to check your blood sugar in between showcase showdowns on the Price is Right. It's in it too. Except here, Wino and his fellow filmmakers expect us to believe that she's a native-cajan living in the backwoods and we are, for whatever reason, not supposed to laugh at his outlandish outfits or anything he says in a thick (and very fake) accent. The first time I saw Hard Target I told my friend, “There is no way it could be better than JCVD (aka Hong Kong martial arts star),” I was wrong. John Woo continues to surprise himself, and time and time again. For example, in one of the movie's more memorable scenes, JCVD catches a snake trying to bite him in the throat with his bare hands. He tosses the serpent into a sailor knot and pins it to a tree as a booby trap for bad guys following him. It works as much senseless ass as that you'll be checking to make sure yours isn't roundhoused off after watching it.

—Spencer Cole
Valle in the Valley

Lompoc’s Valle Eatery & Bar serves impressive creations from local chef Conrad Gonzales

BY REBECCA ROSE

When I walked into Conrad Gonzales’ Valle Eatery and Bar in Lompoc’s Hilton Garden Inn, I felt a huge wave of relief come over me.

It was like the feeling of walking into your house after being on a transcontinental flight that’s been delayed for five hours and then fighting through rush hour traffic to get home. It just feels so damn good to be in the place.

Valle Eatery is typical of the type of local flavor Hilton is lately known for incorporating in their Garden Inns. Escewing chain restaurants or cookie-cutter standard hotel food, Hilton looked within the Santa Ynez Valley to find an up-and-coming chef whose food has a built-in fan base.

If you’re a fan of local tri-tip contests, you’re no stranger to Gonzales’ award-winning tri-tip tacos. He’s won several local competitions, including back-to-back awards at Presqu’ile Winery’s annual tri-tip cook-off. The secret, I believe after eating so much of his food, is in the way he pampers and finesse each and every ingredient, taking nothing for granted.

From making his own masa and using a traditional hand-ground technique for his tortillas, to slow-roasting fresh vegetables for his tacos, to hand making the salsa verde that accompanies them, Gonzales has built a reputation at Valle Fresh in Los Alamos as one of the most talked about eateries on the Central Coast.

And he’s carried on that reputation for attention to detail in Lompoc. Valle Eatery and Bar is a stunning success of vision—a distinct upscale ambiance paired with impeccable originality, one that keeps with the vibe of a growing foodie community that expects more of the same of what it loves and the occasional curveball.

The decor is clean and modern, sophisticated enough I could call it home. It’s almost like walking into your own living room, when hotels were social scenes for people to meet and mingle with visiting dignitaries and celebrities.

You might feel a bit like one of the women from Sex and the City, as cliche as that might sound. It’s lush and perfect for sipping on the bar’s healthy selection of colorful and creative drinks. I would definitely grab some girlfriends and spend a Thursday night talking about makeup and fashion here. Drinks such as the Blackberry Elixir incorporate fresh, locally sourced ingredients and look pretty enough to take selfies with (which I did, naturally). On The Beach, made with Ciroc vodka, cranberry and orange juice, hibiscus syrup, and mint play up tropical themes with a classic urban vibe.

Valle Eatery currently offers a full breakfast, lunch, and dinner menu. Breakfast is pretty standard fare, with the exception of the addition of Nutella pancakes. Lunch is where things start to get intriguing. Soups and salads include two perfect seasonal soups, a pink lentil soup with fresh vegetables and a roasted corn chowder. I had the chowder and it was expertly made, the balance of roasted red peppers to the sweet corn was offset with a subtle amount of heat.

The shareable plates, also known as tapas in some regions, are a great idea for lunch or dinners with bigger parties. Valle Eatery offers a vibrant selection of dishes that allow customers to experiment and get to know more about the chef. Blistered padróns with teardrop tomatoes and manchego cheese speak to Gonzales’ roots in the valley; the dish is a nod to the vast agricultural fields just outside Lompoc’s city limits. Again, Gonzales is a master of balance; almost every dish incorporates a smart portion of something crunchy, salty, sweet, spicy, and creamy. It almost seems to come easy to him, these effortlessly flavorful dishes.

One of the best things I ate the day I visited was a plate of modest-looking hush puppies, served with a chipotle aioli and pickled chiles. The addition of the creamy spicy sauce was well paired with the sweet corn-flavored hush puppies. I like the way Gonzales fuses the world of traditional Southern comfort food using the idea of corn as an ingredient firmly rooted in Mexican cuisine. There’s a poetic harmony in the dish that reflects so much on his thinking as a chef.

Of course, it wouldn’t be a Valle restaurant without the signature tacos. They are on the menu and include vegetable, wonton, halibut, pork belly, and of course, his famous tri-tip tacos. Having eaten quite a lot of them in my days here, I opted for the veggie tacos, a good choice. Made with broccoli, mushrooms, goat cheese, and shredded cabbage, the dish is remarkable for how much Valle manages to do with a few ingredients. The braised pork belly tacos are another must-try, served with goat cheese, salsa verde, shredded cabbage, Valle manages to execute a dish with a commonly used product that feels fresh and original.

Dinner offers a lot of the same options for starters as well as a full selection of brick oven wood-fired pizzas, which are made right on the outside patio. The dinner menu seems geared toward hotel guests looking for familiar and stable selections of beef and pork, which is fine. I would recommend the salmon broil, made with yuzu, soy, ginger, and fried rice for something a little more outside the box. Desserts include a house-made churro and a selection of seasonal gelato flavors, which are a good cap on the meals.

Just remember, if you do ask me to tag along to Valle Eatery to channel your inner Sex and the City self, I’m always the Carrie. Always. I’m a writer and have a hundred pairs of shoes. It’s non-negotiable.

Arts and Lifestyle Writer Rebecca Rose is Berry berry happy. Contact her at rose@ santamariasun.com.
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5 bd, 3 ba, 4 car garage. $2,600 mo + $2,600 dep.
709 Stemwood Dr.
3 bd, 2 ba. $2200 mo + $2200 dep
275 E. Newlove Ave. #5
3 bd, 2 ba, 1 car garage. $1,950 mo + $3,900 dep.

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FOR SALE
Santa Maria
$2350 1722 Billbao Drive – 3 + 2.5, La Ventana 2story condo in gated com near hospital/101 freeway, vaulted ceilings, dbl loft, kit granite ctrs, F/R, F/P, 2car grg, patio, pool/club privs inc, no pets.
$2295 2426 Del Sur – 3 + 2, Classics 2story w/mstr ste w/s and bdmrs d/s, all appls, f/wd flrs, ldry rm inc w/d, 2car grg, low maint yd, grdr, up to 2 sm dogs neg w/dep.
$1995 4726 Hartnell Road – 3 + 2, South Point Estates: 1story hm in gated community, L/R, F/R, Kitchen nook area w/access to lg yd, 2car grg, w/d hkups, grdr inc. 1 pet neg w/dep.
$1950 264 Highland Drive – 4 + 2, Orcutt 1story hm w/all new carpet, new vinyl flrs and paint thru-out, kitchen w/nook, F/R, F/P, 2car grg, lg yd/grdr, no pet.
$1850 2083 Trinity Drive – 3 + 2, Single story hm near West Gate Ranch w/mgr ste, Kitchen w/Island & eat-in dining area, ldry rm/hkups, 2car grg, yd/grdnr, no pets.

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$665,000 • www.1941VistaDelSol.info

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3625 Rucker Road, Lompoc, CA 93436
$1,200,000 • www.3625Rucker.com
Religious & Educational Center For Sale 6280 SF Sanctuary Building Built in 1965 w/Tower, Sanctuary w/Balcony Stage, Audio Visual Station & Offices. 5120 SF Classroom Building Built in 1978 w/8+ Classrooms, 2 Kitchens & a Fellowship Hall. 62 Paved Parking Spaces. 5.00 Acre Property Site.

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$339,900 • www.1973Celebration.info
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2303 Signal Avenue, Santa Maria, CA 93458
$412,000 • www.2303Signal.info
Beautiful Turnkey Home in desirable Orcutt Area. 3 bedroom, 2 bathroom home with gorgeous laminate flooring in most of the home. Huge backyard as well as RV parking with full concrete area for your boat or RV. Indoor laundry and tons of storage in the fully finished garage. Make an appointment to see this beautiful home today! (CO120) $447,000

SANDRA CERVANTES’ LISTINGS

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$430,000 • www.1917Ybarra.info

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Beautiful Turnkey Home

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Rare Tepusquet Canyon

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