

Sun

AT THE MOVIES



Serenity: It's meh [26]

A point in time

The biennial homeless count gives the Sun a firsthand look at what it really means to be homeless in Santa Maria [12] BY KASEY BUBNASH



NEWS Southern California Edison sues the county [4]

ARTS Civic Theatre takes on Tennessee Williams [22]

EATS New sweets shop is a great spot [28]

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Contents

JANUARY 31 - FEBRUARY 7, 2019 VOL. 19 NO. 48

Every two years, volunteers fan out across the county for the Point In Time Homeless Count. Staff Writer Kasey Bubnash volunteered to help with the count in Santa Maria on Jan. 24. She tells the story of how those three hours went in this week's cover story. It involves a 7-Eleven, two homeless men, two police officers, and three volunteers—and a life lesson or two about how things don't always work out as they're planned and how situations aren't always what they seem [12].

Also this week, Santa Barbara County and SoCalGas are suing each other [4], Santa Maria Civic Theatre's powerful rendition of *A Streetcar Named Desire* [22], poetry with the power to highlight social issues [23], and a Sweet Spot to find candy from around the world [28].

Camillia Lanham,
editor



A COUNT TO REMEMBER: Volunteering to help with the biennial Point In Time Count can yield a variety of things, including the shock of experiencing a situation that has all of the stereotypes about police officers and homeless individuals rolled into it.

Cover design by Alex Zuniga, Cover file photo by Dylan Honea-Baumann

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PHOTO BY KASEY BUBNASH

Political Watch

• On Jan. 28, **U.S. Rep. Salud Carbajal** (D-Santa Barbara) announced the reintroduction of his first piece of legislation in Congress, the California Clean Coast Act—now of 2019. The bill, House Resolution 279, would permanently ban future offshore oil and gas leasing in areas of the Outer Continental Shelf off the coast of California. His announcement coincides with the 50th anniversary of the 1969 oil spill in Santa Barbara, which many credit with galvanizing the environmental movement in the U.S. Carbajal joined Democratic representatives from New Jersey, Florida, South Carolina, Rhode Island, Virginia, and California to introduce bills designed to block offshore drilling in one or more regions of the Outer Continental Shelf. The package of bills comes as the Trump administration prepares to release the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management's proposed oil and gas leasing program for the Outer Continental Shelf. "With the Trump administration's unrelenting attacks on our environment and natural resources, it is more important than ever to make it clear that we will not accept further oil leasing and development off our shores," Carbajal said in a press release.

• To celebrate National Data Privacy Day, Jan. 28, **Assemblymember Jordan Cunningham** (R-San Luis Obispo) joined other Assembly Republicans to introduce a five-policy legislative package designed to strengthen the state's consumer privacy protections. According to the press release, the bills would give people increased control over how their data is being used, encourage family conversations about appropriate social media use, put consumers first in the aftermath of a data breach, and call on the federal government to update anti-trust laws. "The right to privacy is fundamental to a free society. But, as we learn more about tech companies' business practices and how data has been transferred without consent, we realize that, in many respects, privacy is an illusion," Cunningham said in the release. "We need new safeguards so we can continue to enjoy the benefits of these technologies while protecting against the risks they pose."

• **Gov. Gavin Newsom** announced on Jan. 25 that the state planned to file a lawsuit against the city of **Huntington Beach** because it "willfully" refused to comply with state housing law, according to a press release on the Office of the Governor's website. "The state doesn't take this action lightly," Newsom said in the release. "The huge housing costs and sky-high rents are eroding quality of life for families across the state." The state's complaint against Huntington Beach seeks to bring the city's housing plan into compliance with state law by planning for the development of additional housing units that are accessible to residents of all income levels. A bill passed as part of the state's 2017 housing package allows the state to revoke a city or county's existing housing plan compliance and refer potential cases to the state Attorney General's Office for litigation. The suit against Huntington Beach is the first such case.

• The city of **Huntington Beach** filed a lawsuit against the state on Jan. 17 claiming that state legislation streamlining the process for building new housing developments is unconstitutional. The lawsuit argues that the state's Constitution gives cities local land-use and zoning authority that the law, SB 35, usurps by requiring cities to approve housing projects that offer affordable housing faster. **Huntington Beach City Attorney Michael Gates** told the *San Francisco Chronicle* that Sacramento is trying to micromanage cities. "It's really nothing more than the city trying to maintain its local control," Gates said. Sen. Scott Wiener (D-San Francisco), who authored SB 35, responded with a statement that said the city's lawsuit "reflects a deeply misguided view of California's housing mess." ○

PHOTO BY JAYSON MELLOW



MAKING ROOM: Longtime real estate agent and developer Gary Crabtree is one of many Santa Marians who jumped to take advantage of the city's 2017 ordinance allowing accessory dwelling units. Crabtree started construction on his project at 2811 S. Bradley Road about eight months ago (left), and it is now finished (right) and on the market.



Santa Maria issues 57 accessory dwelling unit permits in 2018

Just eight months ago, nothing more than a hollow, wooden frame stood on the expansive dirt lot at 2811 S. Bradley Road. Construction on the then just budding project has since wrapped up, and the lot is now host to a sturdy 2,138-square-foot house and its mini-me, a 1,000-square-foot accessory dwelling unit—the first of its kind in Santa Maria.

It's been more than a year since the Santa Maria City Council voted unanimously in December 2017 to allow accessory dwelling units in residential neighborhoods, a decision that paved the way for local homeowners and developers hoping to convert existing structures into granny units or build entirely new ones.

Longtime real estate agent and developer Gary Crabtree was one of several Santa Maria residents who jumped at the chance to create accessory units after the city's ordinance passed, and Crabtree's project at 2811 S. Bradley Road was the first newly constructed accessory dwelling unit to be approved.

"This is a new concept," Crabtree said of his now finished granny flat, which sits directly next to the larger house on the same lot. "I wanted to be the first."

Crabtree hosted the property's first open house the weekend of Jan. 26, and he said several attendees showed interest in buying.

Most, Crabtree said, were couples with children and aging parents who hoped to house their parents in the accessory dwelling unit. It's a great way for kids to stay close to and care for their late-in-life parents while also having a separate space, Crabtree said.

Several viewers, however, told Crabtree that their parents may not be ready to move in yet, and were concerned about paying for both houses. They were pleased to discover that either of the houses could be rented out, Crabtree said, so long as the owners are living in one.

"That was enlightening to people," Crabtree said. The two-bedroom accessory dwelling unit could potentially be rented out for about \$1,600 to \$1,800, Crabtree said. The larger house would go for much more. All could be money used to pay off the purchase of the property, which is currently listed at \$895,000.

If the accessory dwelling unit model is popular, Crabtree hopes to build several similar homes on a few neighboring lots in the area.

Other homeowners and developers are doing the same.

The city of Santa Maria issued 57 permits for accessory dwelling units in 2018, according to Chuen Ng, director of community development.

The city's decision to allow granny flats was part of a larger state effort to increase California's dwindling rental unit inventory. Several state bills requiring cities and counties to adopt regulations allowing accessory dwelling units were signed into law in September 2016, according to a city staff report.

"[Accessory dwelling units] are generally regarded as an effective way to increase housing options while minimizing changes in neighborhood character or creating additional sprawl," the staff report reads. "They can effectively provide affordable housing for renters, a source of income for homeowners, and a housing source for multi-generational households, including extended families, as well as seniors, college students, and others."

Through Santa Maria Ordinance No. 2017-21, accessory dwelling units—commonly called granny flats or in-law apartments—can be created through the conversion of existing living space in a single-family home, through an addition to an existing home, or by constructing an entirely new detached structure.

"They can be a good form of affordable housing," Ng said in a previous interview.

—Kasey Bubnash

history of debris flows and charges that the city, county, and its flood control district, as well as the Montecito Water District and Caltrans, failed to ensure that Montecito's infrastructure was adequate to reduce the impact of those types of natural disasters.

"This failure resulted in much of the harm from the 2018 mudslides," Southern California Edison spokesman David Song wrote in response to questions from the *Sun*. "As alleged in the cross-complaint, these public agencies designed, built, and maintained debris basins, flood channels, and culverts that were wholly inadequate for the volume of debris that can be expected from watersheds in their jurisdictions, or took other actions that contributed to the damage experienced during the flooding."

The Thomas Fire, a blaze that consumed more than 281,800 acres in Santa Barbara and Ventura counties, preceded the mudslides. On Jan. 9, 2018, heavy rainfall in the burn area caused the massive mudslides in Montecito,

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Weekend Weather

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Dave Horde
KSBY Chief Meteorologist

<p>Thursday</p> <p>COASTAL > High 67 Low 50 INLAND > High 65 Low 46</p>	<p>Friday</p> <p>COASTAL > High 64 Low 50 INLAND > High 63 Low 46</p>
<p>Saturday</p> <p>COASTAL > High 64 Low 51 INLAND > High 62 Low 48</p>	<p>Sunday</p> <p>COASTAL > High 64 Low 60 INLAND > High 62 Low 45</p>

The pattern of quiet weather looks to break into the weekend. Rain is likely Friday or Saturday. For the updated forecast use the KSBY weather app.

City and county were aware of mudslide risks, lawsuit states

Amid a flurry of litigation connected to the Thomas Fire and the deadly Montecito mudslides that followed in its wake, Southern California Edison is pointing the finger at the county of Santa Barbara, city of Santa Barbara, and other government agencies claiming they'd long been aware of the potential for deadly debris flows in the area.

Southern California Edison made the allegations in the cross-complaint filed on Jan. 18 in Los Angeles County Superior Court. The complaint alleges that Santa Barbara County has a well-documented

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destroying more than 200 structures and killing nearly two-dozen people. According to the cross-complaint, Edison is facing more than 75 lawsuits in connection with the mudslides. Those lawsuits allege that the Thomas Fire, which they claim was caused by Edison, caused the mudslides. Edison's cross-complaint states that the cause of the fire is still under investigation and that "numerous factors and causes" contributed to the damages caused by those natural disasters.

In a written response to questions from the *Sun*, Santa Barbara County Counsel Michael Ghizzoni indicated the county is reviewing the cross-complaint and plans to file a response in court at a later date.

"The county of Santa Barbara will vigorously defend against Southern California Edison's claim that county agencies should pay for any damages for which Southern California Edison is found liable," Ghizzoni wrote.

The city of Santa Barbara did not respond to a request for comment for this story.

—Chris McGuinness

Foodbank to continue distributions for federal employees

The partial government shutdown ended—for now—and local federal employees were back at work on Jan. 28, but the Foodbank of Santa Barbara County will continue distributing free food to those impacted by the shutdown through Feb. 8.

"We realize that the moment a paycheck comes in doesn't mean everyone will be instantly relieved," said Judith Smith-Meyer, the Foodbank's marketing communications manager.

Bills have been piling up for many of the local employees who've been going without pay the past month, Smith-Meyer said, and the Foodbank plans to host four additional food distributions in the next two weeks to help impacted families as they attempt to regain financial stability.

Employees at Lompoc's Federal Correctional Institution were hit especially hard, according to Smith-Meyer, who said those employees were considered "essential," and were forced to continue working without pay throughout the shutdown. Smith-Meyer said Foodbank employees helped a number of families in which both parents were employed by the prison.

"So the whole income system in the family was brought to a halt at that time," she said.

The Foodbank's distribution attendance rates jumped significantly after it opened a location at the Federal Correctional Facility Staff Training Center in Lompoc. During the Foodbank's first distributions aimed specifically at furloughed federal employees on Jan. 11, it gave away 1,861 pounds of food to 50 families countywide, according to data collected by the Foodbank. Weeks later on Jan. 23, the Foodbank distributed 4,648 pounds of food to 106 families countywide.

The Lompoc location has had the highest rates of attendance, with a total of 155 families and 637 individuals attending distributions. So far, the Foodbank has given out 16,139 pounds

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Mahjong tournament

BY HELEN ANN THOMAS

Mahjong, anyone? Eighty-eight devotees of the game expressed a resounding “yes!” on Friday, Jan. 22. They gathered at Minami Community Center for the city’s fourth annual mahjong tournament. **Donna Eschen** is the energetic, imaginative, and efficient force behind this benefit for the Special Olympics program, which is sponsored by the Department of Recreation and Parks.

Among the players were **Maggie Daanes**, **Mary Oliver**, **Pam Elken**, and **Suzanne Levy**. Suzanne told me, “I grew up watching my mother play mahjong. It is having a resurgence.”

Apparently, this comeback in popularity is well deserved. The game “is so much fun,” **Celeste Coelho Hudson** said. “About 30 of us play every Friday at the Elwin Mussell Senior Center. You should come.” I am thinking about it, Celeste. But first, I have to take lessons (from Donna, of course).

The ladies (there were three men playing) are so revved up about the game that some of them wore Asian print tops and silk jackets. Not to mention bracelets and earrings fashioned from mahjong tiles.

This tournament ran from 9:30 a.m. to about 2 p.m., after which raffle winners were announced and prizes presented to the top three game scorers. First prize was \$150. Second prize was \$100, and third, \$75. Special Olympics athlete **Taylor Stewart** helped distribute prizes.

Twenty-two tables for four were placed around the playing room. The tabletops were

covered with white tiles (think Scrabble pieces) bearing Chinese characters. When the games begins, a stillness fills the room as players focus on picking up and moving tiles.

It is best not to start a conversation at this time. When a player achieved a mahjong goal (unknown to me—I am new to all of this), he or she flung up a hand to alert a room monitor who noted the win.

The \$38 entry fee included a lovely Continental breakfast of Starbucks coffee, Danish, banana bread, hard-boiled eggs, and miscellaneous munchies. Lunch, also included, featured pulled pork on ciabatta, tuna salad on croissants, salads, more munchies, cheesecake, and homemade cream puffs.

This is the Chinese Year of the Pig, and pig figurines were everywhere, even in the raffle prizes and on the menu (pulled pork).

Last year, this event brought in \$6,000. **Bianca McNeil** of the city’s parks department told me that the money raised pays for travel expenses, equipment, and uniforms for the Special Olympics participants. This year’s tournament may have done better as there was an online auction as well.

All we can say, is carry on and sally forth, Donna. All this is good.

Heart of the Valley

Local history buffs began the New Year with a real treat. It turns out that **Jay Hardy**, founder of Hardy Diagnostics and the Moxie Café on McCoy, is a self-proclaimed history nerd and a devoted student Santa Maria’s aviation past.



DEVOTED TO THE GAME From left to right, Maggie Daane, Suzanne Levy, and Boots Hersh enjoy the fourth annual mahjong tournament on Jan. 22.

As the first speaker in a new series, Heart of the Valley, Jay had a firm hold on his audience of about 55. Heart of the Valley replaced the Historical Society’s The Valley Speaks series. The new program is sponsored by the library and orchestrated by our local history muse, **Shirley Contreras**.

Jay’s hour-long talk, “The Warbirds of Santa Maria,” covered the evolution of an early flying school: The Hancock College of Aeronautics, which became an important training facility for WWII pilots, thanks to the effort of Capt. G. Allan Hancock. It was held Saturday morning, Jan. 19, in the main library’s Shepard Hall.

Jay’s impressive array of facts and comprehensive slide show kept us enthralled. More than 8,000 men trained in Santa Maria. This included four who flew bombing missions

over Japan with Gen. James Doolittle. The program could have been subtitled, “Everything You Wanted to Know about G. Allan Hancock,” the main man behind local aviation. Jay even had a copy of Hancock’s birth certificate.

Among the crowd was City Manager **Jason Stillwell**. We agreed that the fact that Hancock Aeronautical College once had ties with the University of Southern California was news to us.

Other familiar faces were **Dawn Kamiya** and **Jim Bray**. Jim is so into airplanes that he recently ran for the local airport district board.

Methinks we will be seeing more of Jay Hardy on the lecture circuit. ○

If you want to hobnob with Helen, you may contact her at column151@gmail.com.

NEWS continued page 6

of food to 370 families and 1,198 individuals countywide during its shutdown distributions, according to the data.

“It was useful,” Smith-Meyer said. “We were really happy to be of service.”

Still, none of those distributions were budgeted for or expected, and Smith-Meyer said the Foodbank is largely leaning on community donations and volunteers to help make up for that loss. So far, she said, the residents of Santa Barbara County have been hugely supportive.

Smith-Meyer said Foodbank staff will be keeping their eyes on any shutdown updates, and if another comes in three weeks, they’ll be prepared to start up the distributions again.

“None of us are totally beyond the reach of food insecurity,” she said.

—Kasey Bubnash

Oceano neighborhood ‘in shock’ over homicide

As the SLO County Sheriff’s Office continued to investigate the homicide of 90-year-old Larry Bross, friends and neighbors of the well-known community activist are still reeling from the news of his death.

“The whole neighborhood is in shock and sorrow and misses him deeply,” Nell Langford, who owns a vacation home on the same street as Bross and worked with him on addressing several community issues, told the *Sun*.

Bross was found dead in his home in the 1400 block of Strand Way in Oceano on Jan. 24. The SLO County Sheriff’s Department is investigating the death as a homicide, but has released few other details. Questions from other residents in the neighborhood about the killing prompted Langford to

organize a meeting at her home. Langford said the purpose of the meeting was to share information and dispel the rumors circulating in the neighborhood since Bross’ death.

“What we learned at the meeting is that we really don’t know anything,” she said. “We don’t know if they have or have not caught the person, who did it, or if that person or persons are still at-large.”

Langford said she reached out to the Sheriff’s Office, but no one from the department attended the meeting. She said she hopes they will attend the next meeting. In a press release about Bross’ death, the Sheriff’s Office characterized the homicide as an “isolated incident” and stated that there was no risk to the public.

Bross was a longtime activist connected with issues related to the Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area, which butts up against the backyard of his home. He was a

vocal proponent of limiting recreational vehicle activity on the dunes and even helped to defeat SLO County’s attempts to sell the La Grande tract of the dunes to State Parks.

“He was loved, respected, admired,” Langford said. “He didn’t have an enemy in the world. He made friends with everyone, even people whose ideas were different from his own.”

As of Jan. 30, Bross’ death remained under investigation. On Jan. 28, the Sheriff’s Office released a statement asking anyone who had contact with Bross during the last two weeks to contact them. The Sheriff’s Office is also asking any Strand Way residents who might have video surveillance footage to contact them as well. Anyone with information can contact the Sheriff’s Detective Division at (805) 781-4500 or at Crime Stoppers at (805) 549-STOP and slostop.org. ○

—Chris McGuinness

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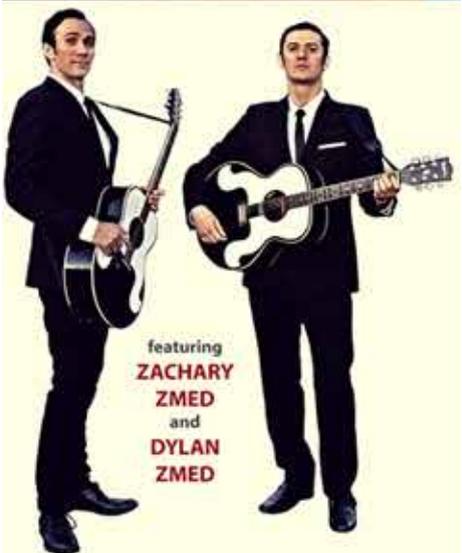
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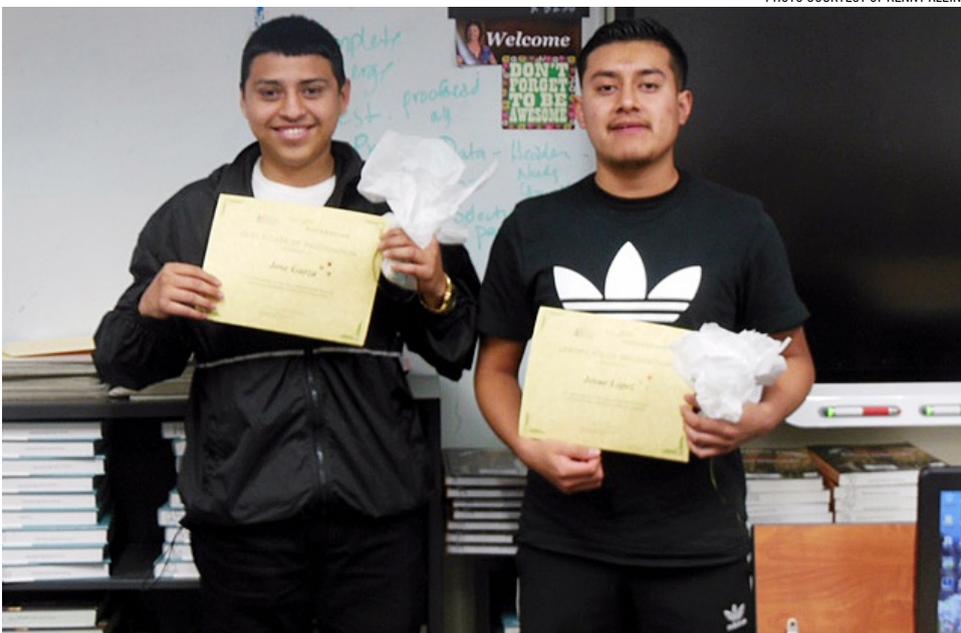
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NEWS

SPOTLIGHT ON BUSINESS

PHOTO COURTESY OF KENNY KLEIN



WALL STREET BOUND: SMHS seniors Jose Garza (left) and Josue Lopez Vega (right) ranked sixth out of more than 1,000 teams during the Stock Market Project's Los Angeles regional competition.

BY CALEB WISEBLOOD

For more than a decade, Santa Maria High School (SMHS) teacher Cindy Quaid has incorporated the Stock Market Game, an online simulation of global capital markets intended for grades four through 12, into her business economics and marketing courses. The program, started by the SIFMA Foundation, is meant to spark participating students' interest in economics and personal finance.

“My goal [with the project] is that all of the students learn about different types of investments, return on investments, diversification, broker fees, and how to trade,” Quaid told the Sun.

Also the school's chair of the Department of Business and Technology, Quaid has seen SMHS teams rank as high as 30th place in the Stock Market Game's Los Angeles regional competition over the years. The bar was recently raised substantially, however, after two of Quaid's economics students placed sixth out of more than 1,000 competing teams.

“I was elated,” Quaid said. “When I first saw the ranking, I had to look up all of the rankings [to verify].”

No amount of double takes could have changed the good news. SMHS seniors Jose Garza and Josue Lopez Vega were the duo responsible for the victory.

“Josue and Jose did a good job of investing early on,” Quaid said. “I prefer to allow students to work in a team of two players, which I select, because they often gain confidence from one another in venture.”

The project granted each team a hypothetical amount of \$100,000 to use however they best saw fit. The investments corresponded to real-time trading, which obligated Garza and Vega to buy stocks at the closing price of the day prior, as their class was during the afternoon when the New York Stock Exchange was already closed, Quaid explained. Broker fees were also applied to the project and deducted from each team's earnings accordingly.

“Since the money was ‘virtual,’ I did require each team to spend as much as they could,” Quaid said. “There was only an eight-week span of participation, and the stock market was crazy during the time.”

The duo didn't make gains on all of their purchases, of course, Quaid said, but enough to rank as high as they did in the regional competition. Garza and Vega researched as much as they could before strategizing their game plan and choosing companies to purchase stock from.

The companies included Verizon, Visa, Vanguard, Honda, CRH, PepsiCo, ExxonMobil, CVS Health, and American Water. The highest gain the duo managed to score during the

project was a 32 percent gain with Tesla.

“They had already researched and selected their stocks [prior to the project], and they spent the majority of their virtual money right away,” Quaid said. “I think that investing early paid off for them. They didn't sell anything once the simulation began, they just sat back and watched.”

For more information on the Stock Market Game and its regional competitions, visit stockmarketgame.org. To find out more about business courses and other programs at SMHS, visit santamariahighschool.org.

Highlights:

- The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program, in partnership with Allan Hancock College and Cal Poly, will offer free tax help to people who generally make \$54,000 a year or less, persons with disabilities, and limited English speaking taxpayers who need assistance preparing their own tax returns. Preparation begins on Feb. 2. Call (805) 922-0329, Ext. 103, to make an appointment.

- The Santa Maria Public Library Foundation hosts its fifth annual fundraiser, Love Your Library, on Feb. 10 from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. at the Santa Maria Public Library. The event includes guest speaker Rona Barrett and live music from the Tri City Sound Chorus. Admission is \$50 and includes lunch, wine, and beer. Call (805) 925-0994 for more information. ○

Calendar Editor Caleb Wiseblood wrote this week's Biz Spotlight. Information should be sent to the Sun via fax, mail, or email at spotlight@santamariasun.com.

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FILE PHOTO BY KASEY BUBNASH

Mayor's Task Force to launch two youth-focused programs

BY KASEY BUBNASH

Since its creation, the Mayor's Task Force on Youth Safety has been criticized by community members as excluding the very group it's supposed to be focused on: youth. Now the city is gearing up to launch two programs that would bring local teens to the table.

Both programs, dubbed the Mayor's Youth Advisory Board and the Student Leadership Program, were developed late in 2018, and will be launched within the next few months. The goal of both programs is to include teens in the conversation, according to Dennis Smitherman, a management analyst for the Santa Maria Recreation and Parks Department.

"The teens will provide a different perspective from our adult point of view and will be able to point out areas of concerns and good points, as well," Smitherman said. "We're looking to find what they like about the city and what we can expand on."

The Mayor's Youth Advisory Board will work directly with Mayor Alice Patino on issues that

teens face in the city. The board will be made up of about eight to 12 high school students, with representatives from each grade, who will be chosen by city and school staff based on a simple one-page application, Smitherman said.

Slated to begin at the end of February, the board will meet with Patino on a monthly basis.

Students on the board will have an opportunity to advocate for whatever changes and improvements their peers see as being necessary to improve the city, Smitherman said, and the program was well received at recent presentations to a few local high schools. Students liked the idea of being increasingly represented, he said, and several students seemed interested in applying.

The Student Leadership Program will launch in March, and will give another large group of students the opportunity to learn about the city's departments and functions, while also gaining leadership and communication skills.

Kids involved in the Student Leadership Program, who Smitherman said will be referred to the city by school staff, will visit at least two city departments a month. Through a facilitator, they'll also learn about resume building, job applications, and how to effectively communicate in a professional setting, among other much-needed skills.

"There's not a lot of civic programming anymore," Smitherman said, "and this is a great opportunity for kids to learn about the city and themselves."

Both programs were developed as part of the Mayor's Task Force on Youth Safety, which was designed to address common issues impacting kids and their families in Santa Maria after a series of gang-related killings and an increase in violent crime shook the city in 2015.

Shortly after its start in 2017, the task force was scrutinized by a Santa Barbara County grand jury, which found various inefficiencies in the organization despite the city's objections that it was still too early to be evaluated. Community members and advocacy organizations have also criticized the task force for not including teen input in its planning process and development.

At one meeting in October 2017, teen Vanessa



RESPONSE TO CRITICISM: Local youth representatives, including members of Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy, held a press conference (pictured) outside Santa Maria High School on Dec. 4, 2017, where they criticized the Mayor's Task Force on Youth Safety for excluding teens from the city's youth safety plan. Now, the city is launching two programs aimed at bringing more kids to the table.

Cantu said the two youth representatives originally assigned to the task force weren't enough. Before helpful adults suggested the idea of youth representatives, Cantu said she had asked task force members if teens could be more involved.

"I came to ask for youth to have a seat at the table and they totally dismissed me," Cantu said at the meeting. "They took it more like my opinions weren't as valid as the adults' were."

Nearly 30 percent of all Santa Marians are teens, according to Smitherman, and the city needs those perspectives.

"So it's a huge component of our population,"

he said. "Sometimes we don't hear them very well, so we want to give them this opportunity. This way we can reach out to them at their schools and really, hopefully, get honest feedback to concerns they may have."

Mayor Patino did not respond to multiple requests for comment. ○

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.

ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

PHOTO COURTESY OF GREG VEGHER



Kainoa Keuma

St. Joseph High School senior Kainoa Keuma has made leaps and bounds since his first year with the school's boys' basketball team—and it shows.

The numbers don't lie: The point guard averages about 14.5 points a game, according to head coach Tom Mott. He makes more than 40 percent of his shots from the 3-point line, and during eight games of this season, he's scored more than 20 points.

Keuma is a big reason the Knights are doing so well this year, with a record of 19 wins and five losses as of Jan. 23.

"Kainoa is an incredibly hard worker and a joy to coach," Mott said.

Although Keuma's high school basketball career will soon be over, his coach said he has a great chance at playing college ball. ○

—Kasey Bubnash



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The thought that counts



PHOTO BY KASEY BUBNASH

PANHANDLING AT 7-ELEVEN: 7-Elevens are known to be frequented by homeless individuals panhandling, and the company has tried a number of different ways—including blasting classical music and posting signs admonishing panhandling—to remove the problem. Neither of those strategies were in use at this 7-Eleven on West Stowell Road when we surveyed local homeless people there on Jan. 24.

Two homeless men sit handcuffed on the pavement. As far as we know, they've done nothing wrong, and it's because of us that they're detained here.

This isn't how the morning was supposed to go.

It's well past 7 a.m., and we'd been waiting for the police to arrive for at least a half hour, standing bored outside the 7-Eleven on West Stowell Road with two homeless men we met while helping out with the county's biennial attempt to tally every unsheltered homeless person in the area.

Information gathered by volunteers during the Point in Time Count is used by various organizations and the county to secure further funding and resources for the local homeless population. We're supposed to be helping them, but these men weren't so sure we'd be "helping" when we called the police earlier.

"They don't like Mexicans," one of the men had said to me and the other two volunteers in my group as we were waiting.

"They see tattoos on you and they think they know you right off the bat," the other had said.

"They"—the police—were on their way. During our survey with the men, they told us a 7-Eleven employee had hit one of them in the face minutes before we got there. A red mark on his face seemed to prove it. They said they'd like to file a report—the store's cameras would make their case a winning one, they said—but thought nobody would listen to them.

Covered in tattoos, the men said that they'd both had their fair share of run-ins with the law. They had records and really didn't get along with cops. So instead of reporting the crime, they wanted to leave before the police showed up.

We had convinced them to stay, to hold the

How a naïve but well-intentioned attempt to lend a helping hand led police to profile and temporarily detain two homeless men

BY KASEY BUBNASH

alleged assailant accountable, to get justice.

Now, an officer is shouting at the men, the victims of the incident we reported, telling them to shut up and get down on the ground. He searches them, cuffs them, and yells at us to back away from the area.

My group-mates shout back, trying to tell the officer that we were the ones who called, that there must be a mistake, that he is arresting the wrong people.

"Stop talking or I'm going to cuff you and put you in the car!" the officer yells back, clearly overwhelmed by the situation and confused by my acquaintances' vocal presence.

We obey and watch the situation unfold, stunned. Between spats of back-talking the officer, the men we'd tried and miserably failed to help look back at us knowingly, and shake their heads. A physical manifestation of "I told you so."

"This is why they don't trust the police," one of my group-mates says.

I hadn't thought much about the Point in Time Count before it was finally time to do it. But as I stand in a line of sleepy volunteers on the steps of the Ethel Pope Auditorium at Santa Maria High School at 5 a.m. on Jan. 24, I start feeling nervous.

I hadn't been able to make any of the one-hour-long trainings, so I had scanned the

informational PowerPoint that was sent to me the day before, and I didn't learn much. I had heard, however, that each group would have an experienced leader, and that made me feel better.

I get my volunteer badge, a cup of complimentary (and cold) coffee, and sit near a few groups of other women.

At about 5:30 a.m., Dorothy Mogavero, regional director of outreach for Northern Santa Barbara County United Way, walks to the front of the auditorium and signals for the crowd's attention. She runs down the list of tips and safety precautions I'd read over the night before:

Always stay with your group.
Don't take any risks.
Keep an appropriate distance.
Don't be overly emotional.

My group would eventually break each of these rules.

Each group is to be made up of three to four volunteers, Mogavero tells us, including one pre-designated group leader who had either experienced homelessness in the past or who is well acquainted with the local homeless community. They know where to find people, and how to approach them.

However, Mogavero says there aren't enough of these guides for every geographical area that needs to be covered in Santa Maria. She asks for a few volunteers.

A woman sitting directly behind me, Alicia Wolff, jumps up and says she'd be happy to lead. She grabs a map from Mogavero, sits back down, and seconds later, asks me if I'd like to join her group.

I gladly accept. Wolff's group consists of her and one other woman, Amber Maness, and both seem outgoing and confident about completing the task ahead.

We grab a clipboard, a tote bag filled with "tools of engagement,"—socks, snacks, McDonald's gift cards, and toiletries to give out while surveying people—and we are on our way.

"So," Alicia says as we walk out of auditorium toward her car, "have either of you done this before?"

Amber and I both shake our heads. Alicia cringes a little when she realizes that we're all first-timers.

"The blind leading the blind," she says with a laugh.

I laugh, too, but my nerves persist.

Making it count

The Point in Time Count is conducted every two years by Santa Barbara County United Way and mandated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. During the count, hundreds of volunteers and experts canvass assigned routes throughout Santa Barbara County and document how many individuals and families are experiencing unsheltered homelessness. The information gathered during the count is later used by the county and various organizations to secure program funding, plan local homeless assistance systems, and to raise public awareness. This year's Point in Time Count took place on Jan. 24 from 5 to 8:30 a.m.

I zip my coat up higher as we scour the edges of a parking lot. Alicia, adhering to her role as team leader, guides Amber and me behind bushes and around light poles, shining her flashlight into corners kept dark despite the slowly rising sun.

If anyone had slept there throughout the night, there is no trace left now.

It's getting lighter out, but we'd only surveyed one person. He'd slept in a park the night before, and he said he lost his apartment when his significant other died months earlier and he couldn't afford the rent on his own. He hadn't found a place to work yet, he said. Even if he did score a job interview, he didn't have anywhere to shave or clean up for it.

I'm thinking about that first participant as Alicia, Amber, and I make our way down West Stowell Road toward Broadway. It took longer than I'd expected to interview him, and he was surprisingly open with us, willing to share all kinds of information about his life and situation.

Alicia and Amber had been so laid-back and natural throughout the survey process that it felt like nothing more than a regular conversation between old friends.

Alicia says that she's always been extroverted, and never judgemental. Amber, who works at a local Salvation Army, says she has significant experience working with the homeless, and she volunteered in an effort to further build rapport with the community.

I was tense during our first survey, but I'm feeling more confident as we approach the 7-Eleven on Stowell near Santa Maria High School.

A man with ragged clothes stands near a red shopping cart at the entrance. We offer him a gift card, some food, and toiletries, which he accepts. But he doesn't want to answer any questions.

We walk toward the neighboring alleyway, which shares its entrance with the 7-Eleven parking lot. As Amber and Alicia canvass the alley, I pull up the Point in Time Count surveying app on my phone to answer questions included in the "observation survey." Volunteers use it to count a homeless person who isn't willing to participate. I fill out a description of him—estimated age range, ethnicity, location—as best I can.

We are deciding where to go next as two men fling open the door of the 7-Eleven, grab the shopping cart near the door, and head in our direction. Clearly agitated, they're shouting, saying something is "bullshit."

I immediately notice their tattoos. I scan their clothes: clean.

I'm not sure whether they're homeless and don't want to worsen the situation or insult them by asking.

But as I back away, Alicia and Amber approach them.



MAPPING IT OUT: A digital map included in the he Counting Us app (pictured) allows volunteers to pinpoint the exact locations of unsheltered homeless individuals they come in contact with.

We confirm that the two men have been homeless off and on for months, and they agree to be surveyed. Then they tell us what had set them off.

One of the men says they were shopping in the store when, for some reason, an argument ensued between them and an employee. The confrontation, he says, ended with the employee walking around the register counter and hitting him.

Amber and Alicia gasp when he shows them the right side of his face, which is a little red. He says the mark is from the alleged assault. When we ask if the employee punched him, he laughs a little and says, "He bitch-slapped me!"

The story isn't finished yet, but Amber marches into the store to yell at the employees.

"I don't care what someone looks like," she tells me later. "I was horrendously bullied in school, so I can't handle seeing someone being taken advantage of."

Next she calls the police.

Although the men had previously mentioned filing a report (or maybe even a lawsuit because of the security footage), now that the police are really on their way, the two debate whether to leave between answering the survey questions. They'd both done time in prison, and although they say that those lives are behind them, they don't think the cops will see it that way. They don't want to give the police their real names and grapple with the idea of being "snitches."

Amber promises that she'll do the talking. She tells the men that having tattoos, a bad past, or being homeless doesn't give anyone a permit to physically assault them. So they stick around.

The Santa Maria Police were right in the middle of a shift change when Amber called, and said it would be a few minutes before any

officers arrived. More than a few have passed, and still no sign of the cops.

Everyone's getting antsy, and Alicia suggests we grab some snacks inside to pass the time. So she, Amber, and I, awkwardly buy coffees, soda, and taquitos from the very employees we'd just reported to the police.

A police car and motorcycle are sitting in the parking lot when we walk out. I hear shouting, and my heart drops.

As we round the corner to the alleyway, I see an officer, identified by his badge as D. Rhoads, shouting at the homeless men we'd met, telling them to sit on the ground. One of the men is holding a cellphone out, attempting to record the interaction as Rhoads repeatedly demands they get down.

Amber shouts for the officer to stop, and says that we are the ones who called.

Rhoads looks at us, clearly confused, and tells us to back away. Amber repeats herself, more aggressively this time, and adds that I work for a newspaper and am taking notes. Rhoads snaps back.

He cuffs the men.

Another officer, J. Uhl, had been standing by quietly. He introduces himself to us, takes down our names and information, and Amber panickedly tells him all about the Point in Time Count, the 7-Eleven employee, and the men we were trying to help.

"We're supposed to be out here looking out for these guys," she says.

Uhl tries to calm Amber down. He says he was just called in for backup, that the two men we'd surveyed weren't exactly being cooperative when Rhoads arrived on scene. The 7-Eleven employee had also called the department to make his own report, Uhl says, a story that doesn't quite align with what the men had told us.

Uhl then walks over to Rhoads—the chaos has since eased—and the officers quietly assess the situation.

Rhoads listens to the men's story, uncuffs them, and asks if they want to file a report. The answer, obviously, is no. They just want to leave. And, shopping cart in tow, they do, no better off than before they knew us.

Rhoads says he arrived on scene with very little information: There had been an incident at 7-Eleven, two men with tattoos were involved and were still waiting around outside.

He tells us later that he recognized the men from past encounters, often ones they'd been on the wrong side of. He saw their tattoos, remembered their records, and assumed they were the instigators.

He made a snap judgement, he says, and it was the wrong one. He apologizes profusely.

Still, he adds that the men weren't necessarily cooperative or wholly truthful about the situation.

"They aren't exactly choir boys," he says.

The cuffs, he says, were merely to prevent a physical fight from ensuing—Amber can't

believe that someone would attack an armed officer—and he says that our shouting didn't help the situation.

He says he hopes we can understand his perspective, and I think we all can. He shakes our hands, and we leave, with lessons learned and little remaining time to continue our count.

Later, as we make our way back to Santa Maria High School to return our supplies, Amber reflects on her first count.

Although she says she understood and accepted Rhoads' side of things, and greatly appreciated the apology, she was surprised by how he had treated the two men. She reiterates that situations like the one we'd just seen must be at least part of the reason why it's sometime so difficult to gain the trust of the homeless community. They apparently can't always trust police, or even the volunteers who call them.

She says she was also shocked at how few of the other homeless individuals we met knew about available services in the area, including those who'd been homeless for years. Some didn't know about the Salvation Army, or where to get free food and clothes.

Amber also says that if she were to do the count again, she'd want a little more guidance regarding where to find people and how to approach them. But when it comes to giving immediate help to those experiencing homelessness, Amber says she's confident now that she knows what they really need:

"They just want someone to listen," she says. ○

Staff Writer Kasey Bubnash can be reached at kbubnash@santamariasun.com.



EVERYONE COUNTS: The Counting Us app (pictured) plays a major role in the Point in Time Count. Volunteers who download the app use it to document detailed information about unsheltered homeless individuals who agree to be surveyed. It also includes a less extensive observation questionnaire for those who can't or won't participate.

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We welcome submissions. Please accompany them with a self-addressed, stamped envelope. All letters to the editor become the property of the Sun.

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The importance of mentoring

Being a Big Brother changed my life, and it could change yours too

BY JON VANDERHOOF

Being a mentor is one of the most important roles we may fulfill. We benefit from mentoring relationships throughout our lives. This is especially true for kids. Kids need mentors. They need positive role models from whom they can learn and trust.

If you think back to your own childhood, you may recall an adult who was a valued mentor to you. It may have been a family member, like a parent. It may also have been someone else like a teacher, a coach, or a family friend. Although my parents were my primary mentors, there were other adults who took an interest in me and helped to shape who I would become as an adult.

Things have changed—a lot—since I was young. Kids today have to deal with a lot more than in the past. They need adults they can trust who will listen to them; encourage them; and when appropriate, offer guidance. Mentors are more important than ever. An adult who cares can make a big difference in the life of a child. It might be in a profound way or in smaller, simpler ways that over time still have a profound, life-changing impact.

A little more than 10 years ago I began my journey as a mentor. I had been thinking of ways I could serve my community when I noticed an advertisement for Big Brothers Big Sisters. After initial training and a background check, I was matched with a boy who had just turned 11 years old. I would ultimately be his “Big” until he was 19. Now, I have been matched to a new “Little” for a little more than a year.

Big Brothers Big Sisters is recognized as the single most effective prevention-based mentoring program in the United States. At-risk children ages 6 to 15 years old are carefully matched with adult mentors, who help them reach their full potential through one-on-one relationships built on trust, friendship, consistency, support, and guidance.

Their mission is to provide children facing adversity with strong and enduring, professionally supported relationships that change their lives for the better. Every year, volunteer Big Brothers and Big Sisters help improve the lives of more than 200 youth in Santa Barbara County, many from single-parent, low-income homes.

Big Brothers Big Sisters does an excellent job of matching Bigs with Littles who have similar interests. I have really enjoyed my experience and recommend it highly. I try to create experiences for my Little that will broaden his horizons and provide lifelong memories. I often find that things I already like to do are more enjoyable when shared with my Little. Even things I’ve done many times are more fun and take on a feeling of newness.

One of my commitments is to simply show up, to be a consistent presence in the life of my Little. In my first relationship, there were a few times when my Little didn’t show up. Once, I wasn’t able to connect with him for about a month. I kept calling and did not give up. It was an opportunity for me to show him that I was committed to the relationship and that he was important to me.

My Little and I spend a lot of time together doing simple things we both enjoy (tossing a football, shooting hoops, bowling, playing pingpong), being on a “mission” to find the best hamburger—a search that extends from Los Angeles to Paso Robles—or experiencing new things like going to the snow, kayaking, fishing, trying different kinds of food. Time is one of the best gifts an adult can give to a kid. One or two hours a week is all it takes. What takes a relatively small amount of time can have a huge impact on a child.

I appreciate the professional support provided by Big Brothers Big Sisters. Although I was spending time in a one-to-one relationship with my Little, I never felt like I was in it alone. At the

same time I sought to encourage and support my Little, I was being encouraged and supported by our caseworker and other staff.

You may be the one who can change a child’s life for the better, forever. Big Brothers and Big Sisters are community leaders, professionals, college students, retirees, military personnel, married couples, and others who are caring adults. There are kids right now who are waiting to have a Big come into their life. You can do things you enjoy while creating fun experiences and lifelong memories for a child. By becoming a Big you can have a positive impact on and be a positive influence in the life of a child. ○

Jon Vanderhoof is a Big Brother in Santa Maria. Send comments through the editor at clanham@santamariasun.com or write your own opinion

LETTERS

Refreshing approach to a tough problem

The primary election for 2020 is just 13 months from now in March of 2020; it’s time to start thinking about who the Santa Barbara County supervisor of the 4th District should be. The incumbent has announced that he doesn’t intend to run again, so the seat is open.

The county, like almost every other city and county in the state has a growing budget problem. Someone needs to propose solutions rather than painting a rosy picture. Instead of spending more money on pet projects and banishing revenue-producing businesses, maybe it’s time for a different voice in the decision-making process.

It’s past time for a laser-like focus on the revenue side of the budget, and I know and respect someone who has been studying the issues, analyzing staff reports, and attending Board of Supervisor meetings for more than 20 years. He is without a doubt an expert on the subject.

I have found him to be fiscally responsible and knowledgeable of every major issue confronting the county. He has consistently stressed the importance of nurturing businesses, specifically those that produce significant revenue flow for the ailing general fund, which pays for firefighters, sheriff’s deputies, parks, libraries, and schools.

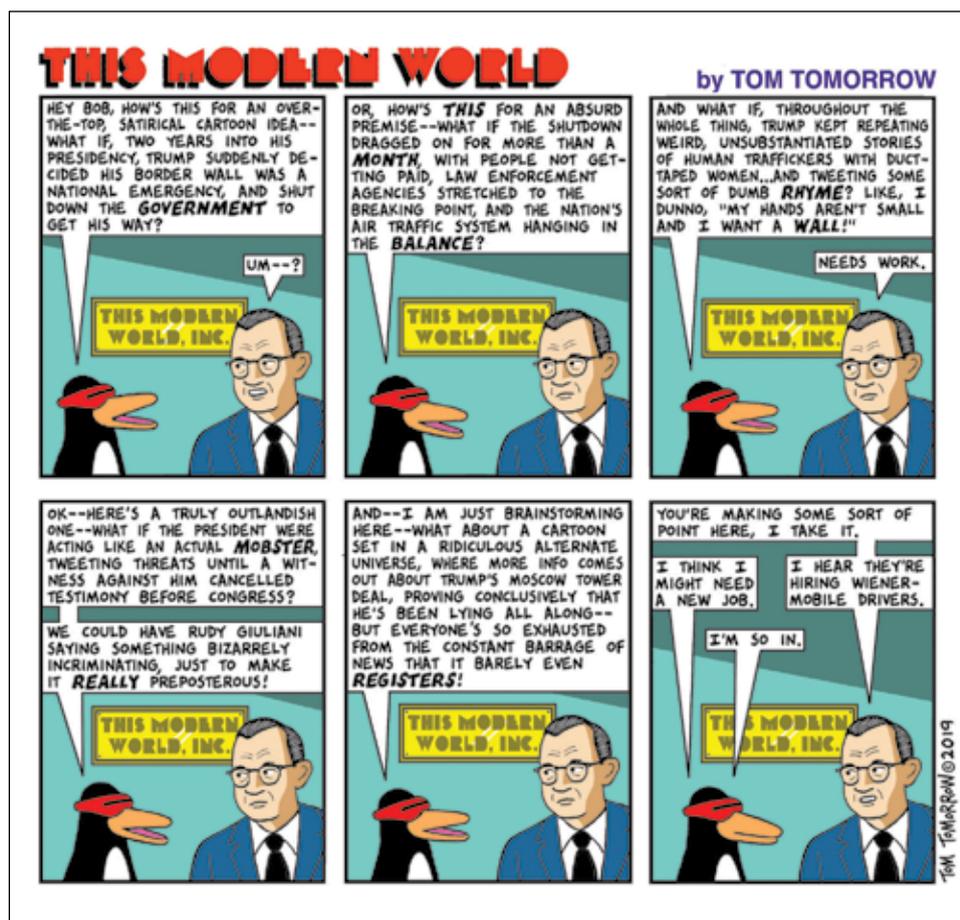
I asked him what he thought was needed. “I’ve said and have been saying for years, we aren’t thinking big enough on how to transform the county bureaucracy into a leaner, smarter, and more cost-efficient organization that emphasizes the critical need for revenue generation via a thriving county economy and innovative process improvements. And we certainly aren’t maximizing our comparable advantages as it relates to our county’s unique opportunity to increase local revenues by enhancing existing resource development, or by growing new economic sectors,” he responded.

This is a refreshing approach and one that should be embraced by folks who would like to see existing county services maintained for the next several years. We need this kind of thinking at the helm, and he may be able to convince others that this is the right way to success.

His support for revenue-producing projects to help resolve budget issues is unwavering. I am confident that his approach to creating that “leaner, smarter, and more cost-efficient organization” would be strategic based on his broad experience in these matters.

So, who is this mystery man? I believe that Joe Armendariz, a strong industry and taxpayer advocate, would be in the best position to serve the 4th District and the entire county. If you think so too, talk to Joe and urge him to run.

Ron Fink
Lompoc



Payday

Just got the first press release I've had from the **Los Padres National Forest** since before Christmas! Why does that matter?

Well, I'm glad you asked. It means that—drum roll please—the **United States of America** is back, baby! The federal government is no longer partially shut down! For at least three weeks, possibly longer, but I'm not going to pin any hopes and dreams on that.

As our fair-weather elected officials duke it out over border security, furloughed federal workers are back in action. But they still won't likely get paid until Jan. 31.

The good news is, if people want to celebrate getting paid to work again, they can head on into that beautiful national forest of ours and light up a campfire or a charcoal barbecue (in designated areas, of course, unless you have a California Campfire Permit)! Snow and rain have made the Central Coast moist enough to reduce fire restrictions in the national forest, according to that super exciting first press release of 2019.

Speaking of exciting, volunteering for the **Point In Time Homeless Count** is apparently extremely exhilarating if you don't follow the safety rules outlined for the counters who walk the streets of **Santa Maria** in the pre-dawn darkness searching for homeless people to survey.



More than 500 volunteers fanned out across Santa Barbara County on Jan. 24 to help perform the biennial count of the homeless population. There were enough volunteers to cover all of the geographical areas that the count needed to take into consideration. Most everything went to plan, according to the **Northern Santa Barbara County United Way**. Most every group probably followed those aforementioned safety rules.

I guess you never know what's going to happen when you call the police. For instance: They could handcuff the people you're trying to help, because those people look a certain way. It's called profiling—you've probably heard of it and it's alive and well in Santa Maria. Also, just know that something interesting is always happening at a **7-Eleven** near you.

It seems as if at least one corporation reads the news—and doesn't think it's fake. **Southern California Edison**. The company is embroiled in about 75 lawsuits due to the **Thomas Fire**, which many claim the utility provider caused, and the resulting **Montecito mudslide**. Well, the Southern California electricity company recently filed a cross-complaint alleging that Santa Barbara County knew there was the potential for deadly debris flows in the area.

Although **Edison spokesperson David Song** didn't tell our reporter that a certain **Los Angeles Times** article was the reason for the counter-suit, the timing is telling. The **LA Times** article in question (published on Dec. 20) outlines a history of county documents that detail the dangers of potential debris flows in the area and alleges that the county could have done more to stop the mudslide, but did not.

A month after that article comes out, the company files a countersuit.

You know what's crazy? The fact that Southern California Edison probably has more time, money, and resources to spend on that kind of research than the **LA Times**, but didn't: #journalism.

The canary is all about that boots in the air reporting at canary@santamariasun.com.

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RANDY HOUSER

FRIDAY

FEB 15

8 PM



THE CLAIRVOYANTS

FRIDAY

FEB 22

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HOT STUFF

JAN. 31 – FEB. 7
2019



FILE PHOTO COURTESY OF THE GUADALUPE-NIPOMO DUNES CENTER

STAY GOLD

The Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes Center hosts its Huell Howser Walk on Feb. 9 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Oso Flaco Lake. This annual walk takes place in memory of Howser, the television personality best known for hosting California's Gold on PBS. Admission is free, but donations are suggested. More info: (805) 343-2455 or dunescenter.org.

SPECIAL EVENTS

SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS

CHAPEL TO CHURCH HALF MARATHON RUN/WALK Run/walk from San Ramon Chapel, Sisquoc, to St. Louis de Montfort Church, Orcutt. Benefits Catholic Charities of Santa Maria Valley. **Feb. 2**, 8 a.m.-noon \$65-\$75 (includes lunch and t-shirt). 805-937-4555. chapeltochurch.com. Santa Maria, Citywide, Santa Maria.

SOUTH COAST SLO COUNTY

AVILA BEACH SPAGHETTI DINNER/BINGO NIGHT Enjoy a spaghetti dinner with salad, garlic bread, and dessert followed by Bingo. Dinner tickets include first bingo card. **Feb. 1**, 6-8:30 p.m. \$10; \$5 for children ages 6 and under. 805-627-1997. avilabeachcc.com. Avila Beach Community Center, 191 San Miguel St., Avila Beach.

WESTERN MONARCH DAY CELEBRATION Features booths and activities for children including face painting, story time, poster art, a bean bag toss, and a short parade at 12:30 p.m. The Pismo Beach Visitors' Bureau will provide cake. **Feb. 2**, 10 a.m.-3:30 p.m. 805-474-2664. centralcoastparks.org. Monarch Butterfly Grove, 400 S Dolliver St., Pismo Beach.

SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS

CIRCLES OF EMPOWERMENT: IMBOLC DANCE This fundraiser dance, like the Gaelic traditional festival, celebrates the beginning of spring. Proceeds benefit COE. Features music from the Zen Mountain Poets. **Feb. 2**, 7 p.m. \$10-\$20 suggested donation. circlesofempowerment.org. San Luis Obispo Guild Hall, 2880 Broad St, San Luis Obispo, (805) 528-4000.

SMALL BUSINESS, MIGHTY IMPACT Hosted by the Women's Business Center of SLO. Features locally owned products, networking sessions, keynote speakers, craft appetizers, and a no host bar. **Jan. 31**, 3-7 p.m. \$25. 805-595-1357. mcscorp.org/small-business-mighty-impact2019. Embassy Suites, 333 Madonna Rd., San Luis Obispo.

HOLIDAY EVENTS

SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS

CHINESE NEW YEAR CELEBRATION Learn about Chinese New Year with Shiu-Ching McSparron. **Feb. 6**, 4-5 p.m. Free. 805-925-0994. Santa Maria Public Library, 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria.

SAN LUIS OBISPO

38TH CHINESE NEW YEAR CELEBRATION Hosted by Central Coast Chinese Association. Features activities, food, entertainment, and more. **Feb. 2**, 4:30-8 p.m. \$15-\$25. centralcoast-chinese-association.org. Veteran's Memorial Building, 801 Grand Ave., San Luis Obispo, (510) 285-6221.

ARTS

CLASSES & WORKSHOPS

SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS

BALLROOM, LATIN, AND SWING LESSONS Marie King and Kings of Swing offer dance lessons for all ages and skill levels. Couples and singles welcome. Wednesdays, 6:30-8:30 p.m. \$36 for 4-week session. 805-928-7799. Oasis Senior Center, 420 Soares Ave., Orcutt.

BASIC WATERCOLOR No experience required. Tuesdays, 1-3 p.m. \$8. Oasis Senior Center, 420 Soares Ave., Orcutt, 805-937-9750.

BEADING WORKSHOP Thursdays, noon oasiorcutt.org. Oasis Senior Center, 420 Soares Ave., Orcutt, 805-937-9750.

COUNTRY TWO STEP DANCE LESSONS From the basics to a variety of patterns. Dancers of all skill levels welcome. Thursdays, 6:15-7 p.m. \$8. 805-680-5695. Oasis Senior Center, 420 Soares Ave., Orcutt.

CREATIVE ART TUESDAYS Meet other artists and support and critique others' works. Tuesdays, 1-4 p.m. \$1. Oasis Senior Center, 420 Soares Ave., Orcutt, 805-937-9750.

EVERYBODY CAN DANCE Ballet workout classes for teens and adults. Tuesdays, 6 p.m. everybodycandance.com.

New Times and the Sun now share their community listings for a complete Central Coast calendar running from SLO County through northern Santa Barbara County. Submit events online by logging in with your Google, Facebook, or Twitter account at newtimeslo.com. You may also email calendar@newtimeslo.com. Deadline is one week before the issue date on Thursdays. Submissions are subject to editing and approval. Contact Calendar Editor Caleb Wiseblood directly at cwiseblood@newtimeslo.com.

webs.com. Everybody Can Dance, 628 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria, 805-937-6753.

INDIVIDUAL PAINTERS No instructor. Fridays, 9 a.m.-noon \$1. Oasis Senior Center, 420 Soares Ave., Orcutt, 805-937-9750.

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

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.

MUSIC LESSONS Offering private and classroom lessons. ongoing 805-925-0464. Coelho Academy of Music, 325 E. Betteravia Road, Santa Maria.

MUSICAL THEATRE AND CABARET WORKSHOP CLASSES Come improve your vocal skills so that you'll have more fun singing cabaret, karaoke, and more. Mondays, 6:30-8:30 p.m. through Sept. 30 \$75 for a four week session; \$20 to drop in. 805-400-5335. Cabaret805.com. Santa Maria Civic Theatre, 1660 N. McClelland St., Santa Maria.

SALSA DANCE CLASS No partner or experience needed. Wednesdays, 7-9 p.m. Free. 805-937-1574. CentralCoastSwingDance.com. Old Town Brew, 338 W. Tefft St, Nipomo.

SWING, BALLROOM, AND LATIN DANCE CLASSES Hosted by the Kings of Swing. All skill levels welcome (adults). Couples and singles welcome. Pre-registration recommended. Thursdays, 7-8 p.m. \$45. 805-928-7799. Adkins Dance Center, 1110 E. Clark Ave., Santa Maria.

UKULELE CLASS Wednesdays, 11:30 a.m. Oasis Senior Center, 420 Soares Ave., Orcutt, 805-937-9750.

WEST COAST SWING CLASS No partner or

experience needed. Mondays, 7-9 p.m. Free. 805-937-1574. CentralCoastSwingDance.com. Old Town Brew, 338 W. Tefft St, Nipomo.

WINTER MAKERSPACE Events take place in the learning center. Call for full schedule and more info. Saturdays, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. and Wednesdays, 4-6 p.m. through Feb. 27 805-925-0994. Santa Maria Public Library, 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria.

SOUTH COAST SLO COUNTY

ACRYLIC POURING INTERMEDIATE WORKSHOP Artist Shelley Kenny host this class, where every piece will look completely different from the next. **Feb. 6**, 6-8 p.m. \$40. 805-550-9963. theartgalanipomo.com/classes-and-events/. Gala De Arte Plaza, 136 N Thompson Ave. B, Nipomo.

ART AND WINE: CACTUS FLOWER ACRYLIC PAINTING CLASS Create a colorful cactus and flower canvas with artist Wendy Thrasher. All materials and a glass of wine are provided. **Jan. 31**, 6-8 p.m. \$40; \$65 for 2; \$30 each for 3 or more. 805-550-9963. theartgalanipomo.com/classes-and-events/. Gala De Arte Plaza, 136 N Thompson Ave. B, Nipomo.

ART AND WINE: STARFISH NAIL AND STRING ART CLASS Bring beach shells them to this starfish nail and string mixed media class. Artist Wendy Thrasher guides guests through techniques that are easily replicated. All materials and a glass of wine are include. **Feb. 2**, 6-8 p.m. \$40; \$65 for 2; \$30 each for 3 or more. 805-550-9963. theartgalanipomo.com/classes-and-events/. Gala De Arte Plaza, 136 N Thompson Ave. B, Nipomo.

ART AND WINE: WINTER ICE ACRYLIC PAINTING CLASS An evening of wine and painting. Artist Wendy Thrasher guides guests through techniques that are easily replicated. All materials and a glass of wine are provided. **Feb. 1**, 6-8 p.m. \$40; \$65 for 2; \$30 each for 3 or more. 805-550-9963. theartgalanipomo.com/classes-and-events/. Gala De Arte Plaza, 136 N Thompson Ave. B, Nipomo.

BOTTLE PEOPLE Repurpose glass bottles into a whimsical sculptures. **Feb. 4**, 3:15-4:45 p.m. \$45. 805-668-2125. LiLA Creative Community, 1147 East Grand Ave. Suite 101, Arroyo Grande, lila.community.

FREE QI GONG CLASS Taught by Qi Gong Master Anthony Morrocco. Beginners ages 12 and up are welcome. Mondays-Sundays, 9:45 a.m.-noon through April 1 Free. 805-534-1600. Morrocco Method Headquarters, 800 Farroll Rd., Grover Beach, morroccomethod.com.

MEXICAN TIN ART CRAFT Learn to make Mexican tin art during this workshop. For ages 13 and up. **Feb. 2**, 2-3

SUBMIT YOUR EVENTS

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p.m. Free. 805-473-7164. slolibrary.org. Arroyo Grande Library, 800 W. Branch, Arroyo Grande. Learn to make Mexican tin art during this workshop. **Feb. 6**, 4-5 p.m. Free. 805-773-2263. slolibrary.org. Shell Beach Library, 230 Leeward Ave, Shell Beach.

OPEN STUDIO FOR HOMESCHOOLED CHILDREN 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. \$20 per hour. 805-668-2125. LiA Creative Community, 1147 East Grand Ave. Suite 101, Arroyo Grande, lila.community.

PLAY EXPLORE CREATE 2 Includes drawing, pastel, watercolor, tempera, collage, printmaking, sewing, and building. Tuesdays, Thursdays, 9-10:30 a.m. & 1:30-3 p.m. \$20. 805-668-2125. lila.community. LiA Creative Community, 1147 East Grand Ave. Suite 101, Arroyo Grande.



SAN LUIS OBISPO

CABARET SINGING AND PERFORMANCE CLASS Learn the art of singing in a Cabaret style and setting. Find your key and style with a skilled accompanist. You may start anytime during the semester. Wednesdays, 6:30-9:30 p.m. \$185 for 12 week class or \$20 per night as a drop-in student. 805-772-2812. cuesta.edu/communityprograms. Cuesta College Community Programs, Highway 1, San Luis Obispo.

COPPERPLATE CALLIGRAPHY WITH MARY LOU JOHNSON Students will be able to use the copperplate script with pencil and/or a pointed pen by the end of this workshop. **Feb. 2**, 11 a.m.-4 p.m. and **Feb. 3**, 12:30-3:30 p.m. \$65 includes all materials. 805-441-3246. artcentralartsupply.com/current-workshops.php. Art Central, 1329 Monterey St., San Luis Obispo.

DATE NIGHT POTTERY Guests can enjoy sharing wine, throwing pots on the wheel, and more. Fridays, Saturdays, 6-8 p.m. \$30 per person. 805-896-6197. Anam Cre Pottery Studio, 1243 Monterey St, San Luis Obispo, anamcre.com.

FILM AND TV ACTING CLASSES Film and TV acting

classes for all ages and skill levels. Offers optional showcases for major Hollywood talent agents and casting directors. Sundays, 10:30 a.m.-9 p.m. \$165-\$175. 310-910-1228. actorsedge.com. Mission Cinemas, 1025 Monterey St., SLO.

IMPROV CLASS Learn to work on an improv ensemble and discover the basic fundamentals of improv comedy. Classes are taught by theater owner and director Sabrina Pratt. Wednesdays, 6-8 p.m. through Feb. 13 \$225 (for all 6 weeks). 805-242-3109. centralcoastcomedytheater.com. Tigerlily Salon Studio, 659 Higuera St., San Luis Obispo.

PACIFIC HORIZON CHORUS WELCOMES WOMEN SINGERS Visit site or come by in person to see if these music lessons are right for you. Tuesdays, 6:30-9 p.m. 805-441-1405. pacifichorizon.org. SLO United Methodist Church, 1515 Fredericks St., San Luis Obispo.

PAINT A POT Features a selection of pre-made pottery for those who love to design and paint. All ages welcome. Tuesdays-Saturdays, 11 a.m.-4:30 p.m. through March 30 \$25 and up. 805-896-6197. anamcre.com. Anam Cre Pottery Studio, 1243 Monterey St, San Luis Obispo.

POTTERY WORKSHOP: MEDITATION IN MOTION Wheel throwing experience is necessary. Limited to 8 participants. Mondays, 9-midnight through March 4 \$325. 805-896-6197. Anam Cre Pottery Studio, 1243 Monterey St, San Luis Obispo, anamcre.com.

SPECIAL ART EVENTS

SANTA YNEZ VALLEY

RAY STRONG: A COLLECTOR'S PASSION: OPENING RECEPTION Strong's works celebrate the wild lands of Santa Barbara County and northern California. **Feb. 2**, 3-5 p.m. Free. 805-688-1082. wildlingmuseum.org/news/ray-strong-2019-art-exhibit. Wildling Museum of Art and Nature, 1511-B Mission Dr., Solvang.

SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS

FIRST FRIDAY ARTIST RECEPTIONS Valley Art

FILE PHOTO COURTESY OF ISABEL DOWNS



TENTACLE SPECTACLE

The Wildling Museum of Art and Nature presents *Nature Through the Eye of a Needle: A Shared Adventure on Feb. 10 from 3 to 4 p.m.* This arts and science talk features artist Isabel Downs and marine biologist Robert Warner. The museum is located at 1511 Mission Dr., Solvang. More info: (805) 688-1082 or wildlingmuseum.org.

Gallery features 12 artists each year. Enjoy art, wine, and food at these opening receptions. First Friday of every month, 5-7 p.m. Free. 805-937-2278. valleygallery.org. Valley Art Gallery, 125 W. Clark Ave., Orcutt.

SOUTH COAST SLO COUNTY

PSYCHIC FAIRE Features a variety readings, crafters, and more. **Feb. 2**, 2-6 p.m. and **Feb. 3**, 2-6 p.m. \$25. 805-489-2423. Halcyon Store Post Office, 936 S. Halcyon Rd., Arroyo Grande.

SAN LUIS OBISPO

ROLLING STONE MAGAZINE COVER ART SHOW An evening with Baron Wolman, Chief Photographer with the *Rolling Stone*. **Feb. 1**, 6-9 p.m. 805-781-5785. San Luis Obispo Library, 995 Palm St., San Luis Obispo.

EXHIBITS

SANTA YNEZ VALLEY

FOLDED ART: ORIGAMI ANIMALS Featuring origami animals by artist Robert Salazar. In the Oak Gallery (second floor). **Through March 20** Wildling Museum of Art and Nature, 1511-B Mission Dr., Solvang, 805-688-1082, wildlingmuseum.org.

GLO ARTIST SHOW Through Feb. 1 Gallery Los Olivos, 2920 Grand Ave., Los Olivos, 805-688-7517, gallerylosolivos.com.

NATURE ABSTRACTED This exhibit is on display in the Barbara Goodall Education Center (third floor). In collaboration with the Santa Barbara based Abstract Art Collective. Features 29 works by 18 artists. **Through Feb. 4** \$5. Wildling Museum of Art and Nature, 1511-B Mission Dr., Solvang, 805-688-1082, wildlingmuseum.org.

NATURE IMAGINED This exhibit celebrates nature through art by Cheryl Medow, Ellen Jewett, and Hilary Brace. These artists used diverse materials and methods to create their works. Mondays, Wednesdays-Sundays, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. \$5. 805-686-8315. wildlingmuseum.org. Wildling Museum of Art and Nature, 1511-B Mission Dr., Solvang.

NATURE REGENERATED Photographers were encouraged to capture examples of nature's ability to regenerate and thrive. This exhibit showcases winning entries in the Adult and Junior categories. ongoing Free. 805-686-8315. wildlingmuseum.org/photography-competition/. Wildling Museum of Art and Nature, 1511-B Mission Dr., Solvang.

NEW PERSPECTIVES Feb. 1-March 1 Gallery Los Olivos, 2920 Grand Ave., Los Olivos, 805-688-7517, gallerylosolivos.com.

PAVLOV GALLERY: FEATURED ARTISTS Showcasing new collections on a weekly basis. Featured artists include Chris Pavlov, Iris Pavlov, Robert Hildebrand, Doug Picotte, and more. ongoing, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Free. 805-686-1080. pavlovgallery.com. Pavlov Art Gallery, 1608 Copenhagen Dr., Ste C, Solvang.

RAY STRONG: FEATURED ARTIST Sponsored by the Robert and Mercedes Eichholz Foundation. In the Main Gallery (first floor). **Through March 20** Wildling Museum of Art and Nature, 1511-B Mission Dr., Solvang, 805-688-1082, wildlingmuseum.org.

RAY STRONG: A COLLECTOR'S PASSION One collector, David Parker, is sharing his Ray Strong paintings as well as his stories of how he built his collection of over



COMEDY AT THE CASINO

Comedian Tom Segura performs on Feb. 8 at 8 p.m. at the Chumash Casino Resort, located at 3400 E. Highway 246, Santa Ynez. Segura has been featured on a variety of television programs, including *Conan* and *Workaholics*. His latest stand-up special, *Disgraceful*, is currently streaming on Netflix. The casino is a 21-and-older venue. More info: (800) 248-6274 or chumashcasino.com.

thirty pieces. Mondays, Wednesdays-Sundays, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. **through July 8** \$5. 805-686-8315. wildlingmuseum.org/news/ray-strong-2019-art-exhibit. Wildling Museum of Art and Nature, 1511-B Mission Dr., Solvang.

SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS

FINE ARTS STUDENT SHOW Through Feb. 21 Ann Foxworthy Gallery, 800 S. College Dr., Santa Maria, 805-922-6966, Ext. 3252, hancockcollege.edu/gallery/.

SANTA BARBARA PRINTMAKERS JURIED EXHIBITION ongoing smartscouncil.org. Betteravia Gallery, 511 E. Lakeside Parkway, Santa Maria.

SOUTH COAST SLO COUNTY

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/.

NANCY HAGLUND PHOTO EXHIBITION Feb. 2-May 5, 11 a.m.-3 p.m. \$5 per person.. 805-929-5679. DanaAdobe.org. DANA Adobe Cultural Center, 671 S. Oakglen Ave., Nipomo.

STAGE

SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS

A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE Directed by Sally Buchanan. **Through Feb. 10** smct.org/streetcar-named-desire/. Santa Maria Civic Theatre, 1660 N. McClelland St., Santa Maria.

SAN LUIS OBISPO

CALENDAR GIRLS Based on the true story of eleven Women's Institute members who posed nude for a

ARTS continued page 18



Scarlett Okerblom PA-C



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calendar to raise money for the Leukemia Research Fund. Fridays, Saturdays, 7 p.m. and Sundays, 3 p.m. **through Feb. 17** \$15-\$20. 805-776-3287. By The Sea Productions, 545 Shasta Ave., Morro Bay, bytheseaproducts.org.

COMEDY NIGHT Weekly comedy show featuring touring and local comics all for one dollar. Guests can enjoy beer, food, raffle giveaways, and more. Hosted by Henry Bruington and Aidan Candelario. Limited spots available for the open mic. Thursdays, 7:30-10 p.m. through Feb. 28 \$1. 805-540-8300. Bang The Drum Brewery, 950 Orcutt Road, San Luis Obispo, bangthedrumbrewery.com/.

IMPROV COMEDY SHOW Fast-paced improv comedy shows performed by the ensemble of Central Coast Comedy Theater. All shows are based on audience suggestions making every show unique. Saturdays, 8-10 p.m. \$5. centralcoastcomedytheater.com. Kreuzberg Coffee Company, 685 Higuera Street, San Luis Obispo, 805-430-0260.

SHORT FORM IMPROV GAMES CLASS A fast paced comedy class. Sundays, 2-4 p.m. **through Feb. 25** \$150 for all 6 weeks. 805-242-3109. centralcoastcomedytheater.com. Tigerlily Salon Studio, 659 Higuera St., San Luis Obispo.

CULTURE & LIFESTYLE

LECTURES & LEARNING

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 Street, Lompoc.

SOUTH COAST SLO COUNTY

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 toward the site's restoration. Wednesdays, 12 & 1 p.m. and Saturdays, 12, 1 & 2 p.m. \$17-\$22. 805-540-5771. pointsanluislighthouse.org. Point San Luis Lighthouse, 1 Lighthouse Rd., Avila Beach.

TOURS FOR PADDLERS A special tour for visitors who come by ocean. Paddlers will need to clean sand from their feet and dry themselves before the tour so not to damage the antique flooring. Saturdays, 10-10:45 a.m. \$6.49. 805-540-5771. Point San Luis Lighthouse, 1 Lighthouse Rd., Avila Beach.

CLUBS & MEETINGS

SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS

BOARD OF LIBRARY TEENS (BOLT) Teens can help plan upcoming library events and make changes to the teen zone. **Feb. 4**, 5-6 p.m. Free. 805-925-0994. Santa Maria Public Library, 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria.

COFFEE AND CONVERSATION Tuesdays, 1 p.m. oasisorcutt.org. Oasis Senior Center, 420 Soares Ave., Orcutt, 805-937-9750.

HI-WAY DRIVE-IN SWAP MEET Come to the Hi-Way Drive-In for the Sunday Swap Meet. Sellers: \$20; Produce sellers: \$25; Buyers: \$2 car load. Sundays, 4:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. 805-934-1582. Hi-Way Drive-In, 3170 Santa Maria Way, Santa Maria.

RECREATION AND PARKS DEPARTMENT: MAH JONGG Wednesdays, 11:30 a.m.-4 p.m. 805-922-2993. Elwin Mussell Senior Center, 510 Park Ave., Santa Maria.

SANTA MARIA TOASTMASTERS WEEKLY MEETING Toastmasters International is a worldwide nonprofit educational organization that empowers individuals to become more effective communicators and leaders. Tuesdays, 6:30-8 p.m. 805-264-6722. santamaria.toastmastersclubs.org/. Toyota of Santa Maria, 700 E Beteravia Rd., Santa Maria.

TRI CITY SOUND CHORUS OF SWEET ADELINES INTERNATIONAL Welcomes all women who are interested in learning about barbershop-style music singing and performing. Thursdays, 6:45-9:30 p.m. 805-736-7572. Lutheran Church of Our Savior, 4725 S. Bradley Road, Orcutt.

TRIVIA NIGHT Wednesdays, 7 p.m. Free. naughtyoak.com. Naughty Oak Brewing Co., 165 S Broadway St Ste 102, Orcutt, 805-287-9663.

SOUTH COAST SLO COUNTY

HOMESHARESLO COFFEE CHAT Learn about homesharing, share your housing stories, and network with others. First Wednesday of every month, 10:30-11:30 a.m. Free. 805-215-5474. homeshareslo.org. Coffee Bean, 354 Five Cities Dr., Pismo Beach.

NIPOMO SENIOR CENTER The center is open five days a week; closed on weekends and holidays. Mondays-Fridays, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. 805-929-1615. Nipomo Senior

SUPPORT GROUPS

SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS

TRAUMA INFORMED PARENTING GROUP A foster parent class presented by Calm. Tuesdays 805-965-2376. calm4kids.org. Church For Life, 3130 Skyway Dr., Suite 501, Santa Maria.

SOUTH COAST SLO COUNTY

GENERAL GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP (SOUTH COUNTY) Hospice SLO County is offering this support group for those grieving the death of a loved one. Held in the Church Care Center. Drop-ins welcome. Tuesdays, 10-11:30 a.m. Free. 805-544-2266. hospiceslo.org. New Life Pismo, 990 James Way, Pismo Beach.

SPOUSE AND PARTNER LOSS SUPPORT GROUP (SOUTH COUNTY) A Hospice SLO support group for those grieving the loss of a partner or spouse. Held in Room 16. Drop-ins welcome. Thursdays, 5-6:30 p.m. Free. 805-544-2266. hospiceslo.org. New Life Pismo, 990 James Way, Pismo Beach.

CREATE & LEARN

SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS

CARD MAKING Tuesdays, 9 a.m. oasisorcutt.org. Oasis Senior Center, 420 Soares Ave., Orcutt, 805-937-9750.

KNITTING AND CROCHETING Wednesdays, 9:30 a.m. oasisorcutt.org. Oasis Senior Center, 420 Soares Ave., Orcutt, 805-937-9750.

SOUTH COAST SLO COUNTY

SEWING CAFE CLASSES AND WORKSHOPS Sewing Cafe offers various classes and workshop. Call for full schedule. ongoing Sewing Cafe, 541 Five Cities Dr., Pismo Beach, 805-295-6585.

SAN LUIS OBISPO

MUSICAL IMPROV CLASS For those who are curious about learning how to make up songs on the spot and explore the art of musical improvisation. **Feb. 4**, 6-8 p.m. \$225. 805-242-3109. centralcoastcomedytheater.com. Tigerlily Salon Studio, 659 Higuera St., San Luis Obispo.

NORTH COAST SLO COUNTY

BASIC COMPUTER HELP Come to learn basic computer skills. Call to sign up. Thursdays, 8:30-10 a.m. Free. 805-772-6394. Morro Bay Library, 625 Harbor St., Morro Bay.

MIND & BODY

SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS

CANDLELIGHT RESTORATIVE YOGA Release and open your body with breath, props, and meditation. Mondays, 7-8 p.m. yogaformankind.com. Yoga for Mankind, 130 N Broadway, Suite B, Orcutt.

DANCES OF UNIVERSAL PEACE Simple, meditative, and joyous circle dances using music, mantras and movements from a variety of cultures and spiritual traditions. First Sunday of every month, 2-4 p.m. \$8 - \$10 donation. 805-717-1933. Unity Chapel of Light Church, 1165 Stubblefield Rd., Orcutt, unitysantamaria.net/.

GENTLE YOGA Tuesdays, Thursdays, 8:30 a.m. oasisorcutt.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, unitysantamaria.net/.

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

SEVEN CHAKRA CLASS Learn about the 7 Chakra energy system that has been identified within the context of cultural spirituality around the world. Find out how this part of your spirit can be healed and aligned to create balance, energy, focus and stamina. Wednesdays, 6:30-8:30 p.m. through Feb. 6 \$126. 805-598-1509. divining.weebly.com. Divine Inspiration, 947 E Orange St, Santa Maria.

TAI CHI AT OASIS Tuesdays, Thursdays, 9:45 a.m. oasisorcutt.org. Oasis Senior Center, 420 Soares Ave., Orcutt, 805-937-9750.

WISDOM READINGS AnnKathleen is available every day by appointment for Wisdom Readings with Tarot and Oracle cards. Gift certificates available. ongoing \$95-\$160. 805-598-1509. divining.weebly.com. Divine Inspiration, 947 E Orange St, Santa Maria.

SOUTH COAST SLO COUNTY

ADVANCED REIKI TRAINING Join Reiki/Master Teacher Stacy Mitchell for this special Monday offering. **Feb. 4**, 9:30 a.m.-6 p.m. \$275. 805-208-4167. honoryourvoice.com/healing.html. Intuitive Touch Healing



POKER FACE

Naughty Oak Brewing Company hosts Poker Night, featuring the Sunshine Poker League, on Feb. 7 from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. Beginners are welcome, and admission is free. The top three players will be awarded bar poker virtual tokens. Food and beer will be available for purchase. Naughty Oak is located at 165 Broadway, suite 102, Orcutt. More info: naughtyoak.com.

Center, 1054 E Grande, Ste E, Arroyo Grande.

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. Morocco Method Headquarters, 800 Farroll Rd., Grover Beach, morroccomethod.com.

DEVELOPING INTUITION WITH SYMBOLS AND LAW OF ATTRACTION Local radio and TV show host Anna Olsen holds this class to help guests develop intuitive and psychic abilities. Every other Wednesday, 6:30-8 p.m. through Jan. 8 \$20-\$30 per class. 805-723-4208. annaolsenintuitive.com. Halcyon Store Post Office, 936 S. Halcyon Rd., Arroyo Grande.

MAY I BE HAPPY: SERIES ON SELF-COMPASSION Befriend yourself to experience greater peace, emotional stability, joy, and well-being. Pre-registration required. Thursdays, 5-6 p.m. through May 30 805-270-5523. mindfultkindfullyuniversity.com/self-compassion. Women's Club of Arroyo Grande, 211 Vernon St., Arroyo Grande.

THE MINDFUL TEEN PROGRAM Learn how to reduce stress and increase resilience and positivity for overall mental health. **Feb. 6**, 5:30-7:30 p.m. 805-270-5523. mindfultkindfullyuniversity.com/mbsr-for-teens/. Arroyo Grande High School, 495 Valley Rd., Arroyo Grande.

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

SILVER SNEAKERS 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, adulated. luciamarschools.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.

SAN LUIS OBISPO

ADVANCED STRENGTH TRAINING Build strength through proper form. Sessions feature various dumbbell exercises. Mondays, Wednesdays, 8:15-9:15 a.m. \$88. 805-549-1222. ae.slucsd.org. San Luis Coastal Adult School, 1500 Lizzie St., San Luis Obispo.

AFRICAN DANCE An all levels dance class where you can learn traditional dances from Guinea and West Africa. Accompanied by live drumming. Wednesdays, 6:30-7:45 p.m. \$5-\$10. afrodance.net. Performance Athletics Gymnastics, 4484 Broad St., San Luis Obispo, 805-547-1496.

AIKIDO FOR EVERYONE A Japanese martial art designed to stop violence with minimum harm. This class welcomes beginning and experienced students of all levels. Tuesdays, 5:45-7 p.m. \$65 for 3 months. 805-549-1222. aikidosanluisobispo.com. San Luis Coastal Adult School, 1500 Lizzie St., San Luis Obispo.

AIKIDO SELF DEFENSE FOR ADULTS Taught by fifth degree black belt instructor Mary Tesoro. Tuesdays, 5:45-7 p.m. \$65 for 3 months. 805-549-1222. ae.slucsd.org. San Luis Coastal Adult School, 1500 Lizzie St., San Luis Obispo.

I2|BREWASANA Light hearted vinyasa flow paired with a beer of your choice. **Feb. 3**, 10:30-11:30 a.m. \$15. 7Sisters Brewing Company, 181 Tank Farm Rd. Suite 110,

San Luis Obispo, 805-868-7133, 7SistersBrewing.com.

CONDITIONING EXPRESS Includes weights, exercise balls, and TRX Suspension Training. Tuesdays, Thursdays, 6:30-7:15 a.m. \$88. 805-549-1222. ae.slucsd.org. San Luis Coastal Adult School, 1500 Lizzie St., San Luis Obispo.

GENTLE YOGA Includes exercises involving the Egoscu Method, foundation training, active isolated stretching, and more. Mondays, Wednesdays, 5:30-6:30 p.m. 805-549-1222. ae.slucsd.org. San Luis Coastal Adult School, 1500 Lizzie St., San Luis Obispo.

GENTLE YOGA IN SLO Features traditional yoga poses, resistance and active stretching, trigger point therapy, and nerve flossing techniques. Tuesdays, Thursdays, 10:15-11:30 a.m. \$88. 805-549-1222. ae.slucsd.org. San Luis Coastal Adult School, 1500 Lizzie St., San Luis Obispo.

METABOLIC CONDITIONING Enjoy a workout using your own bodyweight, dumbbells, large exercise balls, and the TRX suspension training system. Designated as intermediate advanced level fitness. Tuesdays, Thursdays, 8-9 a.m. \$88. 805-549-1222. ae.slucsd.org. San Luis Coastal Adult School, 1500 Lizzie St., San Luis Obispo.

STRENGTH FOR 50+ Each session begins with "static back" to realign your spine. Features dumbbells and exercise balls. Tuesdays, Thursdays, 9-10 a.m. \$88. 805-549-1222. ae.slucsd.org. San Luis Coastal Adult School, 1500 Lizzie St., San Luis Obispo.

OUTDOORS

SAN LUIS OBISPO

CERRO SAN LUIS HIKE WITH ECOSLO Guests are asked to come prepared with sturdy shoes, water, and a snack. **Feb. 2**, 9-11 a.m. Free. 805-544-1777. ecoslo.org. Cerro San Luis Trailhead, Fernandez Rd, San Luis Obispo.

SENIOR SAUNTER AT EAGLE ROCK A sociable walk to the hilltop overlooking the five Morros. **Feb. 2**, 9:30 a.m. Free. 805-549-0355. sierraclub.org/santa-lucia. El Chorro Regional Park, California 1, San Luis Obispo.

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 E. Foster Rd., Orcutt, 805-937-3738.

KIDS & FAMILY

SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS

AFTERNOON STORY TIME Story time for kids ages 6 to 12 featuring stories, movies, and a craft. Tuesdays, 3:30-4:30 p.m. through Feb. 19 Free. 805-925-0994. Santa Maria Public Library, 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria.

BABYNAUTS STORY TIME Story time for babies up to 12 months and their caregiver. Fridays, 10-10:30 a.m. through Feb. 22 Free. 805-925-0994. Santa Maria Public Library, 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria.

BILINGUAL STORY TIME Features stories, songs, and rhymes in both Spanish and English. Wednesdays, 5:30-6 p.m. through Feb. 20 Free. 805-925-0994. Santa Maria Public Library, 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria.

HOMEWORK HELP For grades K through 6. Mondays-Thursdays, 4-7 p.m. through June 6 Free. 805-925-0994. cityofsantamaria.org. Santa Maria Public Library, 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria.

KTS ALL STAR GYMNASTICS: NINJA WARRIOR CLASSES Bring out your inner warrior with kids parkour classes in a safe setting. For ages 5 and up. Wednesdays, Fridays, 5:30 & 6:30 p.m. 805-349-7575. Santa Maria Town Center, 142 Town Center East, Santa Maria.

MOMMY AND ME CLASSES Brief gymnastics classes for ages 1 to 3 (as soon as they can start walking on their own). Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, 9:30-10 & 10:15-10:45 a.m. \$35-\$55. KT's All Star Gymnastics, 237 Town Center E, Santa Maria, 805-349-7575.

PAWS TO READ Love on a Leash will bring dogs for children to read to. **Feb. 4**, 3:30-5:30 p.m. Free. 805-925-0994. Santa Maria Public Library, 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria.

READALOUND The Buellton Library presents ReadAloud, a play-reading group for adults, teens and children 9 and up. Fridays, 4-5 p.m. Free. 805-688-3115. Buellton Library, 140 W. Highway 246, Buellton.

SANTA MARIA VALLEY RAILWAY HISTORICAL MUSEUM The Santa Maria Valley Railway Historical Museum features a locomotive, boxcar, cabooses, railroad artifacts, and diorama. Second and fourth Saturday of every month. 12-4 p.m. ongoing 805-714-4927. Santa Maria Transit Center, Miller and Boone St., Santa Maria.

ULTIMATE UNICORN STORY TIME Story time for preschoolers, ages 3 to 5, and their families. Wednesdays, 10:30 a.m.-11 p.m. through Feb. 20 Free. 805-925-0994. Santa Maria Public Library, 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria.

SOUTH COAST SLO COUNTY

BILINGUAL STORYTIME Enjoy storytelling and songs in both English and Spanish. First Tuesday of every month, 10:30-11 a.m. Free. 805-473-7161. slolibrary.org. Arroyo Grande Library, 800 W. Branch, Arroyo Grande.

MINDFUL KINDFUL PEACEFUL (AGES 6-11): ARROYO GRANDE A social-emotional learning program that provides foundation for greater mental strength, resilience, happiness, and well-being. Pre-registration required. Thursdays, 3:45-4:45 p.m. through May 30 805-270-5523. mindfulkindfulyouiversity.com/register-dragonfly-ag. Women's Club of Arroyo Grande, 211 Vernon St., Arroyo Grande.

OCEANO DUNES VISITOR CENTER Enjoy exhibits of dune and lagoon plant and animal species. End your visit with a stroll behind the center to the fresh-water lagoon. ongoing, 12-4 p.m. Free. 805-474-2667. Oceano Dunes Visitor Center, 555 Pier Ave, Oceano.

PLAY EXPLORE CREATE 1 Enjoy various art activities including drawing, painting, building sculptures, and more. Designed for ages 3 to 4. All materials are included. Mondays, Wednesdays, 9-10:30 a.m. \$20. 805-668-2125. LiA Creative Community, 1147 East Grand Ave. Suite 101, Arroyo Grande, lila.community.

SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS

FREE WOMEN'S EXERCISE CLASS Open to all women regardless of denomination. Class includes stretching, aerobics, and floor exercises while listening to uplifting, spiritual music. Free childcare offered on site. Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, 9-10 a.m. Free. 805-922-1919. cornerstonesm.org. Cornerstone Church, 1026 E Sierra Madre Ave., Santa Maria.

HOPE COMMUNITY CHURCH SERVICES Join Hope Community Church for Sunday morning and Wednesday night services. Children care provided for infants and children under 4. Sundays, 10:30 a.m. and Wednesdays, 6:30 p.m. Free. 805-922-2043. hopesm.com. Hope Community Church, 3010 Skyway Dr. Suite F, Santa Maria.

INTUITIVE GUIDANCE Sessions may include but are not limited to mediumship, psychic awareness, light journey work, and aura cleansings. Thursdays, 12-2 p.m. \$20 for 15 minutes. 937-271-5646. CovenantTree: Books and Gifts, 722 E Main St., Santa Maria.

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.

INTUITIVE DEVELOPMENT 1st and 2nd Tuesdays of the month. With Julie Jensen. Come explore your innate gifts that are receiving and giving intuitive information. First Tuesday of every month, 6:30-8 p.m. \$25. 805-489-2423. Halcyon Store Post Office, 936 S. Halcyon Rd., Arroyo Grande.

INTUITIVE CIRCLE CLASSES Explore your gift of receiving and giving intuitive information during these classes hosted by Julie Jensen. Every other Tuesday, 6:30-8 p.m. \$25. 805-489-2432. Halcyon Store Post Office, 936 S. Halcyon Rd., Arroyo Grande.

INTUITIVE DEVELOPMENT Explore your innate gifts of receiving and giving intuitive information with Julie Jensen. First Tuesday of every month, 6:30-8 p.m. \$25. 805-489-2423. Halcyon Store Post Office, 936 S. Halcyon Rd., Arroyo Grande.

MEDIUMSHIP 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.

REFUGUE RECOVERY Refuge Recovery is a non-theistic, 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.

SUNDAY FOR SPIRIT PSYCHIC READINGS Features an assortment of psychic readers. Sundays, 1-5 p.m. Vaires. 805-489-2432. Halcyon Store Post Office, 936 S. Halcyon Rd., Arroyo Grande.



DOWN TO THE RIPTIDE

The Riptide Big Band will perform during the Santa Maria Valley Senior Citizens Club Valentine's Dance on Feb. 10 from 1:30 to 4 p.m. at the Elwin Mussell Senior Center, located at 510 E. Park Ave., Santa Maria. Admission is free. More info: (775) 813-5186 or riptidebb.com.

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.

a.m.-2:30 p.m. nipomofarmersmarket.com/. Nipomo Farmers Market, Via Concha Road, Nipomo.

SAN LUIS OBISPO

FARMERS MARKET Farmers Market in SLO is the largest Farmers Market in California. Thursdays, 6:10-9 p.m. Downtown SLO, Higuera St., San Luis Obispo.

SLO FARMERS MARKET Hosts over 60 vendors. Saturdays, 8-10:45 a.m. World Market Parking Lot, 2650 Main St., San Luis Obispo.

SLO GUILD TUESDAY FARMERS' MARKET Tuesdays, 2-5 p.m. through Dec. 31 Free. 805-762-4688. facebook.com/TuesdayFarmersMarketSLOGuildHall/. SLO Guild Hall, 2880 Broad St., San Luis Obispo.

EVENTS

SANTA YNEZ VALLEY

ROBLAR WINE TASTINGS Potting Shed and Barrel Room available to members. ongoing, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. 805-686-2603. roblarwinery.com. Roblar Winery, 3010 Roblar Ave., Santa Ynez.

STANDING SUN: TASTING ROOM HOURS Visit site for Cellar Club details and more info. Mondays-Thursdays, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. 805-691-9413. standingsunwines.com. Standing Sun Wines, 92 2nd St., Unit D, Buellton, 805-691-9413.

WINE TASTING AT KALYRA Offering varietals from all over the world. Saturdays, Sundays, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. and Mondays-Fridays, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. 805-693-8864. kalyrawinery.com. Kalyra Winery, 343 N. Refugio Road, Santa Ynez. ☺

FOOD & DRINK

FARMERS MARKETS

LOMPOC/VANDEMBERG

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.

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

SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS

ORCUTT FARMERS MARKET Presents local farmers and small businesses. Tuesdays, 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Orcutt Farmers Market, Bradley Road, Orcutt.

SOUTH COAST SLO COUNTY

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

NIPOMO FARMERS MARKET Includes a large variety of locally grown produce. Open year round Sundays, 11:30



Let's Spread The Love
Valentine's Day, Thursday February 14th

FLOWER CARRIAGE
BY MS. CARDEL

Say it with flowers
(805) 922-0578
2255 S. Broadway, Santa Maria
www.flowercarriage.net

FREE BOX OF CHOCOLATES
For Valentine's Day orders of \$80 or more
On or before February 12th
(Local Delivery Only) USE CODE: Sun
*Cannot be combined with other offers.
Offer valid until 02.12.19 while supplies last

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Call 1-805-922-6966 ext. 3740. Some classes start mid-semester. Ask us about upcoming classes!

Questions? Call 1-805-922-6966 ext. 3209 or visit
www.hancockcollege.edu/communityeducation

ALLAN HANCOCK COLLEGE
Start here. Go anywhere.

What's Your Take? We know you've got an opinion. Everybody's got one!

This week's online poll 1/31 - 2/7

Do you think a point-in-time count is an accurate way to measure homelessness in an area?

- Yes, if it's done well with enough volunteers.
- It's more like a rough estimate.
- No, but since it's tied to receiving funding, I get why we do it.
- No, we should change the way we measure homelessness.

Enter your choice online at:
SantaMariaSun.com

PHOTO COURTESY OF CHARLIE OVERBEY

Live Music

SANTA YNEZ VALLEY

THE AGREEABLES LIVE An indie rock group. Food and drinks available for purchase. Not outside food or drinks allowed. **Feb. 1**, 6-9 p.m. Free admission. Cold Spring Tavern, 5995 Stagecoach Rd., Santa Barbara, 805-967-0066, coldspringtavern.com/entertainment.html.

CHARLIE OVERBEY AND THE BROKEN ARROWS Performing alternative country. **Feb. 2** \$20-\$25. Standing Sun Wines, 92 2nd St., Unit D, Buellton, 805-691-9413, standingsunwines.com.

THE DYLAN ORTEGA BAND As part of KRAZY Country Honky-Tonk Thursday. Thursdays, 7 p.m. Maverick Saloon, 3687 Sagunto St., Santa Ynez, 805-686-4785, mavericksaloon.org.

FIRST FRIDAY '80S NIGHT Featuring the Molly Ringwald Project. First Friday of every month, 8:30-11:30 p.m. \$10 after 8 p.m. Maverick Saloon, 3687 Sagunto St., Santa Ynez, 805-686-4785, mavericksaloon.org.

JEREMIAH AND THE RED EYES Performing blues and Americana. Opening for Charlie Overbey and The Broken Arrows. All ages welcome. **Feb. 2**, 7-10 p.m. \$20-\$25. Standing Sun Wines, 92 2nd St., Unit D, Buellton, 805-691-9413, standingsunwines.com.

KELLY'S LOT LIVE A blend of blues, rock, folk, and more. Food and drinks available for purchase. Not outside food or drinks allowed. **Feb. 3**, 5-8 p.m. Free admission. Cold Spring Tavern, 5995 Stagecoach Rd., Santa Barbara, 805-967-0066, coldspringtavern.com/entertainment.html.

LIVE MUSIC ON THE PATIO Local acts perform every Saturday. Saturdays, 5-8 p.m. Maverick Saloon, 3687 Sagunto St., Santa Ynez, 805-686-4785, mavericksaloon.org.

MUSIC LISTINGS continued page 21

Reign Overbey

Charlie Overbey puts a somber spin on alternative country in Buellton

BY CALEB WISEBLOOD

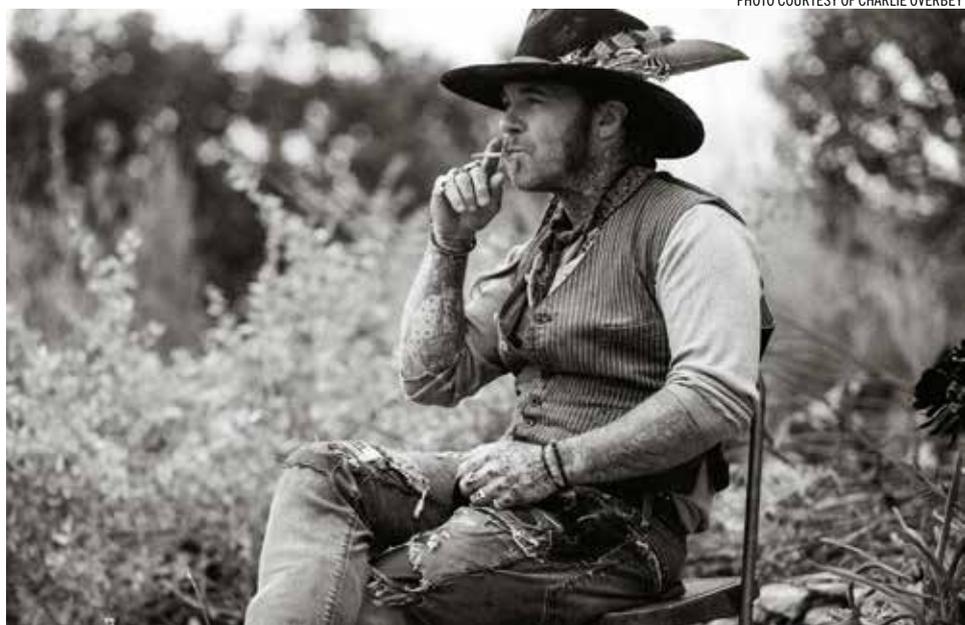
When Kenny Chesney sings "When The Sun Goes Down," not many listeners stop to consider the consequences of that sun never coming back up again. The subject matter found in *Broken Arrow*, the latest LP from alternative country artist **Charlie Overbey**, isn't quite as dismal as global annihilation, but it's still light years away from the feel good vibe of the aforementioned Chesney tune. Catch him on **Saturday, Feb. 2**, at 7:30 p.m. at Standing Sun Winery in Buellton to hear for yourself.

Born and raised in Los Angeles, Overbey tried, but ultimately failed, to break away from the country music his father exposed him to while growing up. His father played nothing but Cash on his 1947 Gibson acoustic guitar. Overbey refers to this period as "the school and church of Johnny Cash."

"When you're raised, and it's all around you, it's the last thing you want to be a part of," Overbey said in press materials.

It wasn't until adulthood—many years and one punk rock rebellion phase later—that the artist finally embraced the genre and admitted its role in shaping his musical growth.

During the last few years of touring the world, opening for various acts including Motorhead, Social Distortion, Blackberry Smoke, and David Allan Coe, Overbey slowly compiled a collection of new, original songs about his youth and upbringing. These introspective compositions became



TRUE GRIT: Alternative country artist Charlie Overbey performs on **Saturday, Feb. 2**, at Standing Sun Winery in Buellton.

the foundation for *Broken Arrow*, which was produced by Grammy-winner Ted Hutt, whose past collaborators include Old Crow Medicine Show, Lucero, Dropkick Murphys, and The Gaslight Anthem.

"I've never worked with anyone like Ted. This is the first time I've ever let go and trusted somebody else as a partner in my songs," Overbey said. "He really pulled some stuff out of me that I had not planned on delivering. Honestly, these songs can be hard for me to sing; they come from a deep, real, and sometimes dark place."

Doors open at 7 p.m. for Overbey's show at Standing Sun. Blues/

LOCAL NOTES continued page 21

THE SANTA MARIA CIVIC THEATRE PRESENTS

A Streetcar Named Desire

Written by **Tennessee Williams**
Directed by **Sally Buchanan**
Original Music by **David Donati**

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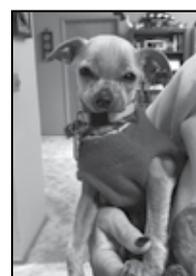


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LOCAL NOTES from page 20

Americana group **Jeremiah and The Red Eyes** open for him. Tickets to the concert are \$20 at the door, but you can reserve your seat in advance for \$5 more.

More music

Mozart maniacs and Beethoven buffs best not miss the **Frisson Ensemble** on **Friday, Feb.**

PHOTO COURTESY OF CONNER CHERLAND



ON TRACK: Singer, songwriter, and guitarist Conner Cherland performs on **Saturday, Feb. 2**, at Zinke Wines in Los Olivos.

I, at 7:30 p.m. at the First United Methodist Church in Lompoc. Works by Ennio Morricone and traditional Celtic suites will also be performed.

Local singer, songwriter, and guitarist **Conner Cherland** is offering his not-so-traditional blend of Americana, indie, folk, and soul on **Saturday, Feb. 2**, at 1 p.m. at Zinke Wines in Los Olivos. Cherland's influences include Sufjan Stevens, Eminem, Shakey Graves, Ed Sheeran, and Hozier among others.

If you're looking for someone to finally take your side, you might want to catch **The Agreeables** on **Friday, Feb. 1**, at 1 p.m. at Cold Spring Tavern. No worries if indie-rock isn't your cup of tea though, the tavern also hosts **The Third Man**, who perform bohemian noir lounge, old-school country, and surf; **The Shorelines**, a contemporary psychedelic duo, on **Saturday, Feb. 2**; and **Kelly's Lot**, a blues, roots, and Irish melody group, on **Sunday, Feb. 3**.

Fun and fancy free

¡Viva el Arte de Santa Bárbara! presents **Grupo Bella**, on **Friday, Feb. 8**, at 7 p.m. at Guadalupe City Hall. This mariachi septet, Nicole Rivera, Maya Arce, Melissa Casas, Lillian Lopez, Diana McConnell, Michael Tejada, and founding member Vanessa



MAGNIFICENT SEVEN: ¡Viva el Arte de Santa Bárbara! presents Grupo Bella on **Friday, Feb. 8**, at Guadalupe City Hall.

Ramirez, performs both Mexican and Mexican-American folk music.

Ramirez originally founded the band as a trio in 2010 and is also known for her solo career as a television composer (cough, cough, *My Fair Wedding* and *Hell's Kitchen*, anyone?). Special guest artist Tomas Herrera will be joining the group for this free, family-friendly concert.

The musicians will meet with the audience for refreshments and conversation after the performance. ○

Calendar Editor Caleb Wiseblood wrote this week's Local Notes. Contact him at cwiseblood@newtimesslo.com.

MUSIC LISTINGS from page 20

LIVE WIRE IN CONCERT **Feb. 1**, 8 p.m. Free before 8 p.m. Maverick Saloon, 3687 Sagunto St., Santa Ynez, 805-686-4785, mavericksaloon.org.

THE PHANTOM PUMPS LIVE **Feb. 2**, 8 p.m. Free before 8 p.m. Maverick Saloon, 3687 Sagunto St., Santa Ynez, 805-686-4785, mavericksaloon.org.

THE SHORELINES LIVE A psychedelic fusion band. Food and drinks available for purchase. Not outside food or drinks allowed. **Feb. 3**, 1:30-4:30 p.m. Free admission. Cold Spring Tavern, 5995 Stagecoach Rd., Santa Barbara, 805-967-0066, coldspringtavern.com/entertainment.html.

SUNDAY ROUND-UP Enjoy live music on the patio and special menu offerings every Sunday morning. Sundays, 11 a.m. Free. Maverick Saloon, 3687 Sagunto St., Santa Ynez, 805-686-4785, mavericksaloon.org.

THE THIRD MAN LIVE A blend of bohemian noir lounge, surf, and old school country. Food and drinks available for purchase. Not outside food or drinks allowed. **Feb. 2**, 1-4 p.m. Free admission. Cold Spring Tavern, 5995 Stagecoach Rd., Santa Barbara, 805-967-0066, coldspringtavern.com/entertainment.html.

TOM BALL AND KENNY SULTAN LIVE Enjoy a blend of guitar and harmonica blues, and rags, and good time music. Food and drinks available for purchase. No outside food or drinks allowed. Sundays, 1:15-4 p.m. Free. Cold Spring Tavern, 5995 Stagecoach Rd., Santa Barbara, 805-967-0066, coldspringtavern.com/entertainment.html.

LOMPOC/VANDENBERG

FRISSON ENSEMBLE LIVE The six-piece ensemble performs various combinations of strings and winds, including violin, viola, cello, flute, clarinet, and oboe. Their program features classical works by Beethoven. **Feb. 1**, 7:30-9:30 p.m. \$5 students; \$25 adults. 805-588-5971. First United Methodist Church, 925 North F St., Lompoc.

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, lompocwinefactory.com.

SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS

BOB CLARK LIVE Part of Moxie Cafe's ongoing, complimentary live music series. Food and drinks available for purchase. **Jan. 31**, 5:30-7:30 p.m. Free admission. Moxie Cafe, 1317 W. McCoy Ln., Santa Maria, 805-361-2900, moxiecafe.com.

LIVE MUSIC AT COSTA DE ORO Enjoy live music and complimentary appetizers every week. Thursdays, Fridays, 5-7 p.m. and Saturdays, 3-5 p.m. Free. Costa

De Oro Winery, 1331 S. Nicholson Ave., Santa Maria, 805-922-1468, cdowinery.com.

LIVE MUSIC AT MOXIE CAFE Enjoy live music from local artists, food, and drinks. Thursdays-Saturdays, 5-8 p.m. Free admission. moxiecafe.com/music/. Moxie Cafe, 1317 W. McCoy Ln., Santa Maria, 805-361-2900.

LIVE MUSIC AT NAUGHTY OAK Enjoy a different musical act and food vendor every Friday evening. Fridays, 5:30 p.m. Free admission. Naughty Oak Brewing Co., 165 S Broadway St Ste 102, Orcutt, 805-287-9663, naughtyoak.com.

LIVE MUSIC AT O'SULLIVAN'S Featuring live entertainment from local and touring alternative, indie, rock, punk, reggae, ska, alt-country, and other left-of-center musicians several times throughout each month. ongoing Free. O'Sullivan's Pub, 633 E. Main St., Santa Maria, 805-925-0658, osullivanspub.net.

LIVE MUSIC AT PRESQU'ILE Different acts every Friday evening. Fridays, 4-6 p.m. Free. Presqu'ile Winery, 5391 Presqu'ile Dr., Santa Maria, 805-937-8110, presquilewine.com.

WILL BREMAN LIVE Breman loops in real time. **Feb. 1**, 5:30-9:30 p.m. Complimentary. Naughty Oak Brewing Co., 165 S Broadway St Ste 102, Orcutt, 805-287-9663, naughtyoak.com.

SOUTH COAST SLO COUNTY

ACOUSTIC SUNDAYS Sundays, 3-6 p.m. Seaventure Restaurant, 100 Oceanview Ave, Pismo Beach, 805-779-1779, seaventure.com.

FRIDAY NIGHT LIVE MUSIC Enjoy live music and food on the patio. Fridays, 5:30-8:30 p.m. Free. 805-489-9099. branchstreetdeli.com. Branch Street Deli, 203 E. Branch St., Arroyo Grande.

LIDO LIVE Live music at Lido at Dolphin Bay. Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, 5-8 p.m. Free. 805-773-8900. thedolphinbay.com/lido. Lido Restaurant at Dolphin Bay, 2727 Shell Beach Rd., Pismo Beach.

LIVE MUSIC AT PUFFERS Tuesdays, 6:30-9:30 p.m. Free. 805-773-6563. puffersofpismo.com. Puffers of Pismo, 781 Price St., Pismo Beach.

OPEN BLUES JAM Wednesdays Mongo's Saloon, 359 W. Grand Ave., Grover Beach, 805-489-3639.

SIDE EFFECTS Tuesdays Free. 805-773-6563. puffersofpismo.com. Puffers of Pismo, 781 Price St., Pismo Beach.

SONGWRITERS AT PLAY: TUNE IN TO THE THE DENNIS AND LAURA SHOW Santa Barbara-based musicians Dennis Russell and Laura Hemenway. Russell's songs are inspired by the landscapes and people of his native California. He and his wife Laura accompany his poetic lyrics. **Feb. 6**, 6-8:30 p.m. Free; tips accepted. 805-489-9099. songwritersatplay.com. Branch Street Deli, 203 E. Branch St., Arroyo Grande.

WEDNESDAYS: LIVE MUSIC Enjoy live music in the fireplace room. Wednesdays, 6-9 p.m. Seaventure Restaurant, 100 Oceanview Ave, Pismo Beach, 805-779-1779, seaventure.com.

SAN LUIS OBISPO

BANJERDAN LIVE Enjoy Pint Nite and music from BanjerDan. **Feb. 1**, 6-8 p.m. Free. 805-868-7133. 7Sisters Brewing Company, 181 Tank Farm Rd. Suite 110, San Luis Obispo, 7SistersBrewing.com.

BOB MARLEY TRIBUTE CONCERT **Feb. 2**, 7 p.m. SLO Brew, 736 Higuera St., San Luis Obispo, 805-543-1843, slobrew.com.

JEFF PETERS LIVE Best known as The Wedding Guitarist. **Feb. 1**, 12-12:45 p.m. Free. 805-543-5451. First Presbyterian Church of San Luis Obispo, 981 Marsh St., San Luis Obispo, fpcslslo.org.

THE KNOCKS LIVE With Young and Sick and Blue DeTiger. **Feb. 1** The Fremont Theater, 1035 Monterey St., San Luis Obispo, 805-546-8600, fremontslo.com.

LSLO SYMPHONY PRESENTS: SPANISH GUITAR Enjoy romantic melodies of Spain and Latin America. Grammy-award winning guitarist Jason Vieaux joins the San Luis Obispo Symphony for this performance. **Feb. 2**, 7:30 p.m. \$20-\$87. 805-756-4849. slosymphony.org/concerts/spanish-guitar/. Performing Arts Center, 1 Grand Ave., San Luis Obispo.

SUNDAY SERENADE Features a different acoustic act each week. Sundays, 4:30-6:30 p.m. Bang The Drum Brewery, 950 Orcutt Road, San Luis Obispo, 242-8372, bangthedrumbrewery.com/.

TRITONAL LIVE With Apek S.J. **Feb. 6** The Fremont Theater, 1035 Monterey St., San Luis Obispo, 805-546-8600, fremontslo.com.

DJ/DANCE

SANTA YNEZ VALLEY

KRAZY COUNTRY HONKY-TONK THURSDAY Thursdays, 6 p.m. Maverick Saloon, 3687 Sagunto St., Santa Ynez, 805-686-4785, mavericksaloon.org.

LOMPOC/VANDENBERG

THIRSTY THURSDAYS WITH DJ VEGA Playing today's and yesterday's hits. No cover charge. Bring your dancing shoes. Thursdays, 9 p.m.-2:30 a.m. Free. 805-478-3980. DJ's Saloon, 724 E Ocean Ave., Lompoc.

SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS

HULA DANCING Thursdays, 6:30 p.m. 805-598-6772. Oasis Senior Center, 420 Soares Ave., Orcutt.

LINE DANCING Mondays, 6:30-9 p.m. \$5. 805-310-1827. Oasis Senior Center, 420 Soares Ave., Orcutt.

NIGHTLIFE AT RANCHO BOWL Enjoy DJ's 6 nights a week in the Rancho Bar and Lounge. For ages 21-and-over. Tuesdays-Sundays, 9 p.m. Free. 805-925-2405. ranchoowl.com/nightlife. Rancho Bowl, 128 E Donovan Rd., Santa Maria.

SOUTH COAST SLO COUNTY

DJ CAMOTE Thursdays, 5 p.m. Harry's Night Club And Beach Bar, 690 Cypress St., Pismo Beach, 805-773-1010, harryspismoeach.com.

DJ DRUMZ AT MONGO'S Fridays Free. 805-489-3639. mongossaloon.com. Mongo's Saloon, 359 W. Grand Ave., Grover Beach.

KARAOKE/OPEN MIC

SANTA YNEZ VALLEY

KARAOKE AT SOLVANG BREW Thursdays Free. Solvang Brewing Company, 1547 Mission Dr., Solvang, 805-688-2337.

OPEN MIC NIGHT AT SOLVANG BREW Wednesdays Free. Solvang Brewing Company, 1547 Mission Dr., Solvang, 805-688-2337.

SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS

KARAOKE WITH DJ RICARDO Thursdays, 9-11:30 p.m. spotoneventservices.com. Blast 825 Brewery, 241 S Broadway St., Ste. 101, Orcutt, 805-934-3777.

WEDNESDAY NIGHT KARAOKE Guests are welcome to take the stage and sing. Wednesdays, 9 p.m.-1:30 a.m. 805-863-8292. Louie B's, 213 E. Main St., Santa Maria.

SOUTH COAST SLO COUNTY

FRONT ROW KARAOKE Thursdays, 9 p.m. 773-1010. Harry's Night Club And Beach Bar, 690 Cypress St., Pismo Beach, harryspismoeach.com.

JAWZ KARAOKE Thursdays, 9 p.m. Harry's Night Club And Beach Bar, 690 Cypress St., Pismo Beach, 805-773-1010, harryspismoeach.com.

KARAOKE WITH DJ SAM Sundays Mongo's Saloon, 359 W. Grand Ave., Grover Beach, 805-489-3639.

SAN LUIS OBISPO

KARAOKE NIGHT SUNDAYS AT BUFFALO PUB AND GRILL Sundays, 8 p.m. Free. 805-544-5155. Buffalo Pub And Grill, 717 Higuera St., San Luis Obispo.

OPEN MIC NIGHT AT 7SISTERS For musicians, poets, and comedians. Family-friendly. Performers get a free beer. Sundays, 5-7 p.m. Free. 805-868-7133. 7sistersbrewing.com/calendar. 7Sisters Brewing Company, 181 Tank Farm Rd. Suite 110, San Luis Obispo. ○

Arts Briefs

Elverhoj Museum presents painting workshop

The Elverhoj Museum of History and Art will host a three-day workshop with local artist Nancy Yaki from Feb. 28 through March 2.

Yaki's acrylic painting workshop will center on a new topic each day to help aspiring artists or hobbyists learn how to better utilize the medium. Day one features exploring acrylic paint and its range, day two focuses on color relationships, and day three explores how to layer and use acrylic media.

The classes start at 10 a.m. in the Bethania Lutheran Church Parish Hall located at 603 Atterdag Road, Solvang. The fee for the workshop is \$300 for museum members and \$325 for non-members. Light snacks and water are included; a closing party is also featured on the last day. To make reservations (space is limited) call (805) 686-1211 or email info@elverhoj.org. A materials list will be provided.

PHOTO COURTESY ELVERHOJ MUSEUM OF ART AND HISTORY



Santa Maria Library introduces book delivery

The Santa Maria Public Library is now offering service from Zip Books, which enables readers to order books and audiobooks not currently owned by any of the library's branches and have them sent to their home at no cost.

Items from Zip Books typically take three to five days to arrive and can be returned to the library when finished, either to the information or youth services desks. Library branches in Orcutt, Guadalupe, Los Alamos, or Cuyama will also accept Zip Books returns. Zip Books is run by NorthNet Library System and funded through the California Library Services Act (CLSA).

Valley Art presents Greater Shades of Love

Valley Art Gallery in Orcutt hosts Greater Shades of Love, a new show that runs through Feb. 23.

The curated show features work from many Valley Art participants. A meet-and-greet reception for the artists is planned for Feb. 2 from 3 to 5 p.m. at the Valley Art Gallery.

The gallery is located at 125 W. Clark Ave., Orcutt inside the Orcutt Trade Center Building. For more information, visit valleygalleryart.com or call (805) 937-2278. ○

Arts Briefs is compiled by Arts and Lifestyle Writer Rebecca Rose. Send information to rose@santamariasun.com.

BY REBECCA ROSE

It's a play known for one of the most iconic moments in acting history, but what's probably most remarkable about Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire* is its impressive and often intense timeliness.

The Santa Maria Civic Theatre is currently staging a revival of the 1947 classic, featuring the story of doomed heroine Blanche DuBois (Kelly Nichols). Blanche is a fragile woman trying to navigate a vicious and often violent world of men who both simultaneously demand her sexual congress and sadistically reject her when she obliges or asserts any agency over her own body or sexuality. The constant cycle of lust and cruelty has left Blanche, already weary from a long line of familial deaths and the loss of her family home, primed to take the worst of abuse from her malicious and barbaric brother-in-law Stanley Kowalski (Josh Cornell). Stanley is married to Blanche's sister, Stella (Stephanie Gray), a woman so blinded by her intense sexual attraction to Stanley that she can no longer see him for what he is.

The play also features Mitch (Jarrod Zinn), one of Stanley's friends, a wolf in sheep's clothing who appears to be a kind and good gentleman but who is just another in a long string of men who see Blanche only for what she can give them. Eunice (Krystal Kirk) and Steve (Thomas Brown) live upstairs from the Kowalskis and mimic the same abusive patterns peppered with heated sexual encounters.

Williams' play is a classic because it's a masterwork at disassembling the social strata affixed to sexual desire and masculine brutality. Stella is content to live out her days repeating the same cycle of abuse and lust as their neighbors above. She sees Stanley as something special, something important, when really he's just another thug who beats up on women and who happens to look great in a muscle shirt.

Blanche's arrival throws an immediate wrench into their sedated and sadistic cycle, by forcing Stella to confront that, as she puts it, "What you are talking about is brutal desire—just—desire! The name of that rattle-trap street-car that bangs through the quarter, up one old narrow street and down another." Blanche, who has secrets of her own that are ready to explode, knows this distinction and is herself both liberated and imprisoned by it. The violent and painfully inevitable ending of the play allows the audience to see just what Stella is willing to trade off in order to save the lies she tells herself about Stanley.

The material is, unquestionably, perfect, and with every iteration it's up to the actors to find the meaty soul of Williams' characters. Stanley is a brute of a man, and Williams wastes no time in making his savagery crystal clear (the first time he's introduced in the script, he is described as literally carrying a blood-soaked package of meat, which he throws at his wife). He is remembered for his daunting physicality. The choice to cast Cornell is interesting, because he isn't as massive or physically intimidating as his other male co-stars. Cornell's direction with the character is smart—his Stanley is more weasley and snide; something more sinister and deliberate in his actions becomes apparent.

I wondered what it would have been like to switch some of the casting around (perhaps Zinn, who cuts an imposing figure on stage, could have matched some of the more physical expectations of Stanley), but Cornell's take holds up well. Also, Zinn is magnetic with Blanche in some of the more demanding scenes, as he unleashes his inner Stanley.

It's the women who drive the movement of this play, as they make their own choices in how to navigate Stanley's violence. Nichols is especially genius, tackling one of the most difficult roles in theater history. It's very easy to turn Blanche into a cartoon of "oh-fiddle-dee-dee" Southern anachronisms, but Nichols knows that the heart of Blanche isn't a fine

Big show

The Santa Maria Civic Theatre presents *A Streetcar Named Desire* through Feb. 10. Tickets are available online at smct.org. SMCT is located at 1660 N. McClelland St., Santa Maria. For more information, call (805) 922-4442.

Brutal truth

The Santa Maria Civic Theatre outdoes itself with a solid production of A Streetcar Named Desire

PHOTO COURTESY OF SANTA MARIA CIVIC THEATRE



SHINING A NEW LIGHT: The Santa Maria Civic Theatre's production of *A Streetcar Named Desire* resonates with a strong sense of timeliness in 2019. Under the modern lens of the MeToo movement, Stanley Kowalski (Josh Cornell) and Stella's (Stephanie Gray) tumultuous relationship feels more disturbing and terrifying than ever before.

white lace glove, it's a tormented mind and a body aching for the primal lust she's also deeply terrified of. Nichols smartly uses her costuming and body to balance demureness with the aching sexuality of Blanche and, best of all, she understands Williams' words. I found myself several times closing my eyes and just listening to the pure poetic beauty of her delivery.

Gray is a staunch contender next to her. There is also a sadism in Stella, although one that never quite gets to the surface. In the end, Stella opts to not believe her sister (even though we, the audience, know it's a deliberate choice, and Stella really does know what Stanley did). Gray delivers a certain look here and there both to Stanley and to Blanche that conveys much more than her calm exterior.

This is a tough play to put on, and SMCT packs a lot in a tight, intimate setting. Every little detail is perfect—the costumes, the props, the lighting, the blocking and movement of the actors, the sets, and the music. Make no mistake, this is a very intense play, and you should be ready to watch tough violent scenes that are physically jarring. SMCT doesn't hold back or temper any of the potency in Williams' masterwork; in fact, the production forces the audience to witness the true meaning of brutality, like Mitch forcing Blanche into the light. For that and many reasons, the play is a must-see. ○

Arts and Lifestyle Writer Rebecca Rose is a delicate Southern belle. Contact her at rrose@santamariasun.com.

Calling to the past

Melinda Palacio's writing touches on issues of cultural identity and history

BY REBECCA ROSE

Black cormorants on bare branches spread their wings as if in prayer.

A sunny day in Summerland and the tree, visible only from the highway, hides its penitent perch from cars racing by too fast."

The stark visual contrasts in Melinda Palacio's poem, "The Praying Tree," show just how skilled she is at creating a mood that alludes to something deeper and often darker behind the grace of our natural world.

Palacio, an acclaimed poet and novelist whose work touches on issues of racial identity, nature, and the fragile circle of life and death, is one of the featured poets at CORE Winery's monthly poetry series on Feb. 9. Her novel *Ocotillo Dreams* won the Mariposa Award for Best First Book in the 2012 International Latino Book Awards as well as a PEN Oakland-Josephine Miles Award for Excellence in Literature for that same year. Her first book of poetry, *How Fire is a Story*, *Waiting* was a finalist for the Binghamton

University Milt Kessler Award and the Patterson Poetry Prize in 2013. The Academy of American Poets' Poem-a-Day Program featured her work in 2015.

Poetry wasn't always the plan for the former journalist. She spent years carrying around journals where she would write ideas (that she would eventually turn into poetry) from time to time but never focused on creative writing as a career. Palacio said it was a move to Santa Barbara several years ago that had a profound impact on her work.

"I really attribute Santa Barbara to bringing out more creative writing in me," she said. "I started writing poetry and started attending the Santa Barbara Writers Conference. I became more interested in poetry and fiction."

At one of the conferences she attended, she won a prize for a poem she had written, which immediately helped launch her career as a poet. Shortly thereafter she wrote a short story about the fractured relationship between a young girl and her father, which was also published.

The story, like much of Palacio's work, was deeply personal and reflective of her own life. She has spent much of her creative career exposing that vulnerability and examining it through the lens of her art.

"I didn't grow up with my father," she said. "We were estranged. Years later, I visited him in Folsom Prison, and I ended up writing a bunch of poems about it, and that manuscript won a contest."

The resulting chapbook, *Folsom Lockdown*, won the Kulupri Press' 2009 Sense of Place Chapbook

Award. The collection is a haunting exploration of violence and incarceration, touching on how the impact reaches beyond prison walls and into the lives of those left in the wake.

Palacio's work also touches heavily on themes of immigration and fear. Her novel *Ocotillo Dreams* is set in Arizona during the infamous 1997 immigration sweeps. Like her main character in that book, Palacio also lost her mother at a young age, one of the many ways she identified with her own characters.

"It was an easy idea for me to take some of the ideas in my notebook and turn them into poetry," she said. "With the novel, I had lived in Chandler, Arizona, during the immigration sweep. It really wasn't that far-fetched for me to imagine myself, as a Mexican-American, being caught up in an immigration sweep and being mistaken for an undocumented person."

She's currently working on a second novel that deals with many similar issues. The book follows a young Mexican-American girl, Violet, who desperately wants to get out

of East Los Angeles so she can go to college. But she's hampered by an abusive father and overbearing brothers who don't want her to leave. Palacio said the story is about what Violet experiences as she travels across the U.S., witnessing racial discrimination and tension.

"The new novel goes back a little further but touches on the same themes," she explained. "It's a coming of age story."

Recent current events involving deportations and the imprisonment of migrant children

In her words

Melinda Palacio and Toni Wynn will read selections from their writings on Feb. 9 at CORE Winery at 7 p.m. Admission is free. CORE is located at 105 W. Clark Ave., Orcutt.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MELINDA PALACIO
POETRY TAKES FLIGHT: Melinda Palacio, poet and novelist, will read selections from her writing at CORE Winery on Feb. 9, including work from her poetry collection, *Bird Forgiveness*.

and families at the Mexican border have raised concerns and stirred a lot of emotions within the poet. She was recently asked to contribute a poem for an anthology about immigration.

"Writing about the situation at the border, the words just came," she said. "It's so easy to write about the hurt and the injustice that's happening in our lifetime, today. Even though I've written about it as historical fiction, this is happening now. As a poet, my way of contributing and resisting is through my writing." ○

Arts and Lifestyle Writer Rebecca Rose loves road trips. Contact her at rrose@santamariasun.com.

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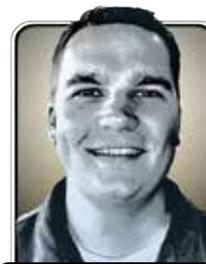
BY ROB KRIDER

For many years my house was split right down the middle, perfectly even along gender lines. We had me as the patriarch of the family, my wife as the actual boss of the family, our handsome son was our oldest child, and our beautiful daughter was our youngest. Life was perfect, and there was a natural balance in the home. There was a time when we had a goldfish as a pet, but nobody could really tell what sex it was, so it essentially brought a gender-neutral component to our house. Then things started to change; our son went off to college, we rescued a female dog from the pound, and suddenly, it was me and three ladies in the house. I was the only male left. Essentially, I was the last man standing (to pee).

With those changes, the house certainly did sway in the female hormonal direction. There were a lot more decorative pillows on things, and the show that populated our television the most was about drag queens. I survived it mostly by just making sure I put the toilet seat down and by spending lots of time alone in the garage. I wasn't really accomplishing anything in the garage, but I was in there among the tools and I felt manly.

Then we rescued a little boy puppy, and suddenly the household went plus one in the direction of the male category. My wife has an enormous heart and spared no expense getting this homeless stray back to health. She bought the finest foods for the puppy, read endlessly about the best way to care for the puppy, and overwhelmingly loved the puppy more than anything in the world (including me, it appeared).

Then one day, once the puppy was feeling a little better and off of his medications, the puppy became extremely male. He liked to roll over and show his man parts, he was aggressive in the way he played with our other dog, and he humped everything in the house that moved. Suddenly, my wife, whom I love, wasn't as impressed with our sweet little rescue puppy. She thought something was wrong with him. Things definitely escalated when she caught the puppy aggressively humping



Rob Krider
Man Overboard

our poor female dog's head. Our older dog just stood there and took the abuse, but looked toward my wife with eyes that asked, "Is there no dignity in this house?"

Right then my wife decided the most important thing to do in the whole wide world was to have

the puppy immediately neutered. She spoke to our veterinarian, and the doctor said he would prefer to wait until the puppy was 6 months old, which would be four months out. This was unacceptable to my wife. So, she started shopping around for a shelter that would do the surgery immediately. It seemed like she was on a mission to destroy any added maleness to our household, and I called her out on it.

"Hey Baby, I'm confused. You have done everything step by step, doctor's orders, in the care for this puppy. But suddenly, because he humped your leg one time, you want to ignore the doctor's advice and cut the puppy's balls off?"

"We can't have him humping everything in the house."

"He's a dog, it isn't even a sexual thing; it's more of a dominance thing. He's trying to be the alpha."

"Even more reason to have him neutered. I don't want him trying to dominate things in this house using his penis."

"Baby, he is an 8-week-old animal. He doesn't know the difference. Having his testicles may help him develop into a normal grown dog. That's why the vet wants to wait until 6 months."

"I don't care. I already made the appointment. It's done. His balls will be gone by Wednesday."

I looked over at the puppy, who was humping a stuffed animal, and shrugged my shoulders, "Sorry, little guy. I tried. Who knows around here—I might be next." ○

Rob and the puppy are in the garage hiding from the women. To read more from Rob Krider or contact him, visit robkrider.com.

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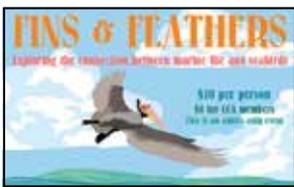
Calendar Girls
SELECT DAYS IN JAN-FEB
By the Sea Productions



Avila Beach Spaghetti Dinner
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 1
Avila Beach Community Center



Brewasana
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 3
7Sisters Brewing Co.



Fins and Feathers
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 8
Central Coast Aquarium



Protecting Your Loved Ones: Valentines Day Defense Class
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 9
7Sisters Brewing Co.



Orchestra Novo Co-Creation Project III with Robert Thies
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 10
CPAC at Cuesta College



Tribute to Aretha Franklin & Smokey Robinson
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 12
Morro Bay Wine Seller



Valentine's Couples Dinner and Singles Bash
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 14
Tooth & Nail Winery



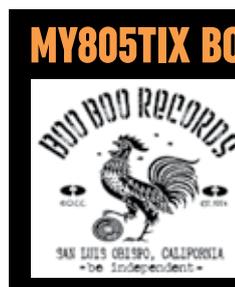
Love in Avila Beach Dinner and Dance
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 15
Point San Luis Lighthouse



Unfinished Business 55th Beatles Anniversary Valentines Show
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 16
Mongos Saloon



Wine & Dine
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FRI & SAT, MARCH 1 & 2
Alex Madonna Expo Center



Return of the Jette: A Benefit Concert for Orchestra Novo
SATURDAY, MARCH 2
Congregation Beth David



Highway 46 West Wine Safari
SAT & SUN, MARCH 2-3
Paso Robles HWY 46 West Wineries



UK Guitarist Clive Carroll
FRIDAY, MARCH 7
Morro Bay Wine Seller



Vocal Arts on Broadway
FRIDAY, MARCH 8
Monarch Club at Trilogly



A Historic Evening with Eva Schloss
SUNDAY, MARCH 10
Chumash Auditorium



Tribute to Johnny Cash
TUESDAY, MARCH 12
Morro Bay Wine Seller



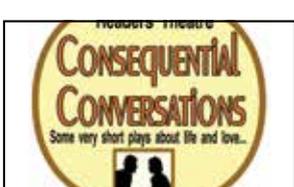
Movie Screening: Miss Representation
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13
Cuesta College Associated Student Center



Rick Springfield: Stripped Down
SATURDAY, MARCH 16
Rava Wines + Events



Mamma Mia!
SATURDAY, MARCH 16
Morro Bay High School



Consequential Conversations
MARCH 22-24
By the Sea Productions



Royal Family KIDS Fundraiser
SATURDAY, MARCH 23
Fountain Pavilion at the Santa Maria Fairpark



Watercolor & Wine Workshop
SUNDAY, MARCH 24
Zaca Mesa Winery



Brynn Albanese performs with StringFire
SUNDAY, MARCH 31
Old Santa Rosa Chapel



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Film Reviews

A DOG'S WAY HOME

What's it rated? **PG**
 What's it worth? **Matinee**
 When's it showing? **Movies Lompoc**
PICK Charles Martin Smith (*Air Bud, Dolphin Tale*) directs this family adventure about Bella (voiced by Bryce Dallas Howard), a dog who travels 400 miles to find her owner.
 Born a stray under a house, Bella's found and brought home by aspiring doctor Lucas (Jonah Hauer-King) to live with him and his unemployed veteran mom, Terri (Ashley Judd). Then through circumstance, Bella's sent to live elsewhere. She tries to find her way home only to get lost in the woods and befriended by a cougar cub.
 Sure, the story is familiar, perhaps even derivative. Yes, it's clumsily cloying and emotionally manipulative. True, its social justice message is dumbed down to the point of being ineffective. But there's an adorable dog, a formulaic feel-good story, and you can bring the whole family ... and some tissues, definitely some tissues. (96 min.)
 —Glen Starkey

ESCAPE ROOM

What's it rated? **PG-13**
 What's it worth? **Rent it**
 When's it showing? **Movies Lompoc**
 Director Adam Robitel (*Insidious: The Last Key, The Taking of Deborah Logan*) helms this thriller about six strangers who find themselves in circumstances beyond their control after entering a mysterious escape room. The group must use their wits and work together if they're to survive.
 There's enough tension and suspense to thrill fans of the genre, but for many viewers the film won't warrant a trip to the theaters. (109 min.)
 —Caleb Wiseblood

GLASS

What's it rated? **PG-13**
 What's it worth? **Matinee**
 Where's it showing? **Hi-Way Drive-In, Movies Lompoc, Parks Plaza**
 In *Glass*, M. Night Shyamalan (*The Sixth Sense, Signs, The Village, Lady in the Water, The Happening*) brings back three of his most iconic characters, directing Bruce Willis as David Dunn, Samuel L. Jackson as Elijah Price, and James McAvoy as Kevin Wendell Crumb, a man with 24 personalities. The three are meshed together in a psychiatric ward to rid them of their superhuman delusions while Elijah has a plan of his own to bring the comic book plot to life.
 We're so used to superheroes that have some sort of connection to a mythical god and are destined for greatness. These heroes are based on comic-book stories,

FILM REVIEWS continued page 27

SCORING

FULL PRICE... It's worth the full price of an evening showing
 MATINEE..... Save a few bucks, catch an afternoon showing
 RENT IT..... It's worth a rental
 STREAM IT..... Wait 'til Netflix has it
 NOTHING..... Don't waste your time

Beach noir

Writer-director Steven Knight (*Redemption, Locke*) helms this thriller about fishing boat captain Baker Dill (Matthew McConaughey), whose tranquil life is disrupted when his ex-wife, Karen (Anne Hathaway), finds him and weaves a desperate tale about her abusive new husband, Frank (Jason Clarke), who's not only threatening her, but her and Baker's son, Patrick (Rafael Sayegh). Karen's solution is a fishing excursion that will leave her new husband to the sharks. Is Dill in? Is Karen's story all it seems to be? (106 min.)

Glen: I'll give *Serenity* this: It's very original! It's got a twist you can tell is coming, but when it comes, it's not what you expect. Unfortunately, it's also not very fulfilling, and if you think too hard about it, it makes very little sense. The real question, I guess, is whether the first two-thirds of the film are interesting enough to suffer through the last third. The heart of the story is Baker Dill, whose real name is John. He's hiding out on Plymouth, a tropical fishing island, where he takes tourists out on his boat, *Serenity*, so they can get drunk on beer and maybe—if they're lucky—snag a tuna. Dill's problem—well, one of them—is his obsession with catching a giant tuna he's named Justice. Paying customers be damned, if he thinks Justice has been hooked on one of his lines, he's going to reel him in. He's had the giant fish on the hook four times, but every time he thinks the fish is played-out and ready to be gaffed into the boat, it snaps the line and escapes. On shore after a day of fishing, Dill hooks up with his regular lady, Constance (Diane Lane), in a sweaty tryst that ends with Constance giving Dill enough money to fill his boat with petrol and himself with rum. Think of the film's vibe as beach noir. When Dill's ex, Karen, shows up, Dill has to decide whether to help her kill her abusive husband, Frank, who's a real lout. Sure, he deserves it, but Dill—an Iraq War vet—is a decent man, not a killer. The linchpin is Dill's son, Patrick, a sensitive computer prodigy who, like Karen, is under threat. As a lover of good film noir, I was game to take this twisty ride into Dill's and Karen's lives, and there are some gritty, tense moments conjured up by Knight, but atmosphere alone isn't enough to save *Serenity*, which ultimately flounders under the weight of its third-act twist.
Anna: Personally, I was pretty

SERENITY

What's it rated? **R**
 What's it worth, Anna? **Stream it**
 What's it worth, Glen? **Stream it**
 Where's it showing? **Santa Maria Stadium 14, Arroyo Grande Stadium 10, Parks Plaza**

PHOTO COURTESY OF GLOBAL ROAD ENTERTAINMENT



TROPIC TANGO: Baker Dill (Matthew McConaughey) and his occasional hook-up, Constance (Diane Lane), steam up the screen in his neo-noir thriller.

disappointed with the twist; while I knew something was coming, I had higher hopes than what the storyline landed on. Dill himself is a complicated and interesting character, a brooding loner with a past he's desperate to leave behind, with the exception of the memories of his son, now a 13-year-old living in a whole different world with Karen and her dickish, abusive husband. Plymouth Island, where John-turned-Dill has landed, is the exact right place to get lost. The small, close-knit community watches over one another. If anyone knows your business, everyone knows it, but there's really no law enforcement around to stop bad behavior. While Dill keeps everyone at arm's length, the townspeople won't stay away from him and seem to genuinely want the best for the salty seaman. Karen's arrival is a chink in his chain, both exposing his past life and bringing fresh moral dilemmas to the surface. While at first Dill refuses to entertain Karen's proposal, when the payoff becomes his son's life and happiness instead of money, Dill can't help but consider the idea. At about this point, the plot twist is revealed, and while I don't want to spoil it for potential viewers, I will say that this is where I started to lose interest in both the storyline and characters. Upon reflection, it makes less sense now than it did then. Instead of being a puzzle the audience has to suss out, it's just a confusing mess of pieces the filmmaker didn't work to fit together before letting them fall.
Glen: This is only Knight's third feature film that he's written and directed. *Redemption* (2013), starring British action star Jason Statham, is one of the actor's less inane films—it's smart and

action-packed without being silly. *Locke* (2013) was even better—a taut thriller that takes place almost entirely in a car with Tom Hardy in the titular role. He talks on the phone to his boss, a work colleague, his wife, his two sons, medical personnel, local authorities, and his former one-night-stand who's going into early labor with his child. Knight's also written a bunch of interesting films—*Dirty Pretty Things* (2002), *Eastern Promises* (2007), *The Hundred-Foot Journey* (2014), *Pawn Sacrifice* (2014), *Burnt* (2015), *Woman Walks Ahead* (2017)—and was the creator behind the TV series *Taboo* and *Peaky Blinders*. This film, however, doesn't manage to gel. After the twist, it's hard to stay invested in the characters, and some of the various foreshadowing—for instance

a suit-wearing character named Reid Miller (Jeremy Strong) who keeps trying to give Dill an electronic fish finder, or the strange telepathic connection Dill seems to have with his son, Patrick—seem out of place. Looking back on it all, I wonder what the point of Dill's relationship with Constance is—it goes nowhere. Like I said, if you start thinking about how it's all supposed to fit together, the story crumbles. If you like twists, maybe this film is worth it to rent or to stream, but frankly, I think it's a failure. Save your money!

Anna: Agreed, this one falls flat and with a pretty resounding thump. McConaughey and Hathaway are both talented actors—he's an ace at the kind of outsider Dill is supposed to be, and she's the elegant but shattered piece of candy for her abusive spouse. They pull off the characters, but unfortunately the script, as twisty as it tries to be, fails at being interesting and leaves a lot of gaping holes too big to ignore. I was a big fan of *Locke* and many of the projects Knight has worked on. Hopefully *Serenity* is just a blip in his career of fine filmmaking. I'd even argue that this was shot well, the green tropic scenery and beautiful blue sea with dazzling whites against moments of darkness and lingering stark contrast in shots were visually rather interesting. The problems all came down to the storyline and the unique-but-off-putting twist that left me rolling my eyes. Maybe this pops up on your home system in the future. Nothing else on, why not watch? But like my paramour said—save those bucks to see something else. ○

Sun Screen is written by New Times Senior Staff Writer Glen Starkey and his wife, Anna. Comment at gstarkey@newtimeslo.com.

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Joe & Randy

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FILM REVIEWS from page 26

but Shyamalan based his trilogy on the structure of the comic books themselves. He has a totally different take on his superheroes: They're just people.

If you're going to see *Glass* hoping for a spectacle of fight scenes, crashing cars, breaking buildings, and so forth, you're not going to get any of that. This is more than just some superhero film, and while it could have been more, it has the potential to be great. (129 min.)

—Karen Garcia

GREEN BOOK

What's it rated? **PG-13**

What's it worth? **Full price**

Where's it showing? **Movies Lompoc**

PICK Co-writer Peter Farrelly (*Dumb and Dumber*, *There's Something About Mary*) directs this biopic about African-American pianist Don Shirley (Mahershala Ali), who hires working-class Italian-American bouncer Tony Lip (Viggo Mortensen) as his driver on a music tour of the 1960s American South. Though they're very different people, they develop a warm and enduring friendship. This is one of those classic feel-good movies only a true cynic could reject. Both lead characters come out of the other side of the story improved. (130 min.)

—Glen

THE KID WHO WOULD BE KING

What's it rated? **PG**

What's it worth? **Matinee**

Where's it showing? **Movies Lompoc, Parks Plaza**

PICK Writer-director Joe Cornish (*Attack the Block*) helms this family adventure about a group of kids on a quest to save the world. Alex (Louis Ashbourne Serkis) is sure he's nothing special ... until he finds Excalibur encased in stone! With the help of Merlin (Sir Patrick Stewart), Alex will unite his friends and attempt to defeat the evil enchantress, Morgana (Rebecca Ferguson).

An insecure kid learns to be a leader in this charming action-adventure based on the Arthurian legends. Unlike a lot of kids films that also try to keep the parents entertained, this film is aimed squarely at tweens, so adults may find it a slog. With the goofy charm of '80s adventures—think *The Neverending Story* or *The Goonies*—kids will enjoy its inventive action, fantasy setting, and emotional punch. (132 min.)

—Glen

THE MULE

What's it rated? **R**

What's it worth? **Matinee**

Where's it showing? **Hi-Way Drive-In**

PICK Clint Eastwood (*Unforgiven*, *Million Dollar Baby*, *Gran Torino*) directs this crime thriller screenplay by Sam Dolnick, based on *The New York Times Magazine* article "The Sinaloa Cartel's 90-Year-Old Drug Mule" by Nick Schenk. Eastwood takes on the role of Earl Stone, a horticulturist and

World War II vet who's caught in Michigan running \$3 million worth of Mexican cartel cocaine. (117 min.)

—Glen

ON THE BASIS OF SEX

What's it rated? **PG-13**

What's it worth? **Full price**

Where's it showing? **Parks Plaza**

PICK Mimi Leder (*Pay It Forward*) directs this biopic about a young Ruth Bader Ginsburg (Felicity Jones) and her fight for equality, which eventually helps propel her onto the Supreme Court of the United States.

Just when I thought I couldn't respect Ruth Bader Ginsburg more, along comes this film to show me I can. Ginsburg was one of nine women among 500 men admitted into 1956 class of Harvard Law School, and Sam Waterson as Dean Erwin Griswold is the constant reminder to her and the other women that he's not convinced they're worthy.

On the Basis of Sex is both an important history lesson and an inspirational film for girls and young women still struggling for full equality, access, and representation. I hope parents will bring their tweens and teens to the theater as a reminder that despite staggering odds, justice can overcome tradition and the status quo.

The film also works as entertainment—tax law has never seemed so exciting! The acting and direction is roundly excellent as well. Jones is wonderful as the diminutive Ginsburg—she plays Ruth's moments of despondency and weakness effectively, reminding viewers that even the Notorious R.B.G. is fallible. (120 min.)

—Glen

SERENITY

What's it rated? **R**

What's it worth? **Stream it**

Where's it showing? **Parks Plaza, Santa Maria Stadium 14, Arroyo Grande Stadium 10**

See Sun Screen.

THE UPSIDE

What's it rated? **PG-13**

What's it worth? **Matinee**

Where's it showing? **Parks Plaza**

Neil Burger (*The Illusionist*, *Limitless*, *Divergent*) directs this American remake of the wonderful 2011 film, *Les Intouchables*, about Phillip (Bryan Cranston), a wealthy quadriplegic who hires Dell (Kevin Hart), a man with a criminal record, to help him with his day-to-day needs.

Score this as another one of those audience-pleasing films that critics find cliché and cloying. True, it's not as good as its French progenitor, but as a feel-good story of redemption, it works, and there's no denying Cranston and Hart's chemistry. (125 min.) ○

—Glen

Sun movie reviews are compiled by New Times Senior Staff Writer Glen Starkey. Contact him at gstarkey@newtimeslo.com.

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BINGEABLE

DISENCHANTMENT

When? **2018**

What's it rated? **TV-14**

Where's it available? **Netflix**

There is nothing in the world that I love more than a great animated sitcom. Starting with *The Simpsons*, I was hooked on bingeing my favorite animated comedies over and over and over and OVER again until I wore out my VHS (yes, I'm old). One of the best of all time was, of course, *Futurama*, also the brainchild of *Simpsons*' creator Matt Groening. When *Futurama* finally left the airwaves after a tumultuous canceled-revived-canceled-revived back-and-forth, there really seemed to be an empty spot in the animation landscape.

Thankfully, Groening has returned to form with *Disenchantment*, a bold and quirky look at fairy-tale tropes. The show features Princess Tiabeanie Maribeane de la Rochambeau Grunkwitz, aka Princess Bean, who rejects everything about her life as a princess in favor of drinking, gambling, bedding hot dudes, and committing minor acts of grand theft here and

there. In the first episode, she meets Elfo, an adorably twisted elf who longs to break free from his elfish life where everyone is supposedly "happy" all the time. Elfo wants to be miserable, and he quickly finds that misery when Bean's father, King Zog, and his court wizard, Sorcerio, seek to drain his elf blood, which supposedly holds the secret to everlasting life.

Bean is a motherless child raised by her father. He's married to his second wife, a hilariously doped up lizard creature (although don't say that to her face) named Queen Oona, who has birthed the king's only son, Bonnie Prince Derek. Luci plays a weird demon cat who has been sent by a mysterious coven to watch over Bean (there's a long-running mystery that sort of pays off in the last episode), and he works great as the evil foil. But it's Bunty, Bean's chambermaid, who absolutely steals the show with her lines and running gags.

The writing is pretty typical of what you would expect on shows like *Futurama*. There are plenty of crude jokes and humor that play off Bean's budding awkward adolescence and the interplay of the three main characters. Bean and Elfo have a lot of chemistry but the show really excels when it lets Bean off the reins and out of her



PRINCESS DIARIES: Princess Bean shirks the ladylike expectations of her princessly duties in favor of drinking, gambling, and fighting evil with her catlike demon pal, Luci, and Elfo, an elf with a crush on her.

stereotypical anti-girlie-girl role. Bean is heroic, smart, and, most of all, loyal to her friends. The show will trick you into thinking it's a throwaway job at fairy tales and our modern propensity to roll our eyes at them, but it's at its core a sweet kind of innocence that will absolutely break your heart by the end. (One season, 10 episodes) ○

—Rebecca Rose

Sugar rush

The Sweet Spot is bringing treats from all over the world to Santa Maria

BY REBECCA ROSE

As I type this, I'm singing the words of one of my favorite songs loudly to myself: 1972's "The Candy Man" by the late and great Sammy Davis Jr.

The music is an appropriate accompaniment to this story, although the song might be more aptly titled, "The Candy Family" or "The Candy Shop" (this is leading somewhere, I promise, folks).

Santa Maria's Town Center East is now the home to a brand new candy shop, one that doesn't just serve up your typical gas station candy aisle treats. The Sweet Spot is a hub for specialty and unique candy and snacks from all over the globe, and the owners are bringing to town their vision of how to please your sweet tooth.

On a Thursday afternoon, Tracy Ruiz is busy navigating a stream of customers and phone calls from the media, but that's not stopping her from having a great time.

"It's a candy store; it's always a fun place to be," she said. "We play Disney movies, kids come in to watch and really enjoy it, and even the parents bob along to the music."

The Sweet Spot landed in Santa Maria on Dec. 1, just in time to dole out holiday and Christmas treats. The shop is the brainchild of Ruiz; her husband, Rudy; and her mother-in-law, Donna Ornelas. The couple is no stranger to local business—they own World 1-1 Games right downstairs.

The Ruizes are both Air Force veterans who were stationed at Vandenberg Air Force Base before making their home in Santa Maria. Ruiz's husband had such a large collection of video games amassed during various deployments, they decided to open up the game shop at the mall. But it was another kind of experience that gave Ruiz the idea for The Sweet Spot.

On a trip to New York City, Ruiz visited Dylan's Candy Bar, a popular and visually stunning candy shop owned by Dylan Lauren, daughter of legendary American sportswear designer Ralph Lauren.

"It was the most amazing thing I had ever seen," Ruiz recalled. "It was just enchanting. They had music playing. The colors were so vivid everywhere. There were so many things to do. I just fell in love."

Next thing she knew, Ruiz was back in Santa Maria talking her husband into opening a second business. She said she wanted to duplicate the magical feeling of walking around surrounded by beautiful candy and sweets and offer an environment that families and others could feel welcome in.

Get your fix
The Sweet Spot is located at 391 Town Center East, Santa Maria. Message them through Facebook at [facebook.com/SWEETSPOT805](https://www.facebook.com/SWEETSPOT805).



YUM YUM: Candyland comes to life at The Sweet Spot where owners Donna Ornelas and Rudy and Tracy Ruiz recently opened their new business. The shop features an eclectic collection of candy from all over the world.

The decision to set up another business in the mall was also an important one to Ruiz.

"I've always believed—coming from Texas, where every city has a mall—malls are important to the community," she said. "In our local mall in Texas, we had a lot of events and a lot of activities, like seeing the Easter Bunny. We thought if we're going to be somewhere, we want to be at the center of the community, and that's this mall."

The shop is filled with a massive selection of candy, chocolates, sodas, gum, and specialty gifts from all over the world. The Ruizes were stationed in Japan, something that played a huge role in their merchandising process.

"We were there for three years, and we loved everything about it," Ruiz said. "I knew we had to sell Japanese candy. That's also where I got the idea for the colors; everything is very bubblegum-pop inspired."

One of their most popular Japanese items is a product called Popin' Cookin', a microwaveable candy product that's garnered a huge fandom on YouTube. The product contains packets of cake, gelatin, frosting, and more used to make things such as imitation sushi, birthday cakes, doughnuts, and pizzas. Some customers even make their own videos after buying the product in the store, Ruiz said.

"Kids have been watching YouTube videos to learn to do this, and so it's really blown up," she said. "They don't



SWEET TREAT: The newest store inside Santa Maria's Town Center East is The Sweet Shop, which features an assortment of candies from many countries, including Japan. Co-owners Tracy and Rudy Ruiz, former Air Force veterans, were both stationed in Japan for three years.

EATS continued page 29

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TREAT YOURSELF: A trip to Dylan's Candy Bar in New York inspired Tracy Ruiz to open The Candy Shop along with husband Rudy Ruiz and mother-in-law Donna Ornelas. The shop features vibrant candy as well as gifts and toys aimed at a wide range of ages.

EATS from page 28

care what it looks like; some candies look like sushi, and some look like toilets. And they absolutely love it, but it's not just candy. It's the experience."

Another unique item with a weird internet cult following is green tea Kit Kats. Sugar arts are a huge part of Japanese food culture, and foods like Kit Kat bars take on new life as they experiment with bold and often baffling flavors (baked potato, hot sauce, and cough syrup, to name a few).

"They are traditional Kit Kats flavored with matcha," she said. "I absolutely love them."

If you're a fan of fancy German chocolates (me!), The Sweet Spot has a wide selection from the European continent, as well as chocolates from Australia. One large display in the store is

nothing but Mexican candy.

The store also sells a number of imported and specialty sodas, including Jones sodas in 10 different flavors, the Japanese Ramune soda, Love Potion #69, and a butterscotch soda, among many others. Ruiz said with retro candy tailored for older customers and trendy sweets to draw in teens, the selection is diverse enough to fit many tastes.

"It's not just a candy store," she said. "It's a fun place. You can be silly, you can be funny, you can just have a good time. Even if you walk out without anything, you will be happy. It's just a magic place." ○

Don't make Arts and Lifestyle Writer Rebecca Rose run, she is full of chocolate. Contact her at rrse@santamariasun.com.

PHOTO BY REBECCA ROSE



Rebeccamendations: *What's new, what's fun, and what to try*

• **Zaca Mesa Winery and Vineyards'** new 2016 Inceptive wine is a red blend that lives up to its name. The wine is a Rhone-style blend of syrah, mourvedre, and grenache and is very well balanced and flavorful. It's a bit of a step outside the winery's comfort zone, and it's fun to see what they plan to do next. Visit them at **6905 Foxen Canyon Road, Los Olivos**, to try for yourself.

• It's not always easy to eat vegan or vegetarian, but for a million good reasons that's what I'm doing and I'm finding lots of really great secrets and surprises on local menus. Did you know that **Viet Kitchen** has a selection of vegetarian meals, including vegetable pho (pictured right) It's loaded with carrots, daikon, bok choy, broccoli, tofu, and red onions. Check out all their meatless (or meat-filled!) options at **3456 Skyway Drive, Santa Maria**.

• Looking for romance on Valentine's Day? Try

PHOTO COURTESY OF SCRATCH KITCHEN



SY Kitchen and Chef Luca Crestinelli's special menu: Maine lobster with citrus, baby carrots, and mint; pappardelle with sweet onion, scallops, and caviar; arctic char with spring pea sauce, new potatoes, and truffles; and duck confit with Jerusalem artichokes, broccolini, and port. The special menu, which includes specialty cocktail offerings, runs from 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Feb. 14 at **1110 Faraday St., Santa Ynez**.

• The Mushroom Festival may be over but some local restaurants are still feeling the love for our fungi friends. **Scratch Kitchen** in Lompoc recently whipped up a halibut with herb gnocchi and sauteed spinach dish (pictured left), which highlighted some beautiful local wild chanterelles. For more of what they do with local seasonal ingredients, visit **610 N. H St., Lompoc**.

• **Anthony's Sports Bar** is running a special for the jaw-dropping sandwich called the Massive Mac n' Cheese. For \$13.99 you can get a giant pile of delicious macaroni and cheese on a burger with bacon and a whole lot more. Don't say they never gave you anything at **859 Guadalupe St., Guadalupe**. ○

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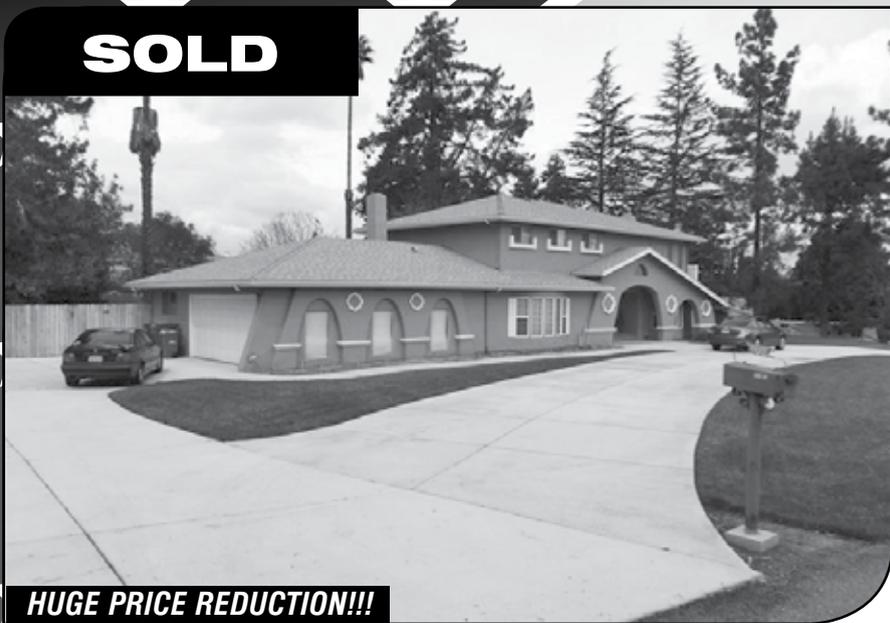
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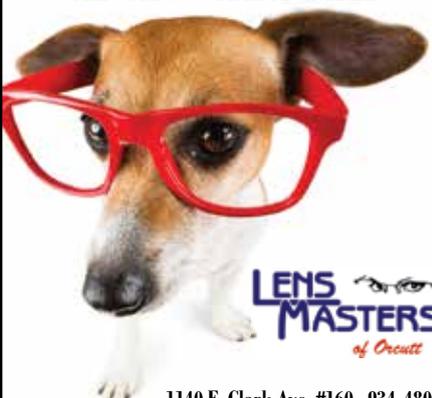
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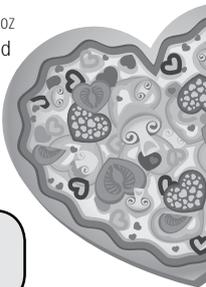
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