Disaster

dive

A look at the role that local divers played responding to the Channel Islands boat fire [10]

BY PETER JOHNSON
The Conception boat fire resulted in the deaths of 34 people, another disastrous tragedy in Santa Barbara County for agencies from multiple counties to respond to—in the last five years alone, there has been a mass killing in Isla Vista, an oil spill off the coast, wildfires, and debris flows. In early September, search and recovery dive teams from San Luis Obispo, Ventura, and Santa Barbara counties dispatched their divers to the scene off Santa Cruz Island to recover the victims of this latest disaster. For this week's cover story, New Times Assistant Editor Peter Johnson speaks with sheriffs from Santa Barbara and SLO counties and dive team members about the search effort and what it takes to respond to tragedy [10].

Also this week, read about all of the changes happening on the oil projects proposed in Cat Canyon [7], Guadalupe's new city administrator [8], a scare so good, Arts Editor Caleb Wiseblood goes back every year [22], a comedic conspiracy podcast originating in SLO County [23], and Presqu’ile’s new executive chef and the plans that come with her [26].

Camillia Lanham, editor

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Group demands police transparency, accountability following arrest video

Protestors holding signs that read “We Want Justice” and “Police Accountability Now” gathered at the corner of South Broadway and Cook Street on Oct. 25 in response to a video circulating on the internet showing Santa Maria police officers using force while arresting a suspect.

In the video, filmed by a resident who watched the arrest happen, at least six officers are shown commanding a suspect to get out of his car during a traffic stop. During the suspect’s arrest, officers appear to punch the suspect’s head while a police K-9 bites his ankle.

Abraham Melendrez, Santa Maria community organizer for the Central Coast Alliance United for A Sustainable Economy (CAUSE), said he was disturbed by the video, but he doesn’t want to jump to any conclusions until the police department completes its investigation. He said CAUSE organized this rally to demand accountability and transparency during that process.

“We’re trying to maintain a neutral look until we get the details,” he said. “But we’re an advocacy organization, so we decided to have a peaceful demonstration.”

Police Cmdr. Marc Schneider said an officer pulled over the suspect, Alejandro Hernandez Meza, after the suspect swerved into an opposing lane of traffic and turned without stopping at a four-way intersection. After arresting Meza, Schneider said police charged him with driving under the influence of drugs, resisting arrest, and failing to stop at a stop sign.

Meza was pursued for multiple city blocks before finally being pulled over. Because of his refusal to initially pull over, an officer called for backup and conducted what Schneider called a “high-risk stop.” This is when an officer stays on the side of a vehicle, calls for other officers, and then commands a suspect to leave his or her car while the officers’ weapons are drawn.

“When a motorist doesn’t stop and they continue to travel and ignore lights and sirens, that sends up a red flag,” Schneider said.

In the video, officers are shown yelling at the suspect to lie flat on the ground, he slightly raises his head and upper body from the pavement as the officers approach. The officers quickly command him to lie flat again, which he does. Shortly after, an officer fires pepper balls—which are basically pepper spray in ammunition form, Schneider said—near the suspect’s head.

When officers move in to make the arrest, one can be seen punching what appears to be Meza’s head while trying to put the suspect’s arms behind his back. At the same time, an officer holding the K-9 moves forward, and the dog bites and holds on to Meza’s ankle.

Schneider said whenever officers use any level of force, the incident is investigated to see if officers used proper training, tactics, equipment, and whether or not the use of force was legal and was carried out in accordance with the department’s policies.

A police sergeant reviews written reports from all officers involved, as well as all audio and video files available. The department’s officers don’t wear body cameras, so police vehicles are equipped with dashboard cameras and officers wear audio recording devices, Schneider said. This information is passed on to a lieutenant and then a division commander, which in this case is Schneider. The commander determines whether the use of force is within policy and makes a recommendation to Police Chief Phil Hansen, who can decide whether to open a formal inquiry into the incident.

Schneider said the investigation into this incident should take about six weeks.

Melendrez said that the way the department handles this investigation is vital to maintaining trust between the community and the police department, which has improved since Hansen became police chief in 2017. But Melendrez is worried this video could reverse that progress.

“The chief has done an amazing job of improving the department and improving community trust,” Melendrez said. “It’s unfortunate that a video like this could throw that trust down the drain.”

Solvang’s fight with its tourism bureau winds down

Solvang City Attorney Chip Wullbrandt wore a bowling shirt to the last City Council meeting, explaining that it had been a long day.

“First, I’ll apologize for not being more formal wear this evening. I’ve actually been here at City Hall all day,” Wullbrandt said during the Oct. 28 meeting. “We’ve been working on trying to finish off asset recovery from the SCVB.”

That’s the Solvang Conference and Visitors Bureau, the city’s excited tourism arm. It’s held on to the city’s property, Wullbrandt said, including cash, an internet account, and even a phone.

“The city and the SCVB have been locked in a rancorous divorce since the summer, and the divided parties haven’t been able to agree on who owns what,” Wullbrandt said.

But recent threats of legal action from the city broke the dam, and Wullbrandt said some of those assets are now out of the city’s hands.

Solvang is also demanding the return of the computer and other hardware, but the SCVB is refusing.

The dispute started over the SCVB’s contract and, after several attempts to reconcile, both agree it was never ratified. When it became clear the future relationship between the two was over, Wullbrandt said the city decided to try to keep the partnership through the end of the year.

“The city has agreed to cooperate with the audit effort that the special city auditor was trying to carry out of past SCVB spending activities,” he said.

Wullbrandt described an Aug. 13 meeting he attended with the city’s efficiency consultant Tom Winidrow, City Councilmember Daniel Johnson, and Kim Jensen, the president of the SCVB.

“We also worked in a cooperative fashion to make sure the assets that had been paid for by the city and developed by the SCVB would be returned to the city,” he said.

Wullbrandt called the results of that meeting a “tentative agreement.” He said it included the return of some cash—at least $32,000 in a money market account and $10,000 in a checking account.

But Aug. 26, Wullbrandt said, the money had not been returned, and shortly after that, the visitor center stopped operating.

“When we got it open, we discovered it had been stripped of the phones and the modem,” Wullbrandt said.

The SCVB kept the phone number and internet account too.

“We were essentially left with the investments the city had made,” he said.

A formal demand for the return of the assets followed, asking for them to be turned in by Sept. 30.

Wullbrandt didn’t get a response.

After a closed session City Council meeting on Oct. 14, Wullbrandt and the council prepared to make the fight legal.

That’s when the city got a response from those who remained at the SCVB. They helped the city secure its digital assets, including social media and video. Solvang also got control of the visitor center phone number.

But the city’s still looking for the money.

Wullbrandt read a letter that Jensen wrote to the Central Coast Film Society on Sept. 30, giving the nonprofit a $16,000 donation and four Mac computers.

Wullbrandt said he got the money back from the Film Society and another $4,000 from an SCVB account.

But not everything is back, Wullbrandt said, there’s still a storage unit out there somewhere with more of the city’s stuff. Now, he’s just looking for the key.

—William D’Ursio

News continued page 6

Microclimate Weather Forecast
Dave Hoyde
KSBY Chief Meteorologist

Thursday

| COASTAL | High 76 | Low 37 |
| INLAND | High 76 | Low 31 |

Friday

| COASTAL | High 77 | Low 38 |
| INLAND | High 78 | Low 32 |

Saturday

| COASTAL | High 77 | Low 40 |
| INLAND | High 80 | Low 35 |

Sunday

| COASTAL | High 77 | Low 42 |
| INLAND | High 80 | Low 38 |

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Lompoc residents discuss concerns, solutions amid youth violence uptick

More than 50 Lompoc community members spent their Friday night at the Dick DeWees Community and Senior Center on Oct. 25 to find answers to an increase in violence that’s plaging the city. Seven homicides have taken place in the town of roughly 44,000 residents so far this year.

In response to a recent shooting that killed soldier Marlon Brunfield, resident Yasmin Dawson organized a march through the city in September that hundreds of people attended. Dawson set up this Oct. 25 meeting to maintain that momentum.

People of varying ages attended the meeting, which remained solemn and hopeful. Toward the end of the meeting, resident Jeremy Ball said he believes Lompoc is “just a couple of days off a brighter future.”

Lompoc Mayor Jenelle Osborne acted as a moderator at the event, while Dawson walked, with a microphone in her hand, to and from the stage. She envisions these meetings as an opportunity for residents who don’t attend City Council meetings to speak with residents interested in sharing their thoughts. Almost all of the concerns raised were related to public safety and youth violence, but there were two recurring issues that dominated most of the conversation. Residents cited a lack of funding for the city’s police department as one of the core issues, as well as a lack of opportunities, services, and supervision for kids in the community.

Numerous residents said part of the problem is that many parents in the city live in Lompoc and work in Santa Barbara, which means parents spend a lot of time commuting and leave kids unsupervised for hours after school.

“The Community Action Commission of Santa Barbara County told the Sun in August that it identified this issue in a community needs assessment of at-risk youth, and that this lack of supervision leaves kids vulnerable to gang recruitment,” said Dawson, who added that representatives from law enforcement did not attend.

Responding to residents’ grievances over a lack of career opportunities in the city, community member Chuck Madison took the microphone, went to the front of the room, and informed the group about a youth center he’s working on called Future For Lompoc Youth.

Madson said the center would provide entrepreneurship, education, and an after-school program to kids in the city. He said he’s in the process of securing a location for the center, which has received funding from the Santa Barbara Foundation, and he hopes to open the doors by the end of the year.

Madson echoed a common refrain that was heard throughout the night: Residents need to keep up this momentum.

“Even if the deaths stop, we need to keep moving forward,” Madison said.

Osborne is looking to continue having similar conversations at town hall meetings in each of the city’s four districts. She’s still in the planning process but wants all of the meetings to take place in the coming weeks.

She envisions these meetings as an opportunity to speak with residents who don’t attend City Council meetings and to learn about the issues unique to each district and ways the city can address those problems.

“The recent spike in violence is the most important [issue] to address first,” Osborne said. “I really do want to get within the neighborhoods and hear from them, because I think they’re having very different experiences from each other.”

Guadalupe begins after-school arts, sports programs

Since he took over as superintendent of the Guadalupe Unified School District in 2018, Emilio Handall planned to establish after-school programs in Guadalupe.

Now he’s done it, and he found an anonymous Santa Barbara donor to help.

First, Handall had to connect with Roberto Rodriguez, the COO of the Boys and Girls Club of Mid Central Coast. They talked about what students needed, what parents wanted, and what it would cost to get it done.

Handall looked at his tight budget, saw no openings there, and worried what kind of turnout there would be if the program came with a steep price tag for parents.

They came up with two numbers: $40,000 for recreational after-school sports and $32,000 for an after-school arts program.

The donor heard the merits and offered up the money.

“Soccer is pretty big in the Hispanic community, and it’s a sport that’s not being offered currently in Guadalupe,” Rodriguez said.

Focusing on recreational sports in the city is something the City Council is also pushing. The city received a $4.5 million grant to renovate LeRoy Park. In a previous interview with the Sun, Mayor Ariston Julian said it’s a priority for the city to make the accompanying field there usable again.

Rodriguez said it was important to have arts programs, too, and the students participating will get a chance to act, sing, and even create their own beats with an iPhone app.

—William D’Urso

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Scaling back

Aera Energy proposes a Cat Canyon project alternative with about 100 fewer wells

BY ZAC EZZONE

Situated among the rolling hills southeast of Santa Maria, the East Cat Canyon oil field produced oil for more than 100 years before being decommissioned in the 1990s. About six years ago, Aera Energy began trying to restore this production.

As the California-based oil and gas company has gone through its application process with Santa Barbara County, the project has met with criticism from some residents and environmental groups opposed to new oil and gas projects within the county.

To quell some of these concerns, and at the direction of county planning staff to reduce the footprint of the project, Aera Energy announced a new alternative for the development that lowers its total number of wells from 296 to 189. However, the company still plans to produce the same amount of oil by using a different drilling technique.

Aera Energy's county representative Rick Rust said this reduction is a result of the company listening to community concerns and adjusting accordingly.

"We're making changes. … Where there are concerns, especially like this with the well count, [the county] asked us if we could make it a smaller footprint. We heard what they said," Rust said.

According to Rust, this alternative reduces air emissions, reduces freshwater usage, minimizes visual impacts, and reduces wildlife habitat impacts. Rust said the latter is especially significant given the number of oak trees Aera proposed removing in its initial project.

Originally, Aera wanted to remove 300 trees, but this was reduced to asking to remove 189 trees under an earlier alternative. Under this latest alternative, Aera is saying 107 trees would need to be removed.

Groups such as the Environmental Defense Center (EDC) said these changes don't go far enough.

The list of issues the EDC has with the project is extensive, including concerns over air quality due to the number of trucks needed for this project, the injection of wastewater into underground aquifers, greenhouse gas emissions, and the risk of oil spills.

EDC staff attorney Tara Messing said the reduction in well count doesn’t mitigate these concerns if the same amount of oil is being produced.

"As far as reduced well count, if they aren't reducing overall production, you have the same impacts," Messing said.

County planner Kathryn Lehr said the county reached out to Aera about reducing the size of its project following a meeting in January where the public had the chance to weigh in on the draft environmental impact review.

"We got public comment, and we pressed Aera to see if there was a way to downsize their project," Lehr said.

This well reduction isn't an entirely new project proposal, but rather an alternative to the original project. During the environmental review process, the county analyzes the original proposal, as well as a range of alternatives that offer ways to mitigate effects on the environment.

Lehr said this well reduction alternative is being analyzed and developed into the project's final environmental impact review, which should be released in early 2020. Following the document’s release, the project will go before the county Planning Commission.

This isn’t the only project proposed in Cat Canyon that’s been reshaped in recent months. During a county Planning Commission meeting on Aug. 14, a representative from TerraCore—which purchased ERG and took over its West Cat Canyon Revitalization Project in June—said the project be removed from the meeting's agenda as the company works on a new solar energy component to mitigate the amount of greenhouse gas emissions that would be generated.

Errin Briggs, a district supervisor with the county's Energy, Minerals, and Compliance Division, said TerraCore hasn't provided the county with an estimated timeframe on when it'll resume the application process. The oil and gas company PetroRock also put its Cat Canyon project on hold six to nine months ago without citing a specific reason, Briggs said.

While these oil and gas development projects move through the planning process, the state is weighing whether or not to request the federal government to expand an aquifer exemption for the same reason. If the request is moved to and granted by the Environmental Protection Agency, it'll expand the area in Cat Canyon where oil companies can build injection wells.

The California Department of Conservation’s Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources and other state agencies held a public meeting on the aquifer exemption in Santa Maria in June, where public opinion was split on the issue. As of press time, the state agencies hadn't yet made their recommendation to the federal agency.

Even with two projects on hold, the concentration of new oil and gas development—along with the possible aquifer exemption—is a concern for the EDC, Messing said.

"That's really the lens you have to look at these projects through, it's not just one," Messing said. "All three [projects] are going through this process at different stages."

From Aera's point of view, the company believes this latest alternative addresses many of the environmental concerns that have been raised about its project, Rust said. But he acknowledged that no matter what happens during the Planning Commission meeting in early 2020, this project will make its way to the county Board of Supervisors.

"No matter what happens at the Planning Commission, one side or the other is going to appeal," Rust said. "If we get a majority of [commissioners], then our opposition is going to appeal. And if we don't get the votes we need at the Planning Commission, we're going to appeal."
Giving season

The local Salvation Army changes the way it asks for money

BY WILLIAM D'URSO

Patricia Torres began her charitable work with the Salvation Army 14 years ago, serving hot lunches to the broke, homeless, or down on their luck.

She's been in Santa Maria the last six years at the organization's 200 Cook St. location. But the Salvation Army and its mission have seen a dramatic drop in Red Kettle donations, shaking the nonprofit's ability to offer services.

The Red Kettle program brings in donations around the holidays every year through volunteers who solicit funds in front of stores by ringing a bell next to a red kettle. It's served as one of the Salvation Army's biggest fundraisers.

Torres' goal each year is to pull in more than $100,000 in donations, she said. Last year, the local Salvation Army raised a maximum of $72,000, continuing the downward trend that has buffeted the local branch with financial problems. That has forced the Cook Street center to close each Friday and reduce the number of hours projects and seeks to steady its fiscal tumble.

Bodem's three-year contract will be for $137,500 a year, according to a Guadalupe staff report.

The city has been in a rut in recent years, managing a $700,000 deficit that has led to wage stagnation for city employees. The last city administrator, Cruz Ramos, resigned in February of 2019, two years into a three-year term. After that, Rob Perrault took hold of the city's management as interim city administrator.

"He has been a great asset for the city in the short amount of time he's been with the city. His professionalism has been greatly appreciated by the council and staff," Councilmember Liliana Cardenas said of Perrault.

Cardenas is in her first term on the council after a December 2018 swearing in. She said the council's goals are to continue shoring up the city's finances as its housing projects inch toward completion.

The city's main projects are already underway, including an 800-house development and low-income housing projects just off Guadalupe street. She highlighted the city's development goals, not just with housing, but for businesses too.

"Definitely helping us with renovating our downtown—that's been a big goal for all council members," she said. "Most of Bodem's direction will come from the council, so he'll be working alongside our police chief."

Cardenas said it's Bodem's experience with small cities that she expects will apply directly to Guadalupe's goals and needs, but

Guadalupe's new city administrator will help finish current development projects, contribute to the future

BY WILLIAM D'URSO

Guadalupe will begin November with a new city administrator to help set them up for the new year.

The City Council selected Todd S. Bodem, one of five semi-finalists for the position, which begins Nov. 1. The selection was made in mid-October after what the city called a nationwide search. The hiring of Bodem comes as the city is in the midst of a number of housing projects and seeks to steady its fiscal tumble.

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"I’ll learn what the policymakers’ goals are and work with them to take Guadalupe to the next level."

—Todd S. Bodem, Guadalupe city administrator

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they were also impressed with his energy and enthusiasm.

Bodem comes to the post with about 20 years of experience as a city administrator in Minnesota and, more recently, in Sand City, California. He held that position for four years and helped shepherd a $250 million mixed-use development and an $800 million beachfront hotel.

He resigned from his last job in October 2018, saying that he felt it was time for a change. He sent his résumé to jobs across the country, including for a position with Flagler County in Florida. He also applied for the city manager posting in Rio Rancho, New Mexico, for which he was one of three finalists.

For his new job, he’ll be looking at a range of issues including increasing housing, getting an accurate count on the census, and bringing more revenue into the city. Guadalupe has discussed a potential 1 percent sales tax increase.

With the housing projects will come an increase in population. Bodem thinks Guadalupe will need to hit about 10,000 people for it to generate the kind of tax revenue and development the city needs to thrive. That would be an increase of more than 3,000 residents. In past interviews, Mayor Ariston Julian has said it’s not likely the city would want to grow much larger than that.

Part of being a good city administrator is also in getting to know the residents, and Bodem said that includes community engagement. But to know the right strategy, Bodem said, he needs to huddle with the City Council.

“There’s the unknowns,” he said. “I’m new. I’ll learn what the policymakers’ goals are and work with them to take Guadalupe to the next level.”

He said he’ll also be looking at housing and that even good people with problems have trouble finding a place to live.

“To be a quality community you want to have more affordable housing from very, very low wage to market rate,” he said.

Bodem said the projects already in the works won’t need any new planning. It’s future projects, like commercial development, that will need to be figured out.

Larry Appel, the contract planning director for the city, has said Guadalupe anticipates looking at what commercial development the city might want to do.

Whatever it is, Bodem expects to be hands-on.

“I’m not just a guy who’s worked for a town of 50,000 where there’s a lot of delegation,” he said. “I’ll be the author of everything I do.”

Staff Writer William D’Urso can be reached at wduroso@santamariasun.com.
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Searching for closure
Sheriffs’ dive team members recount a harrowing call-out to the Conception boat fire at the Channel Islands

BY PETER JOHNSON

A s soon as the news broke on Labor Day, Sept. 2, Scott Smith of Nipomo started anticipating the call. Earlier that morning, the Conception, a 75-foot commercial dive boat, had caught fire off the coast of Santa Cruz Island, killing all 33 passengers and one crew member on board. The charred vessel—and the remains of those who perished in its hull—sunk to the ocean floor. It was the worst maritime disaster to hit California in more than 150 years.

Santa Barbara County Sheriff Bill Brown—responding to the Conception boat fire at the Channel Islands, John McKenney recognized the Conception immediately. After all, he’d been a passenger on it and other Truth Aquatics boats countless times throughout his life. Here it was now reduced to a blackened, turned-over heap on the ocean floor.

“It looked like an upside-down hull—a burned up, wrecked hull,” McKenney recalled. “The whole top side was gone.... You could actually swim through it from one side to the other because it wasn’t perfectly burned down to the water line.”

McKenney is a clear stand-out on the SLO Sheriff’s dive team. A world-respected ocean water diving cinematographer, he hung up the thrill of filming great white sharks at age 48 to focus on family and a new career as a SLO Sheriff’s deputy. Over decades of making diving movies, McKenney produced more than a dozen features for Discovery Channel’s Shark Week.

Yet in all those years of underwater experiences, McKenney had never seen anything like what he saw west of the Conception wreck on Sept. 3—the fragmented remains of somebody’s lip bone and spine.

“None of the recoveries I’ve personally made have ever been in that shape,” McKenney said. “It made me sad. These poor people, how can you even feel what the relatives must feel right now?”

Smith, too, on that first day of diving recovered a female victim that he found “far outside the zone that they expected any bodies.”

“They were exposed to a huge amount of heat,” Smith said. “You could identify that it was a female, but that was it.”

For all the divers on the Conception recovery, the scene hit heart-wrenchingly close to home. Virtually everyone who was there had at some point taken the same diving trip that the victims did when they perished, and they had slept in the same bunk room the victims were asleep in when the fire erupted. They could all relate.

“All these people,” Lipanovich said, “they were us. That very same boat, the Conception, my wife and I and one of my other dive team members and his wife were booking it in July to do that exact same trip. We decided last minute to take our own boat just to save money, but we’ve all been on those boats. This could’ve been any one of us.”

Lipanovich felt that the kinship gave the divers additional strength to finish the job.

“It was one of those things where it really makes you want to give everything you got and make sure you collect every body,” he said.

Over the first two days of searching, divers found all but one of the Conception victims. Rapid DNA tests were able to identify them within a day or two. Then the search effort was suspended until the following Tuesday, Sept. 10, due to poor weather conditions.

Emotions frayed as the final victim's family began to worry that their daughter, 16-year-old Berenice Felipe Alvarez, the
ON THE SCENE: SLO Sheriff’s dive team members spent three days at the Conception boat disaster site last month, recovering three victims, including the final missing victim, 16-year-old Berenice Felipe Alvarez.

Getting Ready: SLO Sheriff’s deputy and dive team member Matthew Shields gets wetsuit help from teammates Pat Nugent (right) and JD Cronin at an Oct. 12 training at Port San Luis.

As it turns out, that’s a common reason civilians join the dive team, which currently has more volunteer members (16) than it has sworn deputy members (11). The Santa Barbara dive team, in contrast, is made up of all deputy members.

Motivations

Smith decided to join the SLO Sheriff’s dive team as a volunteer about three years ago. As a lifelong scuba diving enthusiast, Smith said he simply wanted to give back to his community, using a unique skill that he’d enjoyed for decades.

One of the most interesting parts of being on the dive team is the humanity of it sets in.”

Supporting each other

As emergency responders wrapped up their work at the Conception wreck, removing every bit of evidence and eventually wrenching what was left of the boat out of the ocean for investigators, Smith couldn’t shake from his mind what he’d experienced.

Smith said, "Having that group of guys that had been doing it for so long was invaluable too because you could talk to them."

LOCATE THE VICTIM: SLO Sheriff’s Deputy John McKenney brings a dummy victim onto the department’s boat for a dive team training exercise.

Supporting each other

As emergency responders wrapped up their work at the Conception wreck, removing every bit of evidence and eventually wrenching what was left of the boat out of the ocean for investigators, Smith couldn’t shake from his mind what he’d experienced.

He started having nightmares. He found himself having a “nagging need” to learn the name of the female he’d recovered. It felt like all of the disturbing realities of the recovery were hitting him on delay.

"You really don’t have time during the recovery to focus in on the horrific nature of it. You’re more focused in on getting these people home,” Smith said. “It isn’t really until after, when you’re driving home or laying in bed, when the magnitude of it hits and the humanity of it sets in.”

Years ago, Smith might’ve had to deal with those struggles alone.

But after the Conception recoveries, the SLO Sheriff’s Office held a mandatory “debrief” with a psychologist for all of the dive team members who were dispatched to the disaster to attend.

“When I started, there was really nothing other than suck it up and move forward,” Parkinson said. “Over the years we’ve learned more and more the cumulative effect it has on you.”

The debriefs are department policy for employees who’ve experienced a psychologically stressful incident while on duty, according to Parkinson. In the case of the Conception divers, it was an opportunity for all the team members on hand to reflect on the shared experience.

“We all kind of sat around, everyone who had recovered, and compared notes and talked about it, which was therapeutic,” Smith said. "Having that group of guys that had been doing it for so long was invaluable too because you could talk to them.”

Lipanovich said he thought it was cathartic for team members to realize that they weren’t alone in holding dark feelings about the dives.

"I think it’s good as a group because you got guys who maybe don’t want to say, ‘Hey, this really bothered me.’ But if you start talking and learning that you’re not the only one who feels that way, I notice that guys started to open up really quick,” he said. “Hopefully we do that kind of stuff more because I found that very beneficial.”

While some volunteers may decide to step down from the dive team after the Conception, Smith said he isn’t one of them. He feels too strongly about the importance of serving his community through diving and helping victims’ families heal.

“I felt proud and humbled to be out there to try to bring closure to these families,” he said. “You learn very quickly how important it is. That’s really what we’re doing—bringing closure for these people. That is the No. 1 mission, and that’s, I think, why we do it. It’s certainly why I continue to do it.”

Reach New Times Assistant Editor Peter Johnson at pjohnson@newwintosslo.com.

www.santamariasun.com • October 31 - November 7, 2019 • Sun • 11
Dear ‘sensitive receptors’

Anti-cannabis sentiments are rooted in bigotry

By Erik Huber

It has become evident that local NIMBY watch groups (arguing against land-use rights) need an education on the history of cannabis as a medicine in America and as a modern weapon of bigotry. I’m happy to oblige.

Spanish colonists with trading ties to the African continent brought cannabis to New Spain for use as a holistic medicine, for its seeds, its oil, and for hemp fibers to make rope. It was so critical to survival in the American colonies that cannabis could be grown to pay taxes. However, anti-Mexican sentiment in the wake of the Mexican-American War would instead transform this wondrous plant into a weapon of Anglo-supremacy against “lazy, stupid, and loco” Mexican immigrants and later against African-American jazz musicians deemed a danger to society (aka white women).

The notoriously racist head of the Narcotics Bureau, Harry Anslinger, used yellow journalism and other tools of white supremacy to terrify a largely ignorant and gullible America into the acceptance of unjustifiable federal drug laws and their incorporation into the UN charter. This nativist response to fear-mongering literally cursed the world with America’s multi-generational failure on cannabis policy despite the La Guardia Report (1944) fully discrediting the fascist science.

Following the hard-earned gains of the civil rights era, and despite the 1972 Schafer Commission Report (hidden from the public by Richard Nixon) again disproving 1930s fascist science, our ethically challenged president would use his Drug War not as a tool for public health, but as a disgraceful weapon against his political enemies.

According to his domestic affairs advisor John Ehrlichman: “The Nixon campaign in 1968, and the Nixon White House after that, had two enemies: the anti-war left and black people. You understand what I’m saying? We knew we couldn’t make it illegal to be either against the war or black, but by getting the public to associate the hippies with marijuana and blacks with heroin, and then criminalizing both heavily, we could disrupt those communities. We could arrest their leaders, raid their homes, break up their meetings, and vilify them after night through the evening news. Did we know we were lying about the drugs? Of course we did.”

Armed with modern tools of white supremacy and keenly aware of the abuses of Nixon, the Reagans happily went to work creating our mass incarceration system, circumventing the Bill of Rights, demonizing urban minority communities, and putting an end to any and all scientific research that might substantiate the validity of the La Guardia and Schafer reports. In fact, the DEA is still actively engaged in the obstruction of all independent science. Despite U.S. government patents (6630507) on medical cannabis, cannabis possession is still the No. 1 point of entry into our overwhelmed prison system, and the DEA still classifies cannabis as devoid of any medical use and deems it more dangerous than cocaine, heroin, and fentanyl.

Despite legalization across half of America, as well as California, the consequences of simple possession still include: excessive punishment, suspension of Second Amendment and voting rights, wholesale violations of privacy rights, denial of the “full faith and credit” clause, denial of access to medical care and privacy, loss of parental rights and federal aid, the loss of jobs and housing, exposure to no-knock and warrantless militarized police entries, drug testing without due cause, as well as the typical exposure to public ridicule and bigotry.

So when “sensitive receptors” talk about their “diminished rights” and arrogantly claim that the local cannabis cultivation is “fundamentally and innately incompatible with homes and businesses in rural, agricultural areas,” we all know precisely what they mean.

Erik Huber writes about history because he’s a Cuesta College history major. Send comments through clanhum@santamariasun.com or write a letter to the editor and email it to letters@santamariasun.com.
Topsy-turvy

I’m not sure what’s weirder, the fact that CAUSE (Central Coast Alliance United for A Sustainable Economy) is actually being CALM about a recent Santa Maria Police Department use-of-force incident or the fact that Solvang politics seems to be full of people who don’t know how to act their age. Honestly, CAUSE Santa Maria organizer Abraham Melendrez’s reaction to this video of the police punching a suspect and spraying him with pepper balls as they yell at him to stay on the ground is befuddling. “We’re trying to maintain a neutral look until we get the details,” he told a Sun reporter.

What? You guys are waiting until the full story comes out. Uhh. I’m having a hard time comprehending. Aren’t you activists supposed to be flying off the handle about police brutality and pushing the public into a lather of outrage about illegal use-of-force? You know, kind of like the environmentalists do every time an oil company talks about drilling for oil in Santa Barbara County.

At least the Environmental Defense Center (EDC) usually stays true to form, feeding my need for drama in tense situations that don’t really need any more tension. Unfortunately, though, that didn’t happen this week either! All that EDC Staff Attorney Tara Messing said about Aera Energy’s reduction in the number of oil wells it wants to drill in Cat Canyon was that if they aren’t reducing overall production, you have the “same impacts.”

Boo! That’s boring. It also isn’t quite true. Aera reduced its well counts by almost 100 wells. That definitely makes a difference in on-the-ground, visible environmental impacts. You know, the company is only going to kill 107 trees to drill their oil wells. They were going to kill 300! But Aera is still a tree killer! Amirite? The least Messing could have said was that all oil companies like Aera want to do is rape the environment at the expense of our children’s future. Then, I would have had something good to work with.

How the hell am I supposed to do my job with all of you activists behaving like normal people? You know what though? I’ll always have Solvang.

The now defunct Solvang Conference & Visitors Bureau (SCVB) is up to its old tricks—and as passive-aggressive as ever. The people who are still associated with the unfunded, unhoused, closed, former tourist arm of the city are like little imps, making City Attorney Chip Wullbrandt jump through hoops and look under rocks to get Solvang’s money and assets back. He was so tired of dealing with the mess that he actually wore a bowling shirt to a City Council meeting. A bowling shirt! I’m guessing that chocolate shop owner SCVB President Kim Jensen has something to do with all of the weird little shenanigans that have Wullbrandt running around like a chicken with his head cut off.

The City Council wants to get $42,000 in city funds back from the bureau, as well as a handful of computers and other technology, and it disappeared. You know what happened to part of it? Jensen donated $16,000 and four iMacs to the Central Coast Film Society! Wow. That’s bally. It also explains a lot, such as why the City Council terminated the SCVB’s contract.

The Canary is ready for more drama. Send tips to canary@santamariasun.com.
**SEA FOR YOURSELF**
The Pacific Conservatory Theatre’s (PCPA) production of Disney's The Little Mermaid opens at the Marian Theatre on Thursday, Nov. 7, at 7 p.m. The show will run through Sunday, Dec. 22, and the cast includes Katie Emerson as Ariel (right) and Yusef Svozils as Sebastian (left). Tickets range from $38 to $80. The theater is located at 800 S. College Drive, Santa Maria. Call (805) 922-8313 or visit newtimesslo.org for more info.

—Caleb Wiseblood

**SPECIAL EVENTS**

**SANTA YNEZ VALLEY**

**QUEEN OF ARTS SHOW AND SALE** This two-day event reigns over the museum gallery and garden in a celebration featuring maker-designed goods, handcrafted and sold by the artists. **Nov. 8**, 2-7 p.m. and **Nov. 9**, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Free. 805-686-1211, elverhoj.org. Elverhoj Museum of History and Art, 1624 Elverhoy Way, Solvang.

**FUNDRAISERS**

**SOUTH COAST SLO COUNTY**

**CELEBRATE OUR VETERANS: LUNCHEON AND FUNDRAISER** Lunch is included in the admission price and will include Thrı̈̄e beans, green salad, dessert, iced tea, and lemonade or water. **Nov. 3**, noon-$25; free for Veterans. my805x.com. Peacock Farms, 2018 Los Berros Road, Arroyo Grande.

**FALL HARVEST SPAGHETTI DINNER/BINGO** Enjoy a delicious spaghetti dinner with salad, garlic bread, and dessert followed by Bingo. **Nov. 1**, 6:30-8:30 p.m. $10. 805-627-1997. avilabeachcc.com. Avila Beach Community Center, 191 San Miguel St., Avila Beach.

**SOUPABRATION** An annual fundraiser for local nonprofit Pacific Wildlife Care, the area’s only licensed rehabilitation center that cares for injured birds, mammals, and reptiles. The event includes 25 restaurants competing for best soup, a silent auction, animal ambassadors, wine and soup tastings, and more. **Nov. 3**, 1-4 p.m. $65. 805-305-0579. eventbrite.com. Avila Beach Golf Resort, 6444 Ano Bay Rd., Avila Beach.

**SAN LUIS OBISPO**

**BETH DAVID ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT** This is a “duffers” tournament so no previous golfing experience is required. **Nov. 3**, 8 a.m.-2 p.m. $50. 805-544-0760. Laguna Lake Golf Course, 11175 Los Osos Valley Rd., San Luis Obispo.

**CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SALE** Choose from a selection of hundreds of varieties of water-thrifty California native plants, many that attract birds and butterflies, save water, and reduce pesticides and fertilizer use. Friendly gardeners will be available to offer tips and advice. **Nov. 2**, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Free. cnppslo.org. Pacific Beach High School, 11950 Los Osos Valley Road, San Luis Obispo. 805-528-0914.

**HOLIDAY EVENTS**

**SANTA YNEZ VALLEY**

**26TH ANNUAL SOLVANG HAUNTED HOUSE** Features a special Halloween Streetfest both nights. **Oct. 31** solvangusa.com. Downtown Solvang, Mission Dr., Solvang.

**SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS**

**CASAS DEL RIO ANNUAL HOLIDAY BAZAAR** Casa Del Rio’s annual holiday bazaar. Come find that perfect gift, or item for your home. Also features homemade jams, cakes, and Greek pastries. **Nov. 2**, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Free admission. 805-441-9791. Casa Del Rio Clubhouse, 1124 N Sury Rd., Santa Maria.

**THIRD ANNUAL TRUNK OR TREAT** This family-friendly event feature music, candy, photo opportunities, and more. Located inside the Honda showroom. **Oct. 31**, 5-8 p.m. Honda Santa Maria, 2175 S. Bradley Road, Santa Maria, 805-922-4600.

**SOUTH COAST SLO COUNTY**

**DANA CAFE: TAMALE MAKE AND TAKE** A hands-on class that will teach you the basic steps to make traditional Mexican style tamales. All ingredients and equipment will be provided. **Nov. 2**, 11 a.m.-2 p.m. $50. 805-929-5679. danadaobe.org. DANA Adobe Cultural Center, 671 S. Oakglen Ave., Nipomo.

**MURDER MYSTERY DINNER** This year features “Dinner at Eight, Dead by Nine”, a humorous whodunit where everyone is a suspect **Nov. 2**, 4-7:30 p.m. and **Nov. 3**, 3:30-6 p.m. $50-$85. my805x.com. Point San Luis Lighthouse, 1 Lighthouse Rd., Avila Beach.

**SAN LUIS OBISPO**

**LUNA RED’S NOCHE DE LOS MUERTOS PARTY** Join Luna Red for their Noche De Los Muertos Party with live music from B and the Hive, DJ, a face painter, photo booth, and more. **Nov. 1**, 8:30 p.m. $5 cover charge. 805-540-5243. my805x.com. Luna Red, 1023 Chorro St., San Luis Obispo.

**RAKU AND A HOLIDAY POTtery SALE** Meet our Feature Raku artist David Tombs and the Central Coast Raku Potters. There will be Pottery for sale for the holidays. Also features live music and treats. **Nov. 1**, 5:30-8 p.m. 805-896-6197. anarcme.com. Anarc Pottery Studio, 1243 Monterey St., San Luis Obispo.

**TRADITIONAL PROCESSION ON DAY OF THE DEAD** Participate in a soulful, traditional procession, which begins with light snacks and drinks. Procession lead by Whistle Hospice musicians playing traditional Mexican music. Costumes encouraged. **Nov. 1**, 6-7 p.m. 805-547-0027. diadelosmuertosSLO.org. HumanKind Fair Trade, 985 Monterey St., San Luis Obispo.

**TRUNK OR TREAT** Enjoy an evening of games, food, live music, and 20 decorated car/truck trunks. **Oct. 31**, 6-8 p.m. Free admission. 805-543-3192. SLNow Church, 3396 Johnson Ave., San Luis Obispo.

**ARTS**

**CLASSES & WORKSHOPS**

**SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS**

**BALLE ROMAN, 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. 805-928-7731 ext. 4101. 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 oasissanluis.org. Oasis Senior Center, 420 Soares Ave., Orcutt. 805-937-9750.

**COUNTRY TWO STEP DANCE LESSONS** From the

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Interested in selling tickets with My805Tix? Contact us for a demo today! info@My805Tix.com
Academy of Music, 325 E. Betteravia Rd., Santa Maria.


SPECIAL ART EVENTS

WEST COAST SWING CLASS
No partner or experience needed. Tuesdays, 7-9 p.m. Free. 805-925-0994.

UKULELE CLASS
Introductions to the ukulele. Tuesdays, 6:30-7:30 p.m. Free. 805-925-0994.

KIDDYKEYS PRESCHOOL PIANO CLASS

POETRY NIGHT AT CORE WINERY
Monthly. Third Thursday of the month, 6-8 p.m. Free admission. 805-925-0994.

TITANIC: A LIVE SCRIPT READING
Readings of the script of the original Titanic movie. Third Saturday of each month, 7-9 p.m. Free. 805-925-0994.

EXHIBITS

CELEBRATING THE NATIONAL LANDS OF CALIFORNIA
A celebration of the natural beauty of California. Saturdays-Sundays, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. through Jan. 5 Free. 805-686-4711.

CROSSING PATHS
A display of the art of oil and watercolor artist, Erikyr and John Cody. Through Nov. 3 Free. 805-686-4711.

HOME AND AWAY: KRY BUCK AND KAREN MCELWAIN
Features pastels and watercolors. Saturdays-Sundays, 12-5 p.m. through Nov. 3 Free. 805-686-7517.

SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS

MOSAIC WALL: NUTCRACKER
The classic holiday tale comes to life on the Chumash stage with a beautiful dance performance. Nov. 8-10, 11 a.m.-8 p.m. 805-928-7777.

SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS ART EXHIBIT: MARGIE BOWKER
A display of paintings and art tiles, ongoing. Santa Maria Country Club, 505 W. Waller Lane, Santa Maria.

SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS ART EXHIBITION: MUSIC SERIES BY LORI MOLE
The Santa Maria Public Library is exhibiting the art of the Santa Barbara Country Club, 505 W. Waller Lane, Santa Maria.

SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS BOOK SIGNING WITH STEVEN REA
Author Steven Rea will be signing copies of his latest work, Hollywood Book Club: Reading with the Stars, at the Book Loft on Saturday, Nov. 9, from 2 to 3:30 p.m. The book features more than 50 promotional photos and candid snapshots of various celebrities reading books. The store is located at 1609 Mission Drive, Solvang. Call (805) 688-6010 or visit bookloftsolvang.com for more info.

CLUBS & MEETINGS

SANTA MARIA CAMRA CLUB PROGRAM AND MEETINGS
The club meets monthly to discuss different topics related to beer. Guests are welcome. First Thursday, 7-8:30 p.m. Free. 805-928-7777.

SANTA MARIA PUBLIC LIBRARY CULTURAL CENTER
A program for all ages, featuring a variety of cultural events. Saturdays, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Free. 805-928-7777.

SANTA MARIA PUBLIC LIBRARY CULTURAL CENTER LECTURES & LEARNING
Lectures and events for all ages. Call 805-928-7777 for more information.

SANTA MARIA PUBLIC LIBRARY CULTURAL CENTER CLASSES DE COMPUTADORAS
Clases de Computadoras Nov. 7-12 p.m. Free. 805-928-7777.

OPEN READING
Photo author and author Steven Rea will be signing copies of his latest work, Hollywood Book Club: Reading with the Stars, at the Book Loft on Saturday, Nov. 9, from 2 to 3:30 p.m. The book features more than 50 promotional photos and candid snapshots of various celebrities reading books. The store is located at 1609 Mission Drive, Solvang. Call (805) 688-6010 or visit bookloftsolvang.com for more info.
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Need a Study Buddy?

Sonya would love to be that and so much more! This week, she’s hanging “Around Town” with our friends Henry and Ileana at Allan Hancock College. Sonya is attentive, affectionate, and quick to befriend. Meet gentle Marley!

ADOPT!
Adoptable Pets of the Week

BEEBEE
AGE: 5 months
BREED: Domestic Short Hair
SEX: Female
WEIGHT: 5 lbs

SWEETIE
AGE: 5 years 8 months
BREED: American Pitbull
SEX: Female
WEIGHT: 70 lbs

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The Sun is looking for its next EATS writer, but we’re not looking for just any article-pushing, press release-reading, food-eating, wine-drinking someone.

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CLIMBING FOR A CAUSE

The Pad Santa Maria and SLOMotion Film co-host a screening of Climbing Out of Disaster on Friday, Nov. 8, at 5:30 p.m. This short documentary focuses on the efforts of climbers in Puerto Rico, who boulderied buildings in order to retrieve supplies after Hurricane Maria hit. Tickets are $5 and available in advance at my805tix.com. The screening takes place at The Pad, located at 2399 A St., Santa Maria. Visit slomotionfilm.com for more info.

—C.W.
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**Local Music**

**Santa Ynez Valley**

**Dusty Jugz Live**
Nov. 1, 8-11 p.m. Maverick Saloon, 3687 Sagunto St., Santa Ynez, 805-686-4785

**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

**Excellent Tradesman Live**
Food and drinks available for purchase. No outside food or drinks allowed.
Nov. 1, 5-8 p.m. Cold Spring Tavern, 5995 Stagecoach Rd., Santa Barbara, 805-967-0066, coldspringtavern.com/entertainment.html

**First Friday ‘80s Night**
Featuring the Molly Ringwald Project. First Friday of every month, 6:30-11:30 p.m. 510 after 8 p.m. Maverick Saloon, 3687 Sagunto St., Santa Ynez, 805-686-4785, mavericksaloon.org

**John Lyle Live**
Food and drinks available for purchase. No outside food or drinks allowed.
Nov. 2, 1-4 p.m. Cold Spring Tavern, 5995 Stagecoach Rd., Santa Barbara, 805-967-0066, coldspringtavern.com/entertainment.html

**Keltie’s Lot Live**
Food and drinks available for purchase. No outside food or drinks allowed.
Nov. 3, 4:30 p.m. Cold Spring Tavern, 5995 Stagecoach Rd., Santa Barbara, 805-967-0066, coldspringtavern.com/entertainment.html

**The Mutineers Live**
Nov. 2, 8-11 p.m. Maverick Saloon, 3687 Sagunto St., Santa Ynez, 805-686-4785, mavericksaloon.org

**The Regulars Live**
Nov. 3, 1-5 p.m. Maverick Saloon, 3687 Sagunto St., Santa Ynez, 805-686-4785, mavericksaloon.org

**Salt Martians Live**
Food and drinks available for purchase. No outside food or drinks allowed.
Nov. 9, 5-8 p.m. Cold Spring Tavern, 5995 Stagecoach Rd., Santa Barbara, 805-967-0066, coldspringtavern.com/entertainment.html

**Teresa Russell and Cocobilli Live**
Food and drinks available for purchase. No outside food or drinks allowed.
Nov. 9, 5-8 p.m. Cold Spring Tavern, 5995 Stagecoach Rd., Santa Barbara, 805-967-0066, coldspringtavern.com/entertainment.html

**Three Dog Night Live**
The resort is a 21-and-up venue.
Nov. 1, Chumash Casino Resort, 3400 E. Highway 246, Santa Ynez, 800-248-6274, chumashcasino.com/events

**The Youngsters Live**
Food and drinks available for purchase. No outside food or drinks allowed.
Nov. 10, 4:30-7:30 p.m. Cold Spring Tavern, 5995 Stagecoach Rd., Santa Barbara, 805-967-0066, coldspringtavern.com/entertainment.html

**The Youngsters Live**
Food and drinks available for purchase. No outside food or drinks allowed.
Nov. 4, 5, 11, and 12, at 7 p.m. each evening.

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**Knock on Woodstock**

*Five Local Acts Headline Woodstock Tribute Concert at the Great American Melodrama*

**By Caleb Wiseblood**

Back in the summer of 1969, musical acts came together under one roof—well, it was outdoors, so one sky—for the Bethel Rock Festival, aka The Aquarian Music Festival, double aka WOODSTOCK. 2019 marks the 50th anniversary of the generation-defining event. To celebrate the occasion, the Great American Melodrama and Vaudeville in Oceano has put together a tribute festival that features live music from five local acts: Steppin’ Out; Unfinished Business; Back Bay Betty; Hilary Watson; and Baylove. Together the artists will cover the songs of Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, Santana, The Who, Jefferson Airplane, Ten Years After, Joan Baez, Richie Havens, and several other original Woodstock headliners.

This special concert event will be offered multiple evenings at the Melodrama: Nov. 4, 5, 11, and 12. Each performance starts at 7 p.m. (doors open at 6:30 p.m.). Tickets to the show range from $24 to $26. Unlike typical Melodrama shows, there won’t be a vaudeville revue. However, the venue’s staple snack bar will be open, with wine, beer, and food available for purchase. The theater is located at 1863 Front St., Oceano. Call (805) 489-2499 or visit americanelodrama.com for tickets and more info.

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**Local Notes**

**Pick Rick’s**

San Luis Obispo-based pop artist Damon Castillo and his band are stopping by Chef Rick’s in Orcutt for a performance on Saturday, Nov. 2, from 8 to 10 p.m. Influences of this local singer-songwriter include Stevie Wonder, Elvis Costello, Harry Connick Jr., Steely Dan, and Prince. Castillo’s band features Kristian Ducharme on keys, Larry Kim on saxophone, Brian Lanzone on bass, and Sean Sullivan on drums.

Admission to the concert is $15 and tickets are available in advance at my805tix.com. Chef Rick’s is located at 135 E. Foster Road, Orcutt. Call (805) 361-0789 or visit chefsicks.com for more details on the show and other upcoming concerts at the venue.

**Going South**

One is the loneliest number that you’ll ever do. Two can be as bad as one. Three on the other hand, specifically Three Dog Night, is sure to bring you joy—joy to the whole world in fact. The legendary classic rockers perform at the Chumash Casino Resort in Santa Ynez on Friday, Nov. 1, at 8 p.m. The concert takes place in the resort’s Samala Showroom, and guests can expect to hear some of the band’s biggest hits, including “Joy to the World,” “Mama Told Me Not to Come,” and “Shambala,” as well as the group’s more recent singles, such as "Mama Told Me Not to Come."
“Heart of Blues,” and “Prayer of the Children.” Admission to the show ranges from $29 to $59. Visit chumashcasino.com for tickets and more info.

Young hearts be free the night of Friday, Nov. 1, because time is on your side—and so are The Youngsters, who perform at the Cold Spring Tavern from 6 to 9 p.m. This classic rock cover band performs hits from Van Morrison, Neil Young, Bob Dylan, and other genre legends. Solo artist John Lyle takes the venue’s stage the following afternoon, Saturday, Nov. 2, from 1 to 4 p.m., followed by folk rock and surf band Hoodlum Friends, who perform from 5 to 8 p.m. The tavern’s weekend lineup closes with blues, good time, and rags duo Tom Ball and Kenny Sultan (from 11:15 to 4 p.m.) and folk, roots, and R&B group Kelly’s Lot (from 4:30 to 7:30 p.m.) on Sunday, Nov. 3. Entry to all three shows is free.

**More music**

The Naughty Oak Brewing Company in Orcutt presents Bender and Jack on Friday, Nov. 1, from 6 to 9 p.m. This Central Coast-based duo performs acoustic rock. Entry to the concert is free, but grab from DeBlitz and Family Mobile Kitchen will be available for purchase during and a bit prior to the show (from 5:30 to 9 p.m.).

A string of solo artists will perform at Blast 825 Brewery this weekend: Timothy Metcalfe on Friday, Nov. 1, from 7 to 10 p.m.; Russ Douglass on Saturday, Nov. 2, from 7 to 10 p.m.; and Nataly Lola on Sunday, Nov. 3, from noon to 3 p.m. Admission to all three performances is complimentary. Also in Orcutt, local singer-songwriter Doc Oliver will perform at Vino et Amici Wine Bar on Friday, Nov. 1, from 7 to 10 p.m. Entry to the show is free.

Enjoy dancing to your favorite music videos, Fridays, Saturdays, 9 p.m.-2 a.m. Free. 805-219-0977.

**DJ VEGA: OLD SCHOOL AND PARTY MIX** Saturdays, 8 p.m.-12 a.m. Free. 805-219-0977. Naughty Oak Brewery, 825 Broad St., Orcutt.

**LINER**: **ANTHONY** performs his 19th annual **HUMOR & MUSIC** show. Call (805) 705-0938 or visit smitv.com to assist your medical supply needs. Hrs: Mon-Fri 9am-6pm | Sat 9am-1pm 1504 S. Broadway, Santa Maria • (805)922-1747 • www.healthmart.com

Friday, Nov. 1, from 8 to 11 p.m. The Mutineers take over the saloon the following evening, Saturday, Nov. 2, from 8 to 11 p.m. Steve Philip and The Regulars finish off the weekend setlist on Sunday, Nov. 3, from 4:30 p.m. Admission to all three shows is free.

**SOUL SEARCHING**: Folk, roots, and R&B group Kelly’s Lot performs at the Cold Spring Tavern on Sunday, Nov. 3, at 4:30 p.m. foreign. 805-863-8292. Louie B’s, 213 E. Main Ave., Santa Maria.

**KARAOKE/OPEN MIC**

**SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS**

**KARAOKET WITH DJ RICARDO** Wednesdays, 9 p.m.-12 a.m. Free. 805-219-0977. Anthony’s, 859 Guadalupe St., Guadalupe.

**RANDY LATIN PARTY MIX** Fridays, 9:30 p.m. Anthony’s, 859 Guadalupe St., Guadalupe, 805-219-0977.


Enjoy a concert of patriotic choral music presented by Coastal Voices Community Choir, a California Registered Nonprofit Corporation. NOV. 9, 2:30-3 p.m. Donation only. 805-917-4645. coastvoicesinfo.info. St. Andrew United Methodist Church, 3945 S. Bradley Road, Santa Maria.

**SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS**

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**RANDY LATIN PARTY MIX** Fridays, 9:30 p.m. Anthony’s, 859 Guadalupe St., Guadalupe, 805-219-0977.


**RESIDENT PIANIST** The Santa Ynez Valley Concert Series presents An Evening of Chamber Music at St. Mark’s-in-the-Valley Church on Saturday, Nov. 9, at 7 p.m. Robert Cassidy (pianist), pianist and artistic director of the series, will be joined by members of the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra for this concert. Admission ranges from $20 to $35. A complimentary reception follows the show. Call (805) 705-0938 or visit smitv.com to find out more.

—Caleb Wiseblood
Local literary club holds annual fashion show

The Alpha Literary and Improvement Club of Lompoc hosts its annual Fashion Show and Luncheon—themed “You’ve Come a Long Way Baby!”—at the Lompoc Elks Club on Saturday, Nov. 2. The event begins with a social hour at 11:30 a.m., followed by the luncheon at noon, and the fashion show at 1 p.m. This benefit show features fashions from Elsa’s Dress Shop in Solvang. Proceeds of the event will benefit Lompoc Valley Haven. Tickets are $30. The Lompoc Elks Club is located at 905 E. Ocean Ave., Lompoc. Call (805) 735-2345 for more details.

Santa Maria Inn hosts live script reading of Titanic

Central Coast Live Read presents a live reading of writer-director James Cameron’s screenplay for his 1997 blockbuster, “Titanic,” at the Historic Santa Maria Inn on Friday, Nov. 8, from 7 to 10 p.m. Entry to the show is free, but donations will be accepted to benefit the Ian M. Hassett Foundation, which provides scholarships and other resources to local students and artists. The nonprofit is dedicated to the memory of Ian M. Hassett, an Orcutt resident and aspiring artist who died of cancer at age 19 in 2012. For more info on the foundation, visit idansanctuary.com.

Artist and author Chelsea Ward signs new book in Solvang

The Book Loft in Solvang hosts a book signing with author and art teacher Chelsea Ward on Friday, Nov. 8, from 2 to 4 p.m. Copies of Ward’s new book, Modern Colored Pencil, will be available for purchase, but admission to the signing is free. The book covers a wide range of basic, easy-to-follow concepts and techniques to create vivid works of color pencil art. For more info about Ward, visit chelseawardart.com.

Art Briefs is compiled by Arts Editor Caleb Wiseblood. Send information to cwiseblood@santamariasun.com.

But even the event’s gooser mazes—such as this year’s aforementioned Ghostbusters and Killer Klowns from Outer Space—are more visceral and “gorrific” than you’d probably expect based on preconceived notions of their source material. There’s a big difference between watching stock characters become prey to extraterrestrial circus folk on a screen and becoming said prey yourself. E.T. phone home? More like RUN HOME SCREAMING.

Getting entrapped in a cotton candy cocoon might sound fun on paper, but go ahead and try it sometime. And speaking of candy horror, I hate to keep harping on Marshmallow Man, but he’s just so much scarier in person, and arguably far more fleshed out than his cinematic counterpart.

Other spectacularly gruesome mazes this year include House of 1,000 Corpses, Frankenstein Meets the Wolfman, and last—but certainly not least—Stranger Things. There’s even a Stranger Things-themed ice cream bar near the ride’s exit, based on Scoops Ahoy from the show’s third season (which I still haven’t finished).

After escaping the clutches of the show’s dreaded Demogorgon, I’m tempted to wait in line for some cookies ’n cream, but I don’t want to spoil my appetite. My heart’s already set on dinner at Cletus’ Chicken Shack in Krusty Land, which isn’t decorated in any special Halloween way like the park’s other themed areas. I guess they figured Krusty the Clown is scary enough on his own.

ART SCENE 23

Arts

Night fever

Halloween Horror Nights runs at Universal Studios Hollywood through Sunday, Nov. 3. The event is not recommended for children under age 13. General admission starts at $72. Check hollywood.halloweenhorrornights.com for tickets and more info.

BY CALEB WISEBLOOD

I can literally smell marshmallows as I proceed cautiously down a corridor in Universal Studios’ Ghostbusters maze. Well lo and behold, who’s waiting for me right around the corner? Just the Stay Puft Marshmallow Man, nothing to freak out about.

A few guests in front of me stop and stare at the jolly cream giant towering before us. My fight-or-flight response kicks in, and I want nothing more than to politely shove them out of my way and sprint the heck out of there—but it’s too late. I stay in line and avoid eye contact, but the demon’s cold gaze never breaks. His heady—every menace and soulless—juxtaposed with his big, cuddly stature—follow me until I’m finally outside the exit.

“Who’s up for Killer Klowns from Outer Space next?”

It’s all about atmosphere when it comes to Halloween Horror Nights, Universal Studios’ annual autumn tradition, offered at both parks (Hollywood and Orlando). I wasn’t exaggerating about the marshmallow smell; it’s part of the ride. Seeing and hearing the horrors that occupy each haunted house (or “maze” as they’re referred to) just isn’t enough—sometimes we’re forced to smell them too.

However, none of the scare actors (the humans behind the marshmallows) are allowed to touch us, and we’re not allowed to touch them either. But there are a few gray exceptions to the rule here and there; stay away from Slimer unless you wanna get squirted with... well... whatever he squirts guests with. Water, I hope?

I’ve been going to Universal’s Hollywood event every Halloween since 2011; I guess I’m just waiting for the right maze to scare me into never returning. Some of my favorite movie-themed attractions over the years have included The Shining, The Exorcist, and The Thing, which were all beautifully terrifying (if you’re unfamiliar with the event, the mazes change every year).

This year’s standout for me is Us, based on Jordan Peele’s hit horror film of the same name. The entrance to the maze resembles the super creepy Santa Cruz funhouse in the film’s opening. And surely enough, as soon as you enter, you’re in a hall of mirrors. Get ready to meet your very own Tethered doppelganger. I won’t spoil the film for those who haven’t seen it, but what I love most about the maze is how well it captures even the smallest nuances (kudos to the actor performing as Tim Heidecker’s character and mastering the memeable psych moment).

DOWN TO CLOWN:

Krusty Land is one of the few areas left untouched during Halloween Horror Nights. I guess they figured Krusty the Clown is scary enough on his own.

I SCREAM, YOU SCREAM:

Scoops Ahoy serves up Stranger Things-themed ice cream to fans, not too far outside the Stranger Things maze.
The weekly podcast, called *Wait, Whaaat?*, finds its inspiration for the podcast.

**BY MALEA MARTIN**

The moment that co-workers Elaine Chaney and Paula McCambridge met at their local nonprofit, they had instant comedic chemistry. "We were always bantering, going back and forth," McCambridge told the Sun. "Elaine and I had started carpooling together because she's in Los Osos and I'm in Morro Bay. Elaine literally walked up to me one day and said, 'Do you want to do a podcast together?' And I was like, 'Yep!'"

Chaney, who has a background in freelance humor writing as well as occasional stand-up comedy performing, had long pondered starting a podcast but didn't feel inclined to do it solo. When she met McCambridge, who has a background in journalism, their shared sense of humor hit it off. "It was like this improv mentality," McCambridge said. "One of us would say something, and then all of a sudden we were riffing for five minutes."

The weekly podcast, called *Wait, Whaaat?*, follows a similar format to popular world-touring podcasts like *My Favorite Murder* and *And That's Why We Drink*. For every episode, McCambridge and Chaney each choose a paranormal-related "news" story prior to the podcast. They keep their stories a secret from one another until the mic starts recording, and then they take turns reading their respective UFO or ghost sighting of the week, cracking each other up in the process.

"I have always loved the paranormal since I was little—UFOs, all that good stuff," Chaney said of her inspiration for the podcast. Though the pair has been podcasting for less than a year, they already have a loyal following. Every week, listeners from all over—including locally—tune in to hear new episodes, which are released on Fridays. Since McCambridge and Chaney started in January, they have not missed one week.

"If we're going to be out of town, we'll schedule another day," McCambridge said. "There was one week where we had to schedule a different day to record, and then we had some audio problems, so Elaine did this impromptu 'best of' episode, which is hilarious because we were maybe six episodes in."

"Six in, and we had a 'best of episode!'" Chaney jokingly echoed. "It was kind of crazy after just that many," McCambridge agreed with a laugh, "but what I loved about it was that we were like, 'OK, we screwed it up this week, but we are still going to have something. We are not just going to leave it hanging.'"

McCambridge and Chaney's commitment to the craft has paid off. They've gained fans throughout the U.S. and even a consistent listener from Berlin, Germany.

"She even showed us her Monster," Chaney said. "Elaine and I German listeners and the popular energy drink has become something of a symbol for Wait, Whaaat? fans, as Chaney and McCambridge each drink one before almost every episode.

"They're not sponsoring us yet, but they better," McCambridge said with a laugh.

The duo says they've been continually impressed by how accessible web-based endeavors like podcasting are for both the user and the creator. "The thing about a podcast is people have access from absolutely anywhere," McCambridge said. "It's so bizarre, and it's so awesome."

"Before, if you wanted a radio show, I mean, good luck," Chaney added. "You had to book studio time, and who's going to air you if you're unknown? But now you can just be interested in, like, *Jurassic Park* and *The X-Files*, and have a podcast and everything."

"This is our radio show, completely uncensored," McCambridge said. "It's whatever we want to say."

"Wait, Whaaat?" streams via Anchor.fm, a free service that allows users to record and disseminate their own podcasts. The app also finds sponsors for podcasters based on the number of listens that they average.

"What's always the dream? It's to make money doing something that you love," Chaney said. "This is all of those things."

Though they're only 10 months into the journey, the podcasting pair is always looking to take the show further.

"We are not treating this like a hobby," Chaney said. "We want to take this to the next level."

Following the lead of other popular podcasters, McCambridge and Chaney decided to try something new: a live show. Held on Sept. 27 at the Morro Bay State Park Campground, the event was originally planned to be at a local residence, but it garnered so much interest that it had to be moved to the larger space. McCambridge and Chaney covered alleged alien abductions and the origins of *The Exorcist* for their 39th episode, and they were met by an audience of roaring laughter for 46 minutes straight.

"It's just all these little moments," Chaney said of the first live show. "Knowing that our show is making people laugh, that's really the thing."
Two men in a phallus

C-o-writers Robert and Max Eggers, with Robert (The Witch) directing, have created a psychological fantasy-horror film about two lighthouse keepers—Thomas Wake (Willem Dafoe) and Ephraim Winslow (Robert Pattinson)—stuck together on a remote New England island as they slowly descend into madness (black and white; 109 mins.)

Glen: This is a weird one. As director Robert Eggers said in interviews, “Nothing good can happen when two men are trapped alone in a giant phallus.” Even the aspect ratio, a nearly square 1:19, creates a claustrophobic feeling. Add in the black and white film stock and a soundtrack by Mark Korven that mixes ominous foghorn with a nod to the frenetic sounds of Hitchcock’s favorite composer, Bernard Herrmann, and you’ve got the makings of a very unsettling and uncomfortable environment for two strangers to find themselves stuck in. The entire exterior set was built on Cape Forchu, Nova Scotia, and the horrible weather depicted was often real—three storms blew through during the 35-day shoot. On top of that, because of the black-and-white film stock, the lighting had to be blindingly bright to show up on film. I read that the crew wore classes and that the actors could barely see each other. The filming must have been grueling and horribly uncomfortable. All this attention to detail and in-the-moment realism translates into a surprising and unnerving viewing experience. It also features two remarkable and deeply committed performances. This is nothing like most films coming out of Hollywood. Instead, it feels like early filmmaking—think Fritz Lang (Metropolis, 1927; M 1931) or G.W. Pabst (Adventures of Don Quixote, 1933). All that said, you just might hate this film. I was fascinated watching it but also bewildered and grossed out a bit. It’s a raw and depressing story of madness or maybe an inky black comedy. Perhaps both.

Anna: The Lighthouse is certainly a triumph in intricate filmmaking, but while the feelings it floods its audience with are uncomfortable, they are also raw and unconventional. It’s not a feel-good story, not even for a brief moment. No one is going to love the experience; it’s an oppressive and grueling beast. That said, there is also humor here—the director is unafraid to make the audience giggle from an ongoing flatulence bit. The two men at the center of it all are incredible powerhouse on the screen, and my eyes couldn’t look away even when the rest of me was ready to flee to godforsaken rock and the madness slowly closing in on it. Wake (Dafoe) is the grim and elderly lighthouse keeper who has held his post for far too long, drinking his way into madness for quite a while before Winslow (Pattinson) arrives. Wake is grizzly and mean, crippling by a bad leg. Winslow is young and ready to work, but his resentment for Wake is close to the surface and his own demons start to haunt him soon enough. The claustrophobic feel of the black-and-white cinematography, the oppressive and constant sounds of the foghorn, and the sheer fact that there’s not a moment where these two aren’t waterlogged by the outside storms make for not just a movie viewing but an uncomfortable experience—and one that I’ll be thinking about for quite a while. Glen: There’s certainly a lot of layers going on. Winslow discovers a carved mermaid figure tucked into a hole in his mattress, and it acts as both a focus of his carnal desires and a bad omen that haunts him. Wake is very superstitious, tucked into a hole in his mattress, and it acts as a rock in the middle of the sea. The two actors are adept at playing off of each other, and they’re both bad drunks. There’s also a lot of gay subtext, a preferred to skip rehearsal and jump into the scene in Halifax before filming, that much became apparent to unusual film going experiences. Will you like it? I honestly don’t know, but you’d be hard pressed to find more creative filmmaking or more committed performances. Anna: The film feels like a dream unrealism, it’s chaos compounded by madness all served up on a rock in the middle of the sea. The two actors apparently have very different rehearsal styles—while spending a week with director Robert Eggers in Halifax before filming, that much became evident. Dafoe was happy and eager to rehearse over and over again, while Pattinson much preferred to skip rehearsal and jump into the scene blindly, letting spontaneity guide his performance while filming. Whatever they did work. These two are adept at playing off of each other, and they both are jaw-droppingly good here. I can’t say it’s necessarily an easy film to watch, or even particularly pleasant, but there’s a whole lot here to like at least appreciate. The oppressive nature of it comes across on the big screen, much more so than it will at home, so hit this one up during its stay at Regal Edwards Santa Maria & RPX—just get yourself in the right mindset before you walk in. ©

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

SUNSCREEN PHOTO COURTESY OF A.J.

A Robinson Crusoe of space adventure written by H.W. Moss
Illustrated by Steve Moss

Published by NetNovels.com

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SCORING
FULL PRICE...it’s worth the full price of an evening showing
RENT IT...a few bucks catch an afternoon showing RENT IT?......it’s worth a rental
STREAM IT...‘till Netflix has it nothing...Don’t waste your time
Eat Drink Man Woman

There’s a lot wrong here—lacking cinematography, hastily laid-out rules, surface-level characters—but my biggest issue with Countdown is its insufficient sticking power. The killer app premise is interesting enough, kind of in the same vein as The Ring (2002) or Christine (1983), but those movies were at least a little scary because they stay with you after you leave. The Ring forces you to watch the movie within the movie that leads to death in seven days, so for at least a day or two after watching, you’re paranoid that maybe you really will die. In Countdown, it’s an evil car that comes to life and kills its drivers, which is pretty easy to think about every time you get behind the wheel of a car late at night. But Countdown doesn’t have that because if you just don’t download the app, you don’t have to worry about being killed. Still, it’s spooky season, so I think it’s worth a watch. Happy Halloween! (90 min.)

—Kassy Budnash

TERMINATOR: DARK FATE

What’s it rated? R
Where’s it showing? Hi-Way Drive-In, Movies Lompoc, Parks Plaza, Stadium 14

**NEW** Tim Miller (Deadpool) directs this next installment into the Terminator franchise. This time around, Sarah Connor (Linda Hamilton) and a "revised" T-800 Terminator go by the name Carl (Arnold Schwarzenegger) join forces with enhanced soldier, Grace (Mackenzie Davis), who’s been sent from the future to protect Daniella "Dani" Ramos (Natalia Reyes). If Dale lives, he’ll give birth to a T-800 female leader who will stop an A.I. called Legion, who, unlike Skynet hopes to destroy humankind. They’re being pursued by Rev-9 (Gabriel Luna), an advanced terminator that’s able to split in two. (128 min.)

—Glen

ZOMBIELAND: DOUBLE TAP

What’s it rated? R
What’s it worth? Full price
Where it’s showing? Movies Lompoc, Parks Plaza

**PICK** Ruben Fleischer (Venom, Gangster Squad) directs this sequel to his 2009 comedy horror film, Zombieland, about four survivors—Columbus (Jesse Eisenberg), Tallahassee (Woody Harrelson), Wichita (Emma Stone), and Little Rock (Abigail Breslin)—navigating a zombie apocalypse wasteland. In this follow-up, they slay a whole lot of zombies and encounter other survivors such as Madison (Zoey Deutch), Nevada (Rosario Dawson), Berkeley (Avan Jogia), Albuquerque (Luke Wilson), and Flagstaff (Thomas Middleditch). Somehow, Bill Murray—slain in the original—returns to play himself. (99 min.) 😍

Sun movie reviews were compiled by New Times Senior Staff Writer Glen Stanley this week. Contact him at gslaney@newtimesus.com.

CASA DE LAS FLORES

What’s it rated? TV-MA
Where? Netflix

A Casa de Las Flores, or as Netflix has it titled its streaming service The House of Flowers, is a modern-style telenovela whose characters and storyline are extremely exaggerated, overdone, and ridiculous. I love it.

The series is entirely in Spanish with some English here and there, so if you don’t speak Spanish, great! If you don’t, you probably have to turn on the subtitles.

The second season was recently released, so in preparation for watching the latest episodes, I’m taking a look at the family whose lives were destroyed by a woman’s suicide.

Taking place in Mexico City, the de la Mora family—which includes siblings Elena (Alessi Boni), Paulina (Cecilia Suárez), Julian (Dario Yadek Bernal), and parents Ernesto (Arturo Riés) and Virginia (Verónica Castro)—weaves in family secrets to emerge, the de la Mora family must experience a death that will rock their world.

BINGEABLE

tale: blackmail, a sex tape, cheating, and marijuana dealing among other things.

Casa de Las Flores takes me back to all the telenovelas on Univision, an American Spanish-language television network. I would watch with my parents in the evenings after dinner. In retrospect, I think they believed I wasn’t paying attention to what was on the screen, but I was hooked.

The stories were outrageous and the characters were so convincing, always ready to swoop in to save the day. The story arcs were well-written, crafting a spin of events eventually leading to a death that tourists to all the telenovelas on Univision, an American Spanish-language television network. If you have a good mystery and plenty of hilariously delivered scandalous events happening to one family, I suggest you catch up on season two. (Two seasons, roughly 10 min. episodes) 😍

—Kemi Garcia

RUBEN FLEICHER (Venom, Gangster Squad) directs this sequel to his 2009 comedy horror film, Zombieland, about four survivors—Columbus (Jesse Eisenberg), Tallahassee (Woody Harrelson), Wichita (Emma Stone), and Little Rock (Abigail Breslin)—navigating a zombie apocalypse wasteland. In this follow-up, they slay a whole lot of zombies and encounter other survivors such as Madison (Zoey Deutch), Nevada (Rosario Dawson), Berkeley (Avan Jogia), Albuquerque (Luke Wilson), and Flagstaff (Thomas Middleditch). Somehow, Bill Murray—slain in the original—returns to play himself. (99 min.) 😍

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The stories were outrageous and the characters were so convincing, always ready to swoop in to save the day. The story arcs were well-written, crafting a spin of events eventually leading to a death that tourists to all the telenovelas on Univision, an American Spanish-language television network. If you have a good mystery and plenty of hilariously delivered scandalous events happening to one family, I suggest you catch up on season two. (Two seasons, roughly 10 min. episodes) 😍

—Kemi Garcia

RUBEN FLEICHER (Venom, Gangster Squad) directs this sequel to his 2009 comedy horror film, Zombieland, about four survivors—Columbus (Jesse Eisenberg), Tallahassee (Woody Harrelson), Wichita (Emma Stone), and Little Rock (Abigail Breslin)—navigating a zombie apocalypse wasteland. In this follow-up, they slay a whole lot of zombies and encounter other survivors such as Madison (Zoey Deutch), Nevada (Rosario Dawson), Berkeley (Avan Jogia), Albuquerque (Luke Wilson), and Flagstaff (Thomas Middleditch). Somehow, Bill Murray—slain in the original—returns to play himself. (99 min.) 😍

Sun movie reviews were compiled by New Times Senior Staff Writer Glen Stanley this week. Contact him at gslaney@newtimesus.com.
Presqu’ile Winery, located in the lone valley of Santa Maria, has grown into an established staple in the Santa Maria community since purchasing its vineyard land back in 2007, offering cool-climate pinot noir, chardonnay, and sauvignon blanc wines. But starting this month, the small, family-owned tasting room is shaking things up with a new executive chef, Julie Simon.

Despite being in her early 30s, Simon has already established herself as an innovative and original Central Coast chef. She grew up in France, a global hub for culinary arts—yet, it wasn’t until she left her native country that she began cooking professionally. In fact, back in France, she was on the path to becoming a lawyer, with a side passion for the kitchen.

Simon made the decision to move to Paso Robles to join her aunt and uncle, who were farming an olive grove and making olive oil. After working in various kitchens in the Central Coast, she was only 23 years old when she became the executive chef at Thomas Hill Organics Bistro & Wine Bar (Thomas Hill’s SLO location has closed, but still has a Paso Robles location). There she gained experience in a kitchen that puts an emphasis on both food and local wine.

“Julie shares our core belief that what we eat and drink should be grown sustainably, and her background as a chef and farmer with such restaurants as Thomas Hill Organics and Foremost attests to that,” Presqu’ile Estate Manager Cameron Porter told the Sun via email. Presqu’ile hosts a series of Guest Chef Dinners, and after Simon headlined a sell-out dinner, the winery knew they had found someone special. The Murphy family, the pioneers behind Presqu’ile, was quick to snatch Simon up. Now, she’s bringing her knowledge of food, wine, organics, and everything in between to Presqu’ile Winery.

Though she’s only just started—she began her new position as executive chef on Oct. 1—Simon already has big plans for Presqu’ile. According to the winery, Simon will be creating the tasting room wine and food pairings and will develop special event menus. She’ll also oversee wine dinners, including those with guest chefs.

Additionally, Simon is leveraging her experience with organic cuisine and “will be planting a wide range of fruits, vegetables, herbs, and flowers, all of which will supply our kitchen,” Porter said. “With the entirety of our property now being farmed organically, the timing is perfect to continue full steam ahead with our long-term desire for a true polyculture.”

For Simon, the garden also represents a certain type of customer experience that the winery aims for. “The addition of a permaculture garden not only shows our commitment to great food, it also nurtures the ‘sense of place,’ mirroring our winemaking philosophy,” Simon said, according to a Presqu’ile press release. “I am thrilled to be joining such a strong and dedicated team, where I can be a part of propelling the Presqu’ile
THE SPACE: With high ceilings and plenty of natural light, Presqu’ile’s valley location makes for an idyllic day of California wine tasting and organic bites.

Do the weekend off right on Nov. 1 at 4:30 p.m., 4 p.m. on Nov. 3. A ribbon cutting will start at 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. and an open house from 1 to 7 p.m. It’s the perfect location to top your do-to list this fall and winter season. Cheers!

Nibbles & bites

- Celebrate Dia de Los Muertos with paint, food, ice cream, and beverages. Transformation Butterfly Project Studio invites young and old to two evening paint parties. Adults can paint Mexican-inspired colorful skulls called “calaveritas” onto clay pots while enjoying all-you-can-eat tacos and drinks. These adults-only events are held on Friday, Nov. 1, and Saturday, Nov. 2; both start at 7 p.m. with painting starting at 8 p.m. The $38 fee includes a clay pot, painting supplies, and all the tacos you could want. Kids get their own concha ice cream party and canvas painting project on Saturday, Nov. 2, starting at noon. Adults and children are also invited to bring photos of loved ones who have passed to place on the Dia de Los Muertos altar for the events. Seats are limited, so reserve a spot at eventbrite.com, or call Vicki at (805) 714-4089. Transformation Butterfly Project Studio No. 1 is located at 800 S. Broadway, suite 106, in Santa Maria.

- St. Mary of the Assumption School’s annual Surf & Turf Celebration is happening on Nov. 2 from 6 to 10 p.m. Tickets are $65 for an all-you-can-eat buffet featuring king crab legs and top sirloin. The Sammy Labastida Jazz Band will entertain you, and there will be a dessert auction. Of course, St. Mary’s school is the event’s beneficiary. Visit stmarysschools.com/events/surf-turf-dinner for more information.

- The Wine Stone Inn in Orcutt (pictured right) is kicking off its grand opening on Nov. 2 by opening up its the Vintage Room from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. and an open house from 1 to 4 p.m. on Nov. 3. A ribbon cutting will start the weekend off right on Nov. 1 at 4:30 p.m., followed by drinks in the Vintage Room. The boutique hotel will offer luxury amenities and a fun wine and beer bar. It’s located at 235 W. Clark Ave. in Old Orcutt.

- Each year, Turiya Wines’ winemaker Angela Soleno creates a red wine blend from carefully selected grape varieties that will make up that year’s cuvée. For $25, you can experience the individual grape varietals and the blends they create with an exploratory tasting on Nov. 3 at 11 a.m. at 334 N. E St. in Lompoc. The flight offers up a tasting of the three to four wines that will make up an entire vintage. Check out eventbrite.com for more information.

Editor Camillia Lanham is hungry for North County foodie events. Send tidbits to clanham@santamariasun.com.


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Be sure to check out this week’s updated weekend OPEN HOUSE directory

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**Open Houses**

**LOMPOC**

3709 JUPITER AVE, 4BD, 3.5BA, $550,000, Sun 1-3, Village Properties - Santa Ynez Office, 805-350-4038, Patricia M Armor, DRE #: 01320210

2830 SAN MARCOS AVE, 2BD, 1BA, $875,000, Fri 3-6 Sun 1-4, Los Olivos Real Estate Company, 805-688-0500, William Etling, #00623807

**MORRO BAY**

401 JAVA, 3BD, 3BA, $695,000, Sun 10-12, Navigators Real Estate, 805-459-7768, Mike Aunerud, #1977611

301 TRINIDAD, 5BD, 3BA, $1,025,000, Sat 11-2, Navigators Real Estate, 805-591-9931, Jay Chaisson, #01952049

**NIPOMO**

248 LEMA DR, 2BD, 2BA, $368,000, Sun 12-2, Compass, 805-440-5115, Sheelagh Thomas, 00743316

**PASO ROBLES**

1591 STORMY WAY, 3BD, 2BA, $495,000, Sun 11-1, Home & Ranch Sotheby’s International Realty, 805-712-0400, Lizette Mizelle-Belmonte, DRE #: 01469047

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241 PLACENTIA AVE, 2BD, 1BA, $749,000, Sat 12-3, Allia Real Estate Investments, 805-473-7500, Dennis Allan, DRE #00961923

**SANTA MARIA**

2436 IRON RIDGE CT, 3BD, 2.5BA, $574,000, Sat 12-2pm, Century 21 Hometown Realty, 805-878-5056, April Hugh, CalDRE #01248453

1162 E FOSTER RD APT A, 2BD, 1BA, $329,000, Sat 12-3, Cornerstone RE, 805-266-5216, Angelo Passida, #01055899

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**New Listing**

1116 Southlyn Place, Santa Maria

Beautiful cottage style Knollwood Village home located in a quiet cul-de-sac location. The kitchen has been updated with newer cabinets, and granite countertops. This home features a master bedroom and bath with garden tub and guest bedroom with separate bath. The backyard has a large gazebo with new cover. Lot available for purchase as well. Call agent Christy Bagby at 805-714-7726 for price and details. $125,000 (SO111)

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