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To our loyal readers,

We want to update you on the Sun’s and New Times’ plans for COVID-19 (coronavirus). We also want to address any questions you may have regarding our operations, delivery options, and more.

First and foremost, our hearts go out to those in our community and beyond who have been impacted by the virus. The health and well-being of our community is of great importance and we will continually review and update our actions in accordance with new information from the CDC and local authorities.

It is times like these where we feel grateful for our family of clients and readers, and we cannot thank you enough for your continued loyalty. From our family to yours, we wish for the best in these challenging times and for the health and well-being of our clients, readers, and community. We’re grateful for the decades of fun and information the Sun has brought to our lives and know this challenging time is just a bump in the road.

We’re also here for you to tell the stories from our community. Please feel free to share any local notable news, ideas, stories, events, images, or positive actions deriving from our current nationwide crisis. You can send them slowthevirus@santamariasun.com.

We are committed to continue providing weekly coverage of No. Santa Barbara County. Yet, our offices will be closed to the general public.

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We will continue to publish our newspaper as usual and are committed to keeping the public informed. We appreciate your understanding and wish you all good health.

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School districts and Foodbank provide services amid COVID-19 closures

With nearly all students normally receiving free- or reduced-price meals at school, the Santa Maria-Bonita School District (SMBSD) committed to continue providing free meals in the face of school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Santa Barbara County Public Health Department had confirmed two cases of the coronavirus in North County as of March 17.

"No child that wanted or needed a meal will go hungry today," Maggie White, SBMSD public information officer, told the Sun on March 16. White said beginning that day, all schools in the Santa Maria-Bonita School District—which serves children from kindergarten to eighth grade—had sack lunches available at all campuses. By March 18, White said both breakfast and lunch were expected to be offered.

"It didn't matter if it was a preschooler or a high schooler. Any child age 0 to 18 that came to a school district site will get a free meal today and tomorrow," White said on March 16. "They were running sacks lunches to people's cars. Our staff was out there really giving it their best effort."

White said the district is also working quickly to ensure that students who typically take the bus to school—particularly those who live far from their campus—will have an accessible way to obtain food amid the countywide school closures.

"Because those students are further away, we will have a distribution effort through bus stops," White said.

SMBSD's efforts are not going unmatched: school districts throughout Santa Barbara County are coming up with different plans to meet the nutritional needs of their students, according to the Santa Barbara County Education Office.

The Foodbank of Santa Barbara County will also be involved with school food distribution efforts, according to Foodbank Marketing Communications Manager Judith Smith-Meyer.

"We are working collaboratively with school districts on a couple fronts," Smith-Meyer told the Sun. "We are concerned about the children's meals as well as the ability to feed them at home not during school hours."

To combat after-school-hours food insecurity, the Foodbank is finalizing a plan to provide bags of healthy, fresh groceries to families who come to get the school meals. Smith-Meyer said these distribution efforts will likely begin at the start of next week.

School districts and the Foodbank of Santa Barbara County are working closely to provide students with food. While the school meals continue, the Foodbank is also providing bags of healthy food to students and their families.

"If you are young or otherwise healthy, you are at risk and your activities can increase the risk for others," 2nd District Supervisor Greg Hart said at the press conference on March 16. "It is critical that you do your part to stop the spread of the coronavirus."

—Maea Martin

Canadian executives purchase Santa Maria Times, Lompoc Record

After purchasing the newspapers in 2005, Lee Enterprises recently sold the Santa Maria Times, Lompoc Record, and Santa Ynez Valley News to a group of executives who have purchased a number of publications throughout the state and country in recent years.

Lee Enterprises, which owns nearly 80 publications in the U.S., announced the sale on March 13 through a statement in each of its local papers. The transaction also includes the sale of a newspaper in the city of Hanford in Kings County.

"Lee is thankful for the contributions Santa Mar...
Plains All American agrees to pay $60 million for 2015 spill

The company responsible for an oil spill that occurred five years ago near Santa Barbara reached a civil settlement with the federal government that requires it to pay more than $60 million in penalties and damages.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced a settlement with Plains All American Pipeline after the company agreed to pay $60 million for the pipeline near Refugio State Beach spilled nearly 3,000 barrels of crude oil into the ocean, killing birds, fish, and other marine life, according to the agency's statement.

"Today's settlement shows federal and local governments working in partnership to hold industry fairly accountable," said Bruce Gelber, deputy assistant attorney general for the Justice Department’s Environment and Natural Resources Division. "The agreement will also promote public health and safety and protect the environment for local communities."

According to the federal agency's statement, the oil spill was the result of the company's failure to address external corrosion on the pipeline. The agency states the spill was worsened by the company's failure to respond promptly to the incident.

This settlement comes almost a year after Santa Barbara County Superior Court Judge James Herman ordered the company to pay $3.3 million in fines for the same oil spill. The fines were imposed following a September 2018 trial where a jury found Plains All American guilty of one felony and eight misdemeanors. According to county District Attorney Joyce Dudley, the court found that Plains All American knew or should have known that the pipeline would rupture.

Two years after the spill at Refugio State Beach, Plains All American announced its plans to replace the pipeline. The replacement pipeline would traverse 123 miles and three counties, including Santa Barbara. In an interview with the Sun in early 2019, a representative from Plains All American said this project would not result in any new oil production, but would only resume previous production that ceased after the spill.

Two public meetings about it were held in Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties in February 2019 to discuss this replacement project. In March 2019, staff from both counties began working on a draft environmental impact report for the project, which would be presented for public circulation and comment once completed.

—Zac Ezzone
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Growing for good

Heavy fines for illegal pesticide use pose larger questions of safety and regulation for Santa Maria strawberry growers

BY MALEA MARTIN

When consuming fresh fruit and vegetables, it’s easy to forget how these fibrous foods make their way from farm to table. From unpredictable climate patterns to ensuring soil health, farming is a tenuous industry that requires precise planning and prediction in order to keep up with demand. And, for better or worse, one way farmers keep their crops aloft is with the aid of pesticides. But if these chemicals kill bugs, what can they do to those who consume the fruit?

Rules and regulations from entities as large as the California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR), all the way down to local agricultural commissioners, work to stop some of the most dangerous pesticides from making their way onto our dinner tables. One way that the DPR deters the use of illegal pesticides is through a random sampling process.

“We do this random sampling three to four times per week to various stores, outlets, community centers, and farmers’ markets,” Charlotte Fadipe, the DPR’s assistant director of communications, told the Sun.

On March 4, the DPR announced that they levied fines against multiple Santa Maria strawberry growers after finding traces of the restricted pesticide methomyl in their products, the settlement agreement from the case states.

The county’s investigation into the same case is ongoing, and it may result in additional penalties. DPR Director Val Dolcini told the Sun that these enforcement action programs seek to promote public safety.

“We want to make sure that growers understand that we don’t take these actions lightly and that, when we do take actions like this, it’s meant to demonstrate that these programs are credible,” Dolcini said. “They’re designed to protect the health and safety of Californians.”

California produces more than 91 percent of the nation’s entire strawberry crop, according to the Agricultural Marketing Resource Center, and a 2018 California Strawberry Commission report states that Santa Maria is one of the top strawberry producing regions in the state. This means that pesticides from the local region have the potential to reach far and wide. But according to Adam Vega, a Ventura and Santa Barbara county community organizer with Californians for Pesticide Reform, growers are not as far off fault in what he called “a cat and mouse game.”

“The situation in Santa Barbara County is reflective of the issue of this current system of agriculture that we have,” Vega told the Sun. “We’ve had this issue over and over again, and there’s no way to feed the world, so our food is produced to be durable … Because of that, farmers are left to produce high yields of really nice looking fruit, and the way they do that is with a lot of these synthetic chemical inputs.”

Vega emphasized that the DPR and local authorities are in their choice to ban the use of methomyl on strawberries.

“It’s like a sledgehammer: It kills anything and everything it touches,” he said. “It was banned for strawberry production because of its toxicity.” However, he said that just because methomyl is illegal doesn’t mean other legal, registered pesticides don’t also pose a huge public health threat.

“There’s tons of things that are registered for ag use,” Vega said. “We’ve been entrenched in a years-long battle with the use of this chemical called chlorpyrifos … . We’re in the final stages of it being removed from California agriculture. That was a fight 20 years in the making.”

Chlorpyrifos, which can cause brain damage and health defects in children, only became illegal at the start of 2020, according to an NPR article. This means that during the 2019 investigation against the Santa Maria growers who used methomyl, other growers in California were likely using chlorpyrifos—without consequence.

The varying perspectives on pesticide use and enforcement brings up a greater question: What makes using a certain pesticide an inherently good or bad moral choice? Is it the current legal status of the pesticide, which, as Vega points out, often changes over time? Or is it how dangerous the pesticide is to farmworkers, the public, and the environment—regardless of its legality?

Ideally, there would be no discrepancy between what is illegal and what is harmful, but, as Vega said, this is not yet the case.

Regardless of how dangerous both legal and illegal pesticides can be, breaking the law is still breaking the law. The DPR’s investigation found that one strawberry grower indeed broke the law, and Dolcini said that growers are made unequivocally aware of what pesticides are allowed.

“We work closely with county ag commissioners around area,” Dolcini said. “We’re also always doing educational presentations, seminars, and other things, with local growers to Farm Bureau chapters to industry groups.”

Carolyn O’Donnell, communications director at the California Strawberry Commission, told the Sun that pesticide application must be by a licensed, trained applicator.

“They’re trained to know what the cautions are, and the label says what products can be used on each crop,” O’Donnell said.

In the case of methomyl, the chemical’s illegal status is enough to deter most farmers from using it, Dolcini said.

“The vast majority of the time, California growers are in total compliance with our rules and regulations,” Dolcini said. “Every once in a while we find that there’s a pesticide residue violation by a grower, and that leads us to take an action. That was the case here.”

But for other pesticides that are known to be dangerous and yet remain legal, the public health hazard is difficult to track and test their usage. The root of the problem may not lie solely with farmers’ choices, but with a food industry that demands yields and superficial produce perfection that only harsh pesticides can achieve.

That said, we must find solutions like Vega’s, where the path forward isn’t just enforcement actions and fines: it’s a complete overhaul of the system that allows—and the markets that reward—harsh pesticide use in the first place.

“Unfortunately, we’re in a system that type of system to an agroecological system—where we work with nature rather than against, and produce food for local consumption rather than global distribution—the story that came out of Santa Maria is one of many to come,” he said.

Reach Staff Writer Malea Martin at mmartin@ santamariasun.com.

Mixed results

Latest homeless count shows progress in some areas, but not all

BY ZAC EZZONE

In its latest census of homeless individuals, Santa Barbara County found some improvements compared to last year, despite an overall increase in the number of people counted.

The county’s Housing and Community Development Division released the 2020 point-in-time count results on March 10. According to these numbers, 1,897 people were identified as homeless when the count took place on Jan. 29. About 90 more people were counted as homeless compared to 2019, which is an increase of roughly 5 percent.

The county’s Homeless Assistance Programs Manager Kimberly Albers attributed this increase to a rise in the number of people living in their cars, particularly in places along the South Coast, like Carpinteria and Goleta. Albers said this increase is probably tied to the rental market. As rent increases and people are unable to pay their bills, their first course of action is usually to move into their cars.

Along with a greater number of people living in their cars, the county identified 613 people as chronically homeless during the count, which is an increase of 138 people from last year. Albers said while individuals living in their cars may only need rental vouchers, or some other help, to secure a place to live, the needs of people experiencing chronic homelessness are usually more extensive.

Helping people in this category requires building more permanent housing with supportive services.

“Here, supportive housing has been done through development, which is much slower,” Albers said.

Despite increases in these areas, the number of individuals counted in North County is down this year. In Santa Maria, 382 people were counted this year as opposed to 464 in 2019. And in Lompoc, those numbers are 211 and 249, respectively.

Albers said that through state grant funding, Good Samaritan was able to begin new services last spring, including the addition of substance abuse treatment beds that may have contributed to this decrease. Permanent supportive housing has also been developed online this spring at The Residences at Depot Street, which is a project proposed through the Housing Authority of the County of Santa Barbara, should continue to help Santa Maria’s homeless population.

When you have more beds that are closer to meeting the demand, you’d certainly expect to see decreases,” Albers said. “I’m excited to see 2021 numbers to see if the decrease continues.”

Although the county experienced mixed results in its count, the total number of homeless people identified is not too far from previous years. Since 2013, the number has mostly fluctuated between 1,800 and 1,900, aside from in 2015 and 2018 when it dipped below that range. And nearly 1,900 shows we have a massive amount of work to do, we take some encouragement that we’re not seeing the spikes that many California communities are experiencing,” Albers said.

Gov. Gavin Newsom and the state Legislature are funneling millions of dollars to local jurisdictions throughout the state to address the problem. The most recent round of funding comes in through the state’s Homeless Housing, Assistance, and Prevention program.

The county is expected to receive $4 million through this program in early April, county Housing and Community Development Division Director Fred Gamble said. “I think while one person is too many, and nearly 1,900 shows we have massive amount of work to do, we take some encouragement that we’re not seeing the spikes that many California communities are experiencing.”

—county Homeless Assistance Programs Manager Kimberly Albers

“I think while one person is too many, and nearly 1,900 shows we have massive amount of work to do, we take some encouragement that we’re not seeing the spikes that many California communities are experiencing.”

First District Supervisor Das Williams opined that because the county and its partners focus heavily on permanent housing, fewer resources are dedicated to shelters in South County. He questioned whether additional shelter space could have prevented some of these deaths. Meanwhile, 2nd District Supervisor Gregg Hart noted that the average age of those who have died in South County is well below the average lifespan of somebody who lives in a home.

“It is very sobering to hear this report, and particularly the age, the premature [average] age of death are concerning,” Hart said. “We do need resources to keep our community healthy, and it underscores the need for us to continue to work on this issue, the severity of the issue.”

Reach Staff Writer Zac Ezzone at zezone@ santamariasun.com.
Going with the tide
The Cabrillo High School Aquarium's new Interactive Tide Pool offers an accessible and authentic aquatic experience

BY MALEA MARTIN

The Cabrillo High School Aquarium is swimming with exciting new updates that aim to increase accessibility and authenticity for its visitors. The aquarium’s recently completed $250,000 project—funded entirely by grants and community donations—includes upgrades to its aquatic life support system as well as a brand-new exhibit called the Interactive Tide Pool.

The aquarium plans to unveil the tide pool to the public on Earth Day, April 22. Though the aquarium canceled its March 18 open house due to COVID-19 precautions, the April event is still scheduled, as of March 16.

The new exhibit offers guests to physically interact with the animals inside it and replaces an old touch tank, said Chris Ladwig, an advisor to the aquarium and 2001 Cabrillo High School graduate.

“Our original touch tank was getting tired,” Ladwig told the Sun. “It was tall and inaccessible: Wheelchairs couldn’t get to it, and younger kids had a hard time. We realized we needed to replace the touch tank with something that was accessible, and we wanted it to be more authentic. Something that would transport guests to the coast.”

The new exhibit will house a wide variety of tide pool animals, including sea stars, sea urchins, sea cucumbers, snails, abalone, and hermit crabs. The aquarium also features a large shark tank, a jellyfish gallery, and a new round tank that will include coastal fish, sea anemones, and lobsters.

In continuous operation since 1986, the aquarium had a humble beginning.

“It started in a classroom with just one student and one teacher,” Ladwig said. “They basically built an experimental aquarium, and then it just built and built from there.”

Today, the aquarium is operated by six Cabrillo High School classes, around 200 students total. Students hold roles and responsibilities, including aquarium curation, guiding elementary school tours, publishing the facility’s newsletter, and maintaining the filtration and life-support systems.

“A lot of the [student] curators I graduated with are teachers or school administrators now. They develop this level of comfort with students,” Ladwig said. “When we presented the grant [proposal] to the [Santa Barbara] County Board of Supervisors, the students did the presentation. It’s just giving them that confidence.”

Entrusting the students with the grant proposal presentation paid off: The aquarium ended up securing its largest grant for the interactive tide pool project from the county’s Coastal Resource Enhancement Fund. The fund seeks to mitigate significant impacts of offshore oil and gas development to coastal aesthetics, coastal recreation, coastal tourism, and environmentally sensitive coastal resources, according to the county’s website.

While public access is limited to a monthly open house—the next one is scheduled for April 22 at 6 p.m.—the aquarium’s primary visitors are elementary students from across the Lompoc Unified School District. For the district’s fifth graders, the visit is a mandatory part of their curriculum.

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“Being a public aquarium at a public high school, sometimes we’re such a square peg in a round hole,” Ladwig said. “Sometimes people don’t really know what to do with us.”

But thanks to the support of grants and community fundraising efforts that made the new exhibits possible, the Cabrillo High School Aquarium will continue to serve Lompoc’s elementary students and the public for the foreseeable future.

“I want to give credit to the Lompoc Unified School District for supporting us,” Ladwig said. “[It’s] a unique program that doesn’t fit into a lot of templates.”
Buy Restaurant Bonds and Support Small Businesses in No. SB County!

Purchasing gift cards from our local businesses can help stimulate the economy now.

With capacity limitations imposed and now the there are orders that restaurants can only serve takeout or delivery, our county’s restaurant industry has been among the hardest hit by the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. People are being encouraged to stay home and away from crowds and public dining rooms, some restaurants and cafes have already been forced to dial back hours in response to the decrease in business, while others have shut down entirely. With restaurants facing an uncertain immediate future, one way local diners can support their favorite restaurants is by purchasing gift cards - or what some are calling “Restaurant Bonds” - similar to “war bonds” during WWI and II. Whether given as a gift or kept for future meals, gift cards can act as a microloan to restaurants to provide much-needed immediate cash. Many restaurants sell gift cards online, allowing customers to offer their support without having to leave home.

There has never been a more important time to support our neighborhood’s culinary scene. Restaurants are emptying out and small business owners are seeing up to an 80% drop-off in customers. Restaurants already work off razor-thin profit margins, but the COVID-19 pandemic is a test like no other. For now, the best thing our friends and neighbors in the community can do to help is to order takeout or buy gift cards to ensure at least some income during this difficult time.

If this trend continues, many of our beloved businesses will suffer greatly but we have the opportunity to help.

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Opt for carryout or delivery. Many restaurants are opting for curbside pickup or have pick-up areas where you can dash in, get your food and leave. It’s a better deal for restaurants if you collect carry out yourself, rather than use a delivery app. That helps the restaurant — and you — avoid delivery charges. But if you don’t feel like driving over, delivery is your back-up choice. Be sure to tip your delivery person.

Please show your support. Let’s do this together.
Sanctuary problems

Some of the many reasons why federal marine sanctuary management is a bad idea

BY THE MORRO BAY COMMERCIAL FISHERMEN’S ORGANIZATION

There are strong reasons why citizens should oppose a new federal bureaucracy operating in our offshore waters. A recent editorial by Andrew Christie (“Keep the proposed marine sanctuary protections moving through the Legislature,” March 4) takes a very low road in attempting to dismiss the fact-based concerns of citizens and agencies over a sanctuary designation for our region. Let’s fact-check claims of what a new sanctuary will do.

The claim: Local citizens will have a voice in sanctuary management (the “local control” issue). The fact: A new sanctuary will be managed by non-elected federal bureaucrats with significant control from national headquarters leadership. There will be a local Sanctuary Advisory Council (SAC) made up of agency representatives and stakeholders. The rub: Sanctuary managers get to pick them. The Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary has a long history of favoring SAC appointments aimed toward hearing the kind of advice sanctuary managers want to hear. A couple of years ago the three-county Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG) wrote, requesting that an independent committee be formed to make recommendations to fix problems with the SAC. This request, coming from 22 local elected officials, was rejected out of hand. If sanctuaries don’t listen to entities like AMBAG, what local input will resonate? Remember, sanctuaries have federal rule-making authority. The claim: Sanctuaries bring permanent protection against offshore oil and gas development.

The fact: Not true. Sanctuary regulations can be overturned by Congress. The strongest protection comes from a combination of the force of the California congressional delegation with state and local ordinances preventing the construction of oil infrastructure. Whether you are for or against offshore wind energy projects, sanctuaries can allow them and can even make money from such development.

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President & CEO

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What’s your take on the county’s latest homeless point-in-time count?

☐ It shows progress, but not nearly enough.
☐ It doesn’t seem accurate that the number of homeless people in Santa Maria decreased by about 150 from last year.
☐ The increase in chronic homelessness is really concerning.
☐ I’m glad we’re building more housing, but I don’t want developments for the homeless near where I live.

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Learning through nature

Students get educated about their role in the surrounding environment

BY KAREN GARCIA • PHOTOS BY JAYSON MELLOM

Editor’s note: Schools and school programs throughout the state—including the Central Coast’s environmental education programs—have been closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. But the values behind these programs remain an asset for local teachers, schools, and children to look forward to once the programs resume. As of press time, the duration of the closures was unknown.

A necklace hangs on the wall behind Environmental Education Director Celeste Royer’s chair in the SLO County Office of Education. The program director of Rancho El Chorro Outdoor School’s necklace has a wood pendant with colorful beads on either side of the string. “Blue sky” is written on the pendant.

It’s Royer’s nature name. Students who attend Rancho El Chorro Outdoor School and the naturalists—educators of the environment—all have a nature name.

Children come from multiple counties, including Northern Santa Barbara County, to Rancho El Chorro for a hands-on learning experience that focuses on science and ecology in a natural setting.

“There’s no textbooks. Everything is do and think like a scientist, be a scientist,” Royer said.

The school offers three programs for children to attend. Students can stay for three to five days in a residential program. A class can attend Nature Detectives from 9:30 a.m. to noon for a program tailored to the classroom curriculum. A traveling naturalist visits and teaches in their classrooms. Rancho El Chorro also offers the Summer Outdoors Adventures for Kids (SOAK) camp.

“We're among many programs in California that really focus on building environmental literacy in students,” Royer said. “We’re able to get them out into the natural world, get them physically active and help them feel safe in an environment that might be foreign to them.”

It’s also an opportunity, Royer said, for the students to really understand how much nature plays a role in their everyday lives.

The Nature Detectives offerings include programs called Under the Sea and The World Around Me for kindergarten-aged children. In Under the Sea, students learn what marine animals need to live and grow. They get to touch live marine invertebrates at the onsite Blake Marine Science Center and study ocean food chains and what marine animals eat.

With The World Around Me, students learn what natural resources humans need to live and grow. They study the movement of water, how animals are grouped by their characteristics, and how humans and animals use their senses. A large watershed model on the school grounds enables students to observe the flow of water, after which they learn about water movement in their own neighborhoods or communities.

Royer said the science programs always have a human component or conversation. That includes understanding how humans benefit from the natural world, what people get from the ocean, and what mankind’s role is in preserving and protecting the environment.

“What we teach a lot about is the intersection between the natural systems, which is all science and ecology. Then, you have human social systems and how those intersect,” she said.

One of the goals of the school, Royer said, is having the students understand that they can make a difference.

“You will take care of things that you understand and that you've made a connection to,” she said.

If you feel any kind of connection to the natural world, she said, you will most likely take care of it. Every student who visits Rancho El Chorro is viewed as a future environmental steward, and in order to prepare them, the school focuses on environmental literacy.

A changing climate

Royer said there is a huge push in California and across the nation to build environmental literacy. She was part of California State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson’s statewide Environmental Literacy Task Force that created “A Blueprint for Environmental Literacy: Educating Every Student, In, About, and For the Environment.”

The task force included K-12 classroom teachers; school and district administrators; informal science educators; science, environmental, and outdoor educators; higher education faculty; and leaders from government agencies and nonprofit organizations.

The blueprint is a document that outlines recommendations on how classrooms and schools can integrate environmental literacy into mainstream classroom instruction. Environmental literacy can be embedded into normal instruction for history-social science standards and as part of the California Common Core Standards—what students should know and be able to do in each subject as adopted by the state—and California Next Generation Science Standards.

Aside from implementing environmental literacy into classroom curriculum, the blueprint suggests creating learning experiences for students in nature, whether that’s on school grounds, in the local community, in residential outdoor science programs, museums, aquariums, or science centers.

To ensure that schools are incorporating environmental literacy into the classroom, there are six guiding principles that must be followed: equity of access, sustainability and scalability of systems, collaborative solutions, commitment to quality, cultural relevance.
and competence, and a variety of learning experiences.

Former California Gov. Jerry Brown’s executive order to reduce greenhouse gases to 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030 was one of the impetuses to create the blueprint.

Developing and implementing solutions to these challenges requires an environmentally literate population that has the skills to understand, analyze, think critically about, and address future environmental issues, the blueprint states.

When Brown announced the executive order, he stated, “California sets a very high bar for itself and other states and nations, but it’s one that must be reached—for generations and generations to come.”

The document suggests the state’s K-12 students are the future leaders “who will help reach this high bar.”

Camp Ocean Pines

Camp Ocean Pines sits within a Monterey pine forest in Cambria with a view of the ocean. The camp’s mission is to foster enjoyment and appreciation of the natural world through creative activities in a residential camp setting.

Camp Executive Director Andrew Boyd-Goodrich and Outdoor Education Director Bill Thornton showed New Times around the camp’s Nature Center where snakes, reptiles, starfish, and crabs live in tanks.

A barn owl and falcon—both have been rehabilitated—live outside the center in large cages. Thornton said the owl was hit by a car, rehabilitated, and brought here. The falcon was a working bird until it experienced an ear infection that spread to her eye.

“They’re both semi-retired living out their life here at camp. So we use them to educate students on raptors and their importance to the ecosystem,” Thornton said.

Having the animals on-site aligns with the camp’s mission of engaging students in the natural world, but Boyd-Goodrich said the camp makes the animals accessible in a responsible way.

“We wouldn’t want to put a [wild] great-horned owl or a peregrine falcon in a cage, even if we wanted kids to experience it. But because they’re being rehabilitated, we could do that,” he said.

From the camp’s perspective, Boyd-Goodrich said, maintaining that responsibility toward nature and the animals that inhabit it is a key component to environmental literacy.

“It’s not just understanding of the scientific principles and ecological principles, but how do you apply that in terms of lifestyle choices, whether that’s voting patterns, civic engagement, or whether that’s how you think about the role of nature in your life, and so forth,” he said.

When Thornton is creating programs for incoming classes, he said, Camp Ocean Pines and the naturalists who teach the students think about trying to build a foundation so that the students can apply what they learned at camp at their school and beyond.

If students learn about ecosystems and habitats that are interconnected, he said, then students learn what role they can play in that system.

“I say ‘can play’ because we want students when they come here to realize you have a right to be out in nature, you have access, you play a huge part, and you have influence,” he said. “So what do you want to do with that and what does that look like?”

Thornton said, he feels that the program helps students tie things together in the classroom and also build a foundation for who the students want to be “as far as it means being an impactful person in the environment.”

Children in nature

Norma Elliot was attending the University of Colorado, Boulder, and majoring in psychology. Her educational path changed after a study-abroad trip to China.

“I saw that the students there didn’t really have the same kind of access to outdoor experiences that I did when I was a kid. We lived on a quarter-acre, and I was just outside every day playing in the woods, climbing rocks, climbing trees, and going through the grass,” Elliot said.

During her stay in China, she saw that there were national parks but there wasn’t a program or a designated outdoor area for children to enjoy. It got her thinking about ways she could help kids get immersed in nature.

When she returned to the university, Elliot promptly switched her major to environmental studies—she currently has a degree in environmental studies and natural resources.

Her experience spans a stint in an environmental education internship class and as a seasonal naturalist at a few state parks conducting hikes and presentations. Four years ago, she applied for a naturalist position with Rancho El Chorro Outdoor School and has been with the program ever since.

She still can’t believe it’s her job.

In her four years with the program, Elliot said she’s felt there is an urgency for environmental literacy in the classroom.

She noticed the change when Senate Bill 720 was passed in 2018.

The bill states environmental principles and concepts have been “approved by specified authorities and have been embedded in specified curriculum frameworks adopted by the State Board of Education.” It also supported the state superintendent of public instruction to use resources at their disposal to provide leadership in furthering the goals of environmental literacy.

“It’s important to feel supported by the state government, and it really makes me feel like the general public is starting to see the importance of environmental literacy,” she said.

Senate Bill 720 signified to Elliot that the people around her were starting to realize that the next generation of children are going to be dealing with all of the environmental issues of climate change and change of the planet.

“So they really need an educational background to help face their problems,” she said. “I think the biggest thing for me is, with environmental literacy, is you have to really love something before you want to take care of it.”

That’s the core of Elliot’s job, she explained. With her position, she can help the children who attend Rancho El Chorro foster connections with the natural world and get them to fall in love with nature.

New Times Staff Writer Karen Garcia can be reached at kgarcia@newtimeslo.com.
Strange times

BY CAMILLIA LANHAM

The world feels like a weird place to be right now. So it seemed like an appropriate week to give our snarky feathered friend a break, put the canary in quarantine to chill out a little bit so I could talk to the Sun’s readers directly.

As of press time, Santa Barbara County’s Public Health Department had confirmed a second case of coronavirus in North County and was waiting on tests for several other individuals. The number will likely grow, along with the restraints placed on us by local, state, and federal governments eager to stem the pandemic and prevent it from overwhelming our health care system.

It seems strange to say this when the future looks so uncertain, but I believe we will get through this, together, knowing that short-term economic losses and discomfort are better than the alternative. Much like all of you, we are taking it day by day as we wait for news of what comes next.

Updates constantly stream into my email inbox from city and county agencies, businesses, entertainment venues, people in need, those offering aid to others, and sources of misinformation. News alerts are by the minute. It’s hard to keep up with, as well as take the time to parse through, to determine what’s real and what isn’t.

For now, Gov. Gavin Newsom has recommended suspension of group gatherings and the closure of bars, night clubs, and large events. Movie theaters, gyms, and restaurants are next. Because of this, the Sun is taking a revenue hit, similar to other area businesses. With a chunk of our income coming from events-related advertising and more than a few pages dedicated to promoting arts and entertainment in the area, we will be reducing the size of that section of our paper. The Sun office is also temporarily closed to the public, but we are working and available by email or phone.

The situation is fluid and uncertain, but we will do our best to share what we know with you in the way that we’ve always done it. With a thoughtful, big-picture view of the situation and an eye for what’s important—knowing there is more happening than virus spread. We aren’t a breaking news kind of a paper, and we have a tendency to look for things that aren’t being covered by other local news outlets. But you already knew that, and hopefully you know to expect that in the coming weeks.

I think we can all agree that everyone will be affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, whether directly through infection, hospitalization, or self-monitored quarantine and/or indirectly through business and school closures, travel restrictions, and the economic hit that will accompany them. The measure of a community’s strength comes after we’ve weathered the storm of uncertainty and all that it brings.

How we come together, lean on one another, support our neighbors, and deal with adversity—even through the obstacle of social distancing—will be the yardstick with which this crisis is measured. We want to help this happen in any way that we can.

We want you to let us know what you’re concerned about, what you need help with, and what you’re willing to help with. The Sun wants to be able to let the community know what’s open, closed, and in the works; what’s out there to help, to connect, and to share.

Email slowthevirus@santamariasun.com with information.

Reach Editor Camillia Lanham at clanham@santamariasun.com.
**SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS**

**BILINGUAL STORY TIME: HORA DE CUENTOS**
Features exciting stories, songs, and rhymes in both Spanish and English. Wednesdays, 5:30-6 p.m. through April 22. Free. 805-925-0994. Santa Maria Public Library, 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria.

**FABULOUS FISHES: PRESCHOOL STORY TIME**
Storytime featuring stories in a variety of formats, songs, and finger plays. This story time is open to preschoolers aged 3 to 5 and their families. Wednesdays, 10:30-11 a.m. through April 22. Free. 805-925-0994. Santa Maria Public Library, 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria.

**SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS**

**FAMILY AFTERNOON STORY TIME**
Story time features stories, movies, and a craft. Tuesdays, 4:55 p.m. through April 21. Free. 805-925-0994. Santa Maria Public Library, 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria.

**HEART OF THE VALLEY: LOCAL HISTORY**
Are you a local history enthusiast? Please join us every third Saturday of the month for our "Heart of the Valley" speaker series: CASA of Santa Barbara County. Guest Speaker: Kim Colby Davis, Executive Director of CASA Santa Barbara County. March 21, 10:15-11:15 a.m. 805-925-0994. Santa Maria Public Library, 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria.

**SOUTH COAST SLO COUNTY**

**EAT PRAY F* YOU COUPLES INTENSIVE**
Whether you're already on love-cloud-nine or ready to throw wrench at your love's head, this couples intensive will be a sure-fire way to elevate your relationship and give it an invigorating breath of life. March 29, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. 5297 Dolphin Bay Resort, 2727 Shell Beach Road, Pismo Beach.
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Park Street
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Trinity United Methodist Church

Morro Bay WILD
SATURDAY, MARCH 21
Wildlife Rehabilitation Center

Rolling Stones Tribute
SATURDAY, APRIL 18
Klein Dance Arts Studio

Murder Mystery Dinner
SATURDAY, MARCH 21
First United Methodist Church

Easter Brunch Buffet at the Castle
SUNDAY, APRIL 12
Tooth & Nail Winery

Soaring Masterpieces:
Fate and Destiny
SATURDAY, APRIL 18
Grace Baptist Church

The Write Your Deep AF Book Hoedown
SATURDAY, MARCH 21
The Dolphin Bay Resort

The Wild West Hits the Pops
SATURDAY, APRIL 25
First United Methodist Church

Eat Pray F* You Couples Intensive
SUNDAY, MARCH 29
The Dolphin Bay Resort

Peach, Pines and Felines: Music of the 1970’s
SATURDAY, MARCH 21
Allan Hancock College

The Chapman
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MIND & BODY

SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS

ADULT COLORING PROGRAM Come and enjoy this new trend in adult creativity and relaxation at the Santa Maria Public Library. The program is free, and all materials will be provided. Wednesdays, 12:30 p.m. - 1:30 p.m. Free. 805-925-0994-8562. Santa Maria Public Library, 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria.

CANDLELIGHT RESTORATIVE YOGA Release and open your body with breath, props, and meditation. Mondays, 7-8:30 p.m. Free. 805-937-7505. Oasis Center, 420 Soares Ave., Orcutt.

REFLEXOLOGY AT OASIS A relaxing reflexology session is available every Wednesday, 1:30-2 p.m. 805-925-0994. Santa Maria Public Library, 420 Soares Ave., Orcutt, 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria.

WISDOM READINGS AnnKathleen is available every Saturday, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. for wisdom readings. She will also provide support and insight online at www.betterhelp.com. Saturday, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. 805-937-1509. www.divine_reading.com. Divine Inspiration, 947 E Orange St., Santa Maria.

KIDS & FAMILY

SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS

HOMEWORK HELP Free after school homework help for grades K-6. No sign-ups required; first come, first served. Mondays-Thursdays, 3:30-6:30 p.m. Free. 805-925-0994. Santa Maria Public Library, 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria.

KTS ALL STAR GYMNASTICS: NINJA WARRIOR Bring your inner warrior with us to the Ninja Warrior at KTS All Star Gymnastics. Registration open now. Saturdays, 9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. 805-925-0994. Oasis Center, 420 Soares Ave., Orcutt, 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria.

CREATE & LEARN

SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS

AFTERNOON ART TIME Kids aged 6 to 12 learn basic principles of art while completing a project. Registration begins one week before the program. March 26, 2:30-3:30 p.m. Free. 805-925-0994. Santa Maria Public Library, 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria.

CARD MAKING Tuesdays, 9 a.m. oasisart.co. Oasis Center, 420 Soares Ave., Orcutt, 805-937-9750.

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

SANTA YNEZ VALLEY

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.

JOHN LYLE LIVE Food and drinks available for purchase. No outside food or drinks allowed. March 21, 1-4 p.m. 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.

LOW DOWN DUDES LIVE Food and drinks available for purchase. No outside food or drinks allowed. March 22, 4:30-7:30 p.m. Cold Spring Tavern, 5995 Stagecoach Rd., Santa Barbara, 805-967-0066, coldspringtavern.com/entertainment.html.


STUDIO C LIVE Food and drinks available for purchase. No outside food or drinks allowed. March 21, 5-8 p.m. 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. March 21, 6-9 p.m. Cold Spring Tavern, 5995 Stagecoach Rd., Santa Barbara, 805-967-0066, coldspringtavern.com/entertainment.html.

RML LIVE Food and drinks available for purchase. No outside food or drinks allowed. March 21, 5-8 p.m. Cold Spring Tavern, 5995 Stagecoach Rd., Santa Barbara, 805-967-0066, coldspringtavern.com/entertainment.html.

SONIC YOUTH: Eight local musicians ranging from ages 8 to 18, including soprano Bridget Lee (pictured), were chosen to perform during the Santa Maria Philharmonic Society’s annual Youth Showcase.

When we were young

BY CALEB WISEBLOOD

Young, classical musicians throughout the Central Coast, from Santa Barbara to San Luis Obispo County, auditioned to take part in the Santa Maria Philharmonic Society’s eighth annual Youth Showcase, held last month in Orcutt. Entry was open to ages 8 to 18, and eight artists were ultimately chosen to perform classical pieces on piano, French horn, cello, and vocals.

The program is headed by Lynne Garrett, a classically trained pianist and violinist and a board advisor to the Philharmonic Society. “These recitals have become a very popular performance opportunity for youth in our community,” Garrett said in a press release. “The artistry and level of accomplishment of these young performers is astounding.”

Performers who auditioned for the showcase were judged by a jury of professional musicians in technical ability, musical artistry, and other areas. Once accepted into the program, the young artists were provided with professional coaches to prepare for the concert.

Four of the eight chosen musicians are from Santa Maria: pianist Kate Kim (age 8); pianist Suri Kim (age 11); French hornist Joseph Galicino (age 16); and soprano Bridget Lee (age 17). Three of the young performers are from San Luis Obispo: pianist Francesca Osgood (age 12); pianist Isabella Osgood (age 16); and pianist Andy Shen (age 13). And last but certainly not least, 12-year-old pianist and cellist Colin Foster hails from Morro Bay.

For more info on the Philharmonic’s annual music events, and for next year’s auditioning process, visit santamariaphilharmonic.org. The showcase is part of the Philharmonic’s educational concerts and events programming, which also includes the company’s upcoming After Schools Strings program. Call (805) 925-0412 for more details.

Heeree’s Johnny!

The 40th annual Santa Ynez Valley Concert Series presents Grammy Award-winning violinist Johnny Gandelsman at St. Mark’s-in-the-Valley Church on Friday, March 20, at 7 p.m. Appropriately titled A Violinist Explores Bach’s Cello Suites, Gandelsman is set to perform a soloist selection of Bach’s Baroque compositions.

“We are very much looking forward to hearing Johnny Gandelsman’s interpretations of Bach’s timeless and transcendent music,” Robert Cassidy, artistic director of the concert series, said in press materials. “A magical sonic environment will be experienced with the sound of the solo violin resonating off the long-grain fir, high-ceiling interior of the church.”

General admission to the concert is $20, while reserved seating starts at $35. Tickets are available for purchase at the door or online in advance at smtv.org. Admission to students (with student ID) is free, thanks to a grant from St. Mark’s Women’s Guild. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. A Youth Showcase or tips on how to prepare for next year’s auditioning process, visit santamariaphilharmonic.org. The showcase is part of the Philharmonic’s educational concerts and events programming, which also includes the company’s upcoming After Schools Strings program. Call (805) 925-0412 for more details.

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**MUSIC**

**LOCAL NOTES** from page 21

Complimentary reception with Gandelman follows the concert. For more info, call (805) 705-0938. St. Mark’s-in-the-Valley Church is located at 2901 Nojoqui Ave., Los Olivos.

More music

The Maverick Saloon in Santa Ynez kicks off its weekly country-rock lineup with the Rose Valley Thorns on Friday, March 20, from 8 to 11 p.m. The saloon also hosts local artist Jimi Nelson for two shows in a row: Saturday, March 21, from 8 to 11 p.m. and Sunday, March 22, from 1 to 5 p.m. Entry to all three performances is complimentary. The Maverick is located at 3867 Sagunto St., suite D, Santa Ynez. To find out more about upcoming artists at the saloon, call 805-688-6785 or visit themavsaloon.com.

Wednesday, ecletic ensemble Studio C performs at the Cold Spring Tavern on Friday, March 20, from 6 to 9 p.m. The tavern’s weekend concerts continue with solo guitarist John Lyle (from 1 to 4 p.m.) and the RML Trio (from 5 to 8 p.m.) on Saturday, March 21, and blues and raggs duo Tom Ball and Kenny Wayne (from 1:15 to 4 p.m.) and classic rock group Low Down Dudes (from 4:30 to 7:30 p.m.) on Sunday, March 22. Admission to every show at the Tavern is complimentary. The venue is located at 5995 Stagecoach Road, Santa Barbara. Call 805-967-0065 or visit coldspringtavern.com for more info.

Up north, local pop musician Nataly Lola performs at Vino et Amicus Wine Bar in Old Town Orcutt on Friday, March 20, from 7 to 10 p.m. All of 2018’s Flying solo this concert, Lola is well known locally and beyond for her work with pop-rock act Ghost/Monstar. Admission to the show is free. Call (805) 631-0496 or visit vinoetamicis.com to find out more.

The bar is located at 163 S. Broadway St., suite 101, Orcutt. ©

**MUSIC LISTINGS** from page 21

**SAN LUIS OBISPO**


**SOUTH COAST-SLO COUNTY**

ACOUSTIC SUNNYS 3-5 p.m. Seaventure Restaurant, 100 Oceanview Ave., Pismo Beach, 805-779-1779, seaventure.com.

AMERICA’S DIAMOND LIVE STARRING JAY WHITE Jay White is Neil Diamond in this amazing tribute, which he has performed over 9,000 times to fans all over the world including an unprecedented 8-year run in Las Vegas. March 28, 7-9 p.m. 545-558, 805-589-9444, starcenter.org. Clark Center for the Performing Arts, 487 Fair Oaks Ave., Arroyo Grande.

BLUES MASTERS JAN Wednesdays, 6:30-9:30 p.m. Figueroa Mountain Brewing Co., 1462 E. Grand Ave., Antioy Grande, 805-474-8525, fgmbrew.com. ENJOY GOOD, AND COOL Enjoy southern fried soul, and blues dipped in thick, sweet honey. March 19. 6:30-9:30 p.m. 558-863-7272. Louie B’s, 213 E. Main St., Santa Maria.

FRI DAY NIGHT LIVE MUSIC Enjoy live music and food on the patio. Fridays, 5:30-8:30 p.m. Free. 805-989-9512. Figueroa Mountain Taproom. Street Deitil, Santa Barbara.

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

LIVE MUSIC AT SCOTTY’S Enjoy live music from local artists, cocktails, and food. Fridays, 6-9 p.m. Scotty’s Bar and Grill, 750 Price St., Pismo Beach, 805-773-1922, scottysbarpismo.com.

MUSIC OF THE 1970S: SLO VOCAL ARTS ENSEMBLE Fabulous favorite songs from the decade performed by an all-female vocal ensemble, with duets, small ensembles, and the entire 10 plus person choir. March 26, 7-9 p.m. March 27, 7-9, 3 p.m. 840-540, my50sbe.com. The Monarch Club at Trilogy Monarch Dunes, 1645 Trilogy Parkway, Nipomo, 805-343-7530.

**SAN LUIS OBISPO**

WILD, WILD WEST The Wild West Hits the Pops, presented by the Lompoc Pops Orchestra, is scheduled to take place at the First United Methodist Church on Monday, March 30, from 7:30 to 9:15 p.m. The 50-piece ensemble will perform a variety of jazz, big band, and Broadway tunes. Tickets range from $5 to $20 and are available in advance at 805Stix.com. The church is located at 925 N. F. St., Lompoc. Visit lompocpopsorchester.org for more info. © Caleb Wisbeldow

TRIPPED UP AND CENTRAL COAST BREW TAP TAKEOVER Local reggae and brewery, Central Coast Brew, perform and takeover. Giveaways, great music, and local beer can be enjoyed at the patio and bar. March 21, 3-6 p.m. Free. 626-534-7317. PierFront Wine & Brew, 480 Front Street, Avila Beach, pierfrontwineandbrew.com.

**DJ/DANCE**

**KRAZY COUNTRY HONKY-TONK THURSDAY** Thursdays, 6 p.m., 805-922-1468, cdowinery.com.

**LOMPOC/VANDENBERG**

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Is this your card?
Central Coast local Mark Barbere recounts his journey to becoming a professional magician

BY CALEB WISEBLOOD

Oooh and aahs occasionally interrupt the ordinary murmurs you’d expect to overhear in a wine bar or tasting room. Before you can take another sip of your cabernet franc, a man in a suit approaches your party with a deck of cards, among other props.

This is Mark Barbere, a Central Coast-based professional magician. His monthly strolling magic gig at Vino et Amicus offers guests a rare opportunity, unique to Old Town Orcutt specifically, Barbere explained.

“It’s the only place in the North County that offers this type of entertainment—where you can experience close-up magic firsthand on a regular basis, without having to drive to private clubs in Santa Barbara or Hollywood,” he told the Sun.

During his events at Vino et Amicus, he strolls around the venue, performing intimate magic tricks in front of each table. Barbere’s been practicing card, coin, and other sleight of hand feats since his early 20s, although he remembers his intro to magic being much earlier than that. He remembers the culprit too.

“My earliest memory of witnessing a magic trick was when I was 8 years old. My older brother, Robert, was into magic,” Barbere said.

North Coast News & Santa Maria Times
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Vegas, babies
Sin City offers ample fun of the more wholesome variety

BY ANDREA ROOKS

Las Vegas isn’t high on our list of favorite family vacation spots, but here we are. We’ve come to support my older daughter in her gymnastics competition, and we plan to have a good time.

It’s March 5, and we don’t know it yet, but we’re fortunate to be able to attend an event of more than 250 people. Such events have since been canceled in California—including another gymnastics meet in San Jose that had been scheduled for March 8—to stem the spread of the novel coronavirus.

We came to Las Vegas last year for another competition, but our 10-year-old got a nasty stomach bug, so we didn’t do any sightseeing. This year is already different—we’re staying right on the Strip, in Bally’s, which is connected to Paris.

Paris is like an indoor Disneyland. On our way to the crepes cafe, I don’t care that I look like an idiot tourist taking photos every two steps—this place is fun! We’re walking down a manufactured cobblestone street, complete with ornate lamps, fake trees, and detailed storefronts with curtains in second-story windows.

We meet my daughter’s teammates for the aforementioned desserts, which send us into a contented food coma. We wake the next morning with ample time before my daughter has to join her team at 10:45 in the Bally’s convention center.

By 2 p.m. we’ve seen her successfully complete her very first round-off back handspring in her floor routine and earn a personal best score on bars. But there was some seriously stiff competition from as far away as Pennsylvania, and our girl is going home with no medals this time. That’s not getting any of us down, though. She, her coaches, and teammates have a great attitude, which makes me just as proud as if she’d done 10 back handsprings!

To celebrate their hard work, we join some of the team and their families to walk to the Linq Promenade, a relatively new outdoor shopping-dining-entertainment space that extends off the middle of the Strip. On the far end is the ginormous High Roller Ferris wheel, and zip-liners glide overhead a la Superman. On our way to the Yard House for dinner, we pass a huge In-N-Out, a sock store, a virtual reality shop—where my younger daughter rides a roller coaster—Jimmy Kimmel’s Comedy Club, and my older daughter’s favorite: I Love Sugar, a two-story candy store.

After dinner, we wander through the Bellagio’s indoor gardens and marvel at the ornately and enormously decorated organic sculptures, all themed for Chinese New Year. Eventually we make our way outside where we catch the end of the 460-foot-tall fountains dancing to “All That Jazz” and wait for a spot along the rail. The water show is tremendously impressive, eliciting in me the wonder of being made small, innocent in the face of something magnificent.

We sway to the music of “Hey, Big Spender” and “Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds,” and we would have stayed for more, but it’s already almost 11 o’clock. We have a long drive tomorrow.

As we leave Las Vegas, my 10-year-old says she wants to come back. I smile and turn to my husband in the passenger seat. “I’m glad we can make great memories no matter where we are.”

Associate Editor Andrea Rooks is glad nothing happened in Vegas that needed to stay there. Send poker chips to arooks@newtimeslo.com.
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CASA of Santa Barbara County is sending 20,000 rubber ducks down a giant slip and slide to raise funds to support volunteer advocates for children who have experienced abuse and/or neglect.

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Scatter shot

Daneil Wilson directs this sci-fi action film with Vin Diesel as Ray Garrison, a slain soldier brought back to life with regenerative powers, making him virtually indestructible. Unbeknownst to him, he's part of a secret project carrying out extrajudicial killings, though he thinks he's avenging his murdered wife (Taylor Ridley).

Glen: This is the sort of middling film critics love to pan, and indeed, there's a lot not to be impressed by here. The very premise is repetitive. The small amount of charm found in the trailer—with Diesel's character asking if a song is playing on a loop—isn't even in the film. It's the sort of schlocky paint-by-numbers action we've seen again and again. Still, I found myself entertained. Diesel's dependable lead, and while there's nothing here that requires much effort from him beyond looking hunky, squinting, and pulverizing his opponents, it's still a bit of fun.

The bad guy is Dr. Emil Harting (Guy Pearce), who runs the project that brought Garrison back to life and also made cyborg-like soldiers out of KT (Eiza González), who's alive because of a breathing apparatus implanted in her neck; Jimmy Dalton (Sam Heughan), who's outfitted with two prosthetic blades for feet; and some other henchman character so forgettable I can't even remember what his enhancement is. KT is the only one of the quartet of baddies who's a conscience and questions how they're manipulating Garrison to carry out the killing. But since Harting can cut off her breathing with the push of a button, she's at his mercy. The film's basically about Garrison realizing he's Harting's puppet and finding a way out. If you're in the mood for a couple hours of mayhem, it's worth a matinee if action flicks are your thing.

Anna: Repetitive is right, and this one just didn't hold my attention. The whole idea of nanobots that heal and regenerate immediately is an interesting way of creating a super soldier, but Garrison is less interested in Harting's missions and sets his sights on vengeance for the wife he begins to remember.

Harting is an evil genius who isn't all that scary; he's more like a dude who has never been said no to. He wants his soldiers to fall in line, but he doesn't know what Garrison is really capable of. He can literally shut down his soldiers at the press of a button, and it just feels too easy for me. He's playing with fire, so you know in the end he's going to get burned. This role very well could have been Diesel—he is brooding and buff, the tough guy with a soft spot for the woman he loves. It's pretty predictable. The extended fight scenes didn't do a whole lot for me, but I'm not surprised. Action films can be a tough sell for me, especially if there isn't much going on storyline-wise. Bloodshot fell somewhere in the middle—a bit of a story and a bunch of action. I wouldn't give it a rewatch, but it wasn't a waste of time either.

If over-the-top action gets your engines revving, you'll probably dig this one more than I did.

Glen: Garrison's motivation is his love for his wife, who he "remembers" being killed by a revolving door of different faces—men that Harting wants killed. That love for a good woman is sort of a sweet idea, but what happens if Garrison learns the truth? All that's left is pure revenge against the man pulling his strings. The problem is Garrison isn't much of an opponent, so the stand in is Jimmy, who augments his snazzy blade feet with some prosthetic extra arms, which if you've seen the trailer, you'll know what I'm talking about. He and Garrison battle it out on a high-rise, but one of the problems with this epic battle royal is that we by this time know that Garrison is literally indestructible. There's no question he's going to best Jimmy, and the film is basically a setup to coming sequels where Garrison, unshackled from Harting's evil plan, gets to mete out justice on his own terms with his new love interest KT. I can't imagine the coming sequels will be any more gripping. If Garrison can't be beat, where's the tension, right? The more I think about the film, the less I like it. This is the epitome of mindless entertainment.

Anna: You're right—it's one you don't want to think about too hard because it loses whatever value it had when you do. I was frankly more entertained by the thriller, and when even those brief few moments aren't in the film, it's disappointing. KT brings in Wilfred Wigans (Lamorne Morris), an expert hacker who wrote the code Harting's guys used to program Garrison. He's kooky and meant to bring some wacky fun to the cast, but his character too falls pretty flat. Soon enough, the bad guys can't control our hero and thus we are given the epic high-rise battle that I found pretty boring. There's just not a whole lot here that is anything but mediocre. Granted, I'm not the target audience for this film, but if it turns into a multi-movie franchise, I will certainly be skipping the sequels. It does have some entertainment value, but unless you want to see the action up close and personal, this flick can wait for home viewing.

Sun Screen is written by New Times Senior Staff Writer Glen Starkey and freelancer Anna Starkey. Contact them at gstarkey@newtimeslo.com.
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ATHENA (Hilary Swank) is forced to resign from her position at the top of the corporate ladder after an embarrassing text thread becomes public—one in which she jokes about murdering “deplorables,” ignoring a conspiracy theory among right-wingers online—she decides to make the conspiracy a reality.

Aside from Crystal (Betty Gilpin), a quiet Army vet with trust issues and impressive combat skills, Athena’s poor, chosen targets aren’t the average small-government-loving, tax-hating conservatives, either. They hunt rhinos. They’re white supremacists. They actively and purposely spread misinformation and bait online.

So the people watching this movie probably aren’t the ones depicted and criticized in it, and in that sense, The Hunt fails to make a point or take a stance. But it also won’t feel like an affront to anyone watching. It’s approachable to both the red and the blue, something we can all watch and enjoy a little for what it’s worth. And maybe that is the point. (90 min.) —Kasey Bunesh

I STILL BELIEVE

What’s it rated? PG
What’s it worth? Full price (if you’re Christian)
Where’s it showing? Movies Lomprec, Parks Plaza, Stadium 14

Andrew and Jon Erwin (I Can Only Imagine) co-direct this true-life romantic drama about Christian music star Jeremy Camp (K.J. Apa) and his romance with Melissa Henning (Britt Robertson), who was diagnosed with ovarian cancer.

The film’s target audience is loving it. The film currently has a 99 percent audience score on Rotten Tomatoes. Critics, on the other hand, are predictably unimpressed, giving it a mere 40 percent. I guess critics are too cynical to go in for a faith-based tearjerker. (115 min.) —Glen Starkey

DOUBLE DRAGON

What’s it rated? PG-13
Where? Amazon Prime, Tubi

It’s the end of the world as we know it, and I feel like watching Double Dragon, a colorful, escapist, post-apocalyptic martial arts adventure that recently got added to Amazon Prime (free for members).

My fascination with this 1994 video game adaptation—part of that early to mid-’90s trend along with Super Mario Bros., Street Fighter, and Mortal Kombat—increased immensely in recent years upon discovering it was co-written by Peter Gould (of Breaking Bad and Better Call Saul fame).

I’ve always been extremely nostalgic toward this film (I grew up playing the Super Nintendo video game) but the Gould revelation adds a bit more validity to my stance against its unfavorable critical reception. I think it’s a lot more clever and charming than anything at the time it gave credit for—13 percent on Rotten Tomatoes, yikes!

Take the film’s imaginative, futuristic setting for example. Los Angeles in 2027, “a few years after the big quake,” I distinctly remember watching the film on VHS during the early 2000s and asking my dad about the concept. “Yes, there’s gonna be a big earthquake in California! We’re way overdue,” he said nonchalantly.

I immediately envisioned our future looking exactly like Double Dragon predicted: half-destroyed skyscrapers and Warner-esque gangs (each with its own flamboyant theme) everywhere you go. If I said to your kid was kind of excited! And impatient even. 2023 seemed so far away at the time, and I was dying to join the Malmoins someday (yes, one of the gangs featured in the film is themed as a group of postal workers, complete with uniforms and mail bags).

Even if the world atmosphere of this alternate future doesn’t fully make up for Double Dragon’s simplistic story (bad guys try to steal the good guys’ magical medallion to take over the world), at least it lends itself to some truly unique action sequences. In one scene, the film’s protagonists, brothers Jimmy (Mark Dacascos) and Billy Lee (Scott Wolf), helm a ski boat to escape Hollywood landmarks are visible above the surface of the lake as Jimmy and Billy swiftly evade incoming torpedoes. The coolest character in the film by far though is its main antagonist, Koga Shu, a sadistic but ultimately too-human’s-to-take-seriously megalomaniac played by Robert Patrick, fresh off of playing the T-1000 in Terminator 2: Judgment Day. His performance as Shu has previously been described as a combination of that iconic shape-shifting android and ... rap artist Vanilla Ice. I’ll let you find out why for yourselves. (96 min.) —Caleb Wiseblood

THE INVISIBLE MAN

What’s it rated? R
What’s it worth? Matinee
Where’s it showing? Movies Lomprec, Parks Plaza

Writers-directors Leigh Whannell (Insidious 3, Upravel) and1 Cato Roland and Chris Pratt as Ian and Barney Lightfoot, respectively, two teenage brothers on a magical quest to completely bring their deceased father back to life for a day.

In true Disney Pixar fashion, the story isn’t just about casting spells and bringing back a loved one; it’s also about appreciating what you have. Sprinkle in a coming-of-age storyline, and outdoes cohesively ties all of these morals together. (102 min.) —Karen Garcia

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG

What’s it rated? PG
What’s it worth? Matinee
Where’s it showing? Hi-Way Drive-In, Movies Lomprec, Parks Plaza

Dan Scanlon (Monsters University) directs Tom Holland and Chris Pratt as Ian and Barney Lightfoot, respectively, two teenage brothers on a magical quest to completely bring their deceased father back to life for a day.

In true Disney Pixar fashion, the story isn’t just about casting spells and bringing back a loved one; it’s also about appreciating what you have. Sprinkle in a coming-of-age storyline, and outdoes cohesively ties all of these morals together. (102 min.) —Karen Garcia

THE WAY BACK

What’s it rated? R
What’s it worth? Full price
Where’s it showing? Bobcat Plaza

Gavin O’Connor (Warrior, The Accountant) directs this sports drama written with Brad Ingelsby (Out of the Furnace, Run All Night) about an alcoholic former high school basketball star (Ben Affleck) who’s offered a coaching job at his alma mater. Can he confront his old demons, redeem himself, and lead his squad to victory?

It’s always tough watching someone self-destruct on film, and the early scenes of Jack Cunningham (Affleck) drinking his way through his days as a bridge construction worker and his nights erasing himself in his local dive bar are pretty depressing. We don’t even find out until half way through the film what’s driven him to such despair, and I won’t ruin it for you, but he’s got a pretty good reason to want to numb himself.

When he’s asked by Father Edward Devine (John Aylward) to make Jack a character worth rooting for. (108 min.) —Glen Starkey

FOR EVERYTHING food & drink, read our weekly EATS column
Stocking up

Hunker down and find control, satisfaction, and nourishment by making your own ultimate comfort food: chicken stock

ANDREA ROOKS

It's a gray, rainy afternoon, the day after a national emergency's been declared because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and I'm seeking comfort in my kitchen. I've got the bones of two roasted chickens from earlier in the week, some fresh veggies, garlic, and a big pot. It's time to make stock.

The creative act of cooking has a calming effect and helps me feel a little more in control, if not completely centered, no matter what's going on in the world. Making stock also enables me to prepare for future meals—I divide it into containers and freeze it for several months.

Plus, stock contains nutrients that help keep the body healthy, which grandmas everywhere have always said and science is now better understanding. Stock and bone broth are anti-inflammatory, and help the immune system.

Here's my basic recipe (it's actually more of a method, which leaves room for improvisation), which I've adapted from The Complete Cooking Light Cookbook over many years:

- Place the bones of a chicken (or two) in a big pot.
- Gather and cut into quarters one to two carrots, four to five celery stalks, and one onion.
- Peel and smash three garlic cloves with the flat side of a knife.
- Place all ingredients into the pot with the bones and cover with water. Add a teaspoon or two of salt, a teaspoon of whole peppercorns, and a dried bay leaf or two. Sometimes I add a tablespoon of cider vinegar, which helps get more nutrients out of the bones and adds a nice tang.
- Place the pot on the stove and bring to a boil; turn the heat down, partially cover the pot, and simmer for two to four hours.
- Use tongs to take out all the biggest chunks of veggies and bones and carefully strain the liquid into a big bowl.
- After letting the stock cool to room temperature, skim the fat off the top, and divide the stock among freezable containers (if you're not going to use it right away). I keep mine in the freezer for up to six months; it'll last in the fridge for four days. For smaller portions of stock (good for sauces or sauteing veggies) freeze the cooled liquid in ice-cube trays; when frozen, move the cubes to a freezer-safe bag.

If I know I'm going to make soup soon, I'll throw some frozen chicken breast tenderloins into the stock to cook—I take the meat out after about 30 minutes and set it aside till I make the soup.

Homemade stock adds a depth of flavor to all kinds of dishes besides soups—from ground turkey stroganoff to gravies and sauces to stir-fry. Making other kinds of stock entails the same method—just use beef, pork, or lamb bones instead. Or for a veggie stock, add parsnips, leeks, and more herbs, such as thyme, basil, rosemary, and parsley.

Right now, as our local, state, and national leaders continue ramping up the precautionary measures to slow the pandemic’s spread, a steamy, savory bowl of homemade chicken soup will go a long way to calm my growing immune system.

SAVE FOR LATER: Homemade stock will keep in the fridge for about four days or in the freezer for up to six months. Use it not only as the base for soups but as a rich flavor in sauces and gravies, meat dishes, rice, stir-fries, etc.
EATS

from page 31

concern and nourish my family.

To turn stock into a simple soup, I saute more chopped carrots, celery, and onion till not quite browned, throw in one or two minced garlic cloves, and add three cups of the homemade stock. Once it’s reached boiling, I add about a cup of uncooked pasta and the shredded, already-cooked chicken. Depending on how spicy I’m feeling, I’ll season the soup with Worcestershire sauce, salt, white pepper, dried mustard, and dried poultry seasoning. When the pasta is cooked, the soup is ready.

On this gray day, I’m going to enjoy my soup with some toasted sourdough bread and a hearty imperial stout. Or perhaps I’ll try one of those Quarantinis I’ve seen online: vodka and Emergen-C, straight up.

Associate Editor Andrea Rooks just finished eating that bowl of homemade chicken soup. Send your most comforting food ideas to arooks@newtimesslo.com.

Nibbles & Bites

• On March 15, Gov. Gavin Newsom asked wineries, bars, nightclubs, and brewpubs to close their doors to customers to help stop the spread of COVID-19. The governor's request is not mandatory as of March 16, so check your favorite venue's website for details. According to Santa Barbara County Vintners, some wineries are shipping their orders and offering new online deals. In some areas, customers can have wines brought to their doors by grocery delivery services. The governor also asked restaurants to limit their venues to half-capacity or to only serve take-out food. Many North County restaurants are stepping up their delivery options, so visit their websites for more information.

• Santa Barbara County Vintners also announced that it moved the date of its 2020 Santa Barbara Vintners Festival to Oct. 10. The festival was originally scheduled for May 2. It will still be held at Rancho Sisquoc Winery in the Santa Maria Valley from 1 to 4 p.m. with early admission at noon. Highlights of the event include more than 70 local wine producers and food from local restaurants, farms, and caterers, plus a sparkling wine lounge, educational demonstrations, and live music. This date happens to correspond with the traditional Harvest Festival, also held at Rancho Sisquoc. If you’ve already bought your tickets for the May date, the vintners organization will transfer those tickets to October if you’re able to attend. Refunds are available otherwise. For more information and to purchase tickets, visit sbvintnersweekend.com.

Send updated restaurant, winery, brewery, coffee shop, and any other foodie info to Associate Editor Andrea Rooks at arooks@newtimesslo.com.
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$2795 5755 Antelope Trail 3+2.5, Elkhorn Ent Ent cstm 2stry hm w/approx 3000sqft, open flrplan w/2flr D/R, L/R, F/R w/2/fires, vaulted ceilings, kit w/nook, fridge, idry rm hkwps, lg mstr ste w/step-in shower, 2car grg, all new wd/grayd, 1 small pet considered w/add'l dep
$2995 835 E. Foster Rd 4+2, Orcutt Brand New Remodel 1stry near Righetti HS w/gfnd flr pln, dbl wide driveway, all white kitchen w/island, mstr ste w/step-in shower, 2car grg, all new wd/greyd, 1 small pet considered w/addl dep
$1995 2602 Rubel Way 3+2. Classcs 2stry corner hm w/lg.mstr bdrm w/lm, bdrms d/lm, L/R, F/R/F, Fdyrm hkwps, 2car grg, low maint yd, greyd, no pets
$2150 3174 Orcutt Rd 3+2, Orcutt Brand New Remodel 1stry w/open flrpln, wood lam flrs thru-out, kit w/appls/ridge, idry rm hkwps w/walk, mstr ste w/step-in shower, 2car grg, all new wd/greyd/patios, greyd, 1 small pet considered w/addl dep
$995 208A E. Hermosa St. 0+1 (studio) Centraly located and sits behind main house w/private access, fridge, w/lm hkwps, shed, lg yd w/greyd, no pets, 2 ppl max
LOMPOC VALLEY
(805) 735-2492
$2800 3042 Courtney Drive – 3+2, Beautiful Mesa Oaks home situated on picturesque, oak studded half acre, elegant formal sunken living room and a formal dining room both finished with crown molding, well laid out country kitchen opens to cozy family room that has gas log fireplace with remote, large picture window, kit, has butcher block, upgraded appls, lg mstr bdrm w/wn ox/kitc opened to lg dining area w/French doors leading to back yrd. All stained steel appliances, lots of cfrt space & pantry, 2car atch grg, yd care incl, pets nec.
$2100 2015 2stry hm in gated comm, home is backing up to park area, some rms facing south hills, 2car finished grg, idry rm u/s, located 8 miles to nearest VAFB gate or to beach, pet friendly w/dep, yard care incl, no pets.
$1850 505 Mars – 3+2, Single family South Vandenberg Village home with large family room, all newer paint and flooring throughout, includes 2 car garage, yardcare included, no pets.
$1595 287 Village Circle – 2+2, Comfortable townhouse on second floor but one level, 1car grg, living room has fireplace, vaulted ceilings; open to dining area and kitchen, living and dining rooms have slider to balcony, kitchen has garden window with all appliances with separate closet with washer and dryer, tile flooring throughout, carpets in bedrooms only, pool & spa included, gated community, no pets.
$1250 112 S. "M" Street #8 – 2+1, South side apartments, spacious bedrooms, good size living room, dining area of kitchen with slider to fenced back pats. 1 dodgh grg and Indry on site, apartments are freshly painted, with new carpets and new plumbing fixture, refrigerator included, no pets please, water is paid.

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