

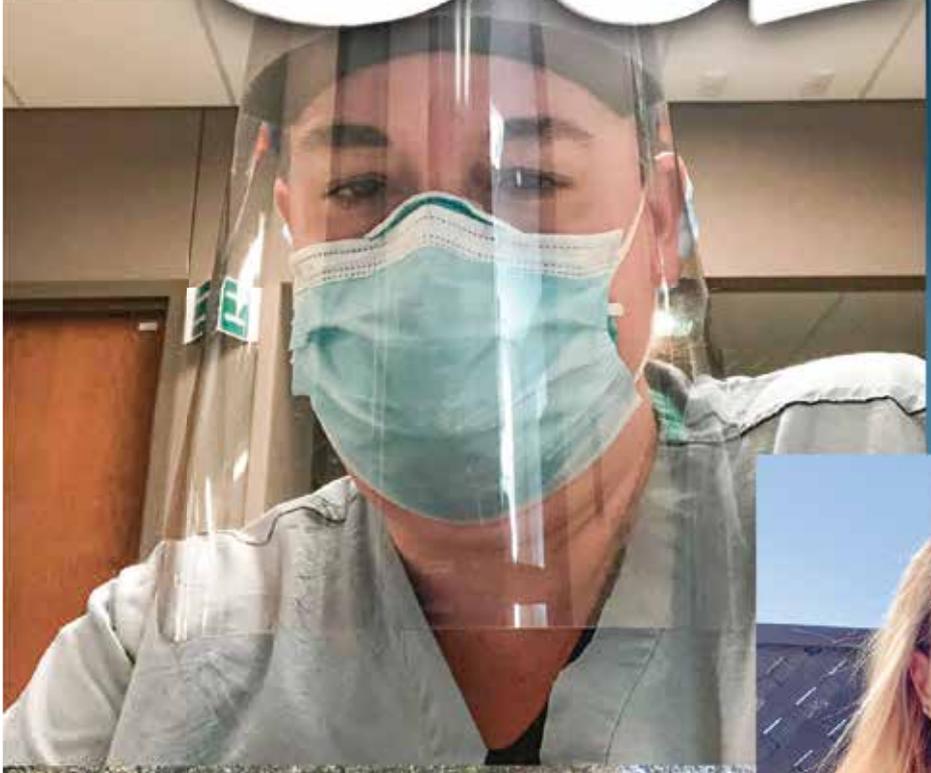
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SUN

AT THE MOVIES



Run: Get hooked [22]



The new abnormal

Everyone's life is a little bit different now. Get a view into the pandemic lives of some Central Coast residents [6]

BY SUN STAFF



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MAY 14 - MAY 21, 2020 VOL. 21 NO. 11

None is immune to COVID-19. Not just to its infectious nature, either. Stay-at-home orders designed to stem the spread of novel coronavirus have closed businesses, pushed some to work from a distance, moved public education into homes, and pushed some residents to the financial brink. The pandemic has affected everyone in similar and unique ways, and we wanted to see how. For this week's cover story, we reached out to a variety of Central Coast residents, who told us their stories [6].

This week, you can also read about what's happening with Old Town Market [3], the county's new pandemic relief fund that benefits the arts [20], a Santa Maria author's new novel about the fictional Edenville [21], and S.Y. Kitchen's new market and the good food that comes with it [24].

Camillia Lanham
editor



DAY IN THE LIFE: The pandemic hasn't let anyone escape its grasp, and it's changed everyone's life—at least temporarily.

Cover design by Alex Zuniga

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Political Watch

• **State Sen. Hannah-Beth Jackson** (D-Santa Barbara) recently announced a new bill she authored that would expand unpaid leave for working parents who have been affected by school and child care closures during the COVID-19 pandemic. Under existing law, job-protected unpaid leave is limited to people who work for companies with 25 people or more and is capped at 40 hours per year. According to a news release from Jackson's office, this proposed legislation—Senate Bill 1383—would extend unpaid leave in cases where schools have closed as a result of an emergency declaration by a federal, state, or local government agency through the duration of the emergency. "Working parents throughout the state are facing the unique challenge of balancing child care, distance learning, and work responsibilities amid the COVID-19 school closures," Jackson said in the news release. "Without adequate job-protected leave, too many parents are forced to choose between caring for their children and keeping their job."

• **U.S. Rep. Salud Carbajal** (D-Santa Barbara) and a group of California members of Congress sent a letter to **Gov. Gavin Newsom** urging the governor to provide COVID-19 relief funding to small and mid-size counties. According to a news release from Carbajal's office, the federally approved Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economy Security Act—known as the CARES Act—allocated \$15.3 billion in funding to the state of California. The state has only outlined how counties with populations of at least 500,000 people can access their share of the funding, which was not the intent of Congress with this bill, according to the release. In the letter, the Congress members asked Newsom when and how small and mid-size counties will receive this aid. "Local governments on the Central Coast and across California have not had access to key coronavirus relief funding within the CARES Act," Carbajal said in the news release. "While future relief funding is important, it's imperative that the governor release the already allocated funding to our local communities that did not receive direct funding so they can maintain essential services."

• **Gov. Gavin Newsom** signed an executive order on May 8 that requires all county election officials in the state to send vote-by-mail ballots for the general election in November to all registered voters in their counties. According to a news release from his office, Californians who may need to vote in person, such as those with disabilities or experiencing homelessness, will be able to do so. The news release states that the governor's office will continue to work with the state Legislature and the Secretary of State's office to determine how the November election will be carried out while not threatening the health of the public during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. "Elections and the right to vote are foundational to our democracy," Newsom said in the news release. "No Californian should be forced to risk their health in order to exercise their right to vote."

On May 6, the **Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board** announced dates for virtual public workshops over a proposed agricultural order the agency released in February. This is the fourth iteration of this order that the board first put in place in 2004, and it's used to record data on water quality conditions and impose regulations on farmers. Some agricultural groups have pushed back on the draft order, claiming the regulations are too stringent and infeasible. The agency is hosting three workshops that'll take place through the online video conference platform Zoom, with each meeting focused on a different part of the region. The meeting for Santa Barbara County is scheduled for June 4 at 9 a.m. ☐

Future uncertain for Old Town Market as cannabis company eyes location

After owning and operating Old Town Market in Orcutt for 16 years, Mark Steller received a text message from his landlord in late April informing him that the building where the store is located had been sold.

Steller broke the news in a post on the market's Facebook page that said the store's closure is a loss for the whole community. The market has operated as a small grocery store under different names since 1948.

"Needless to say, we are heartbroken about this," the post states. "Old Town Market is our second home, and we are so, so sad to leave behind 16 years of hard work, good memories, and amazing relationships with our customers and community."

Soon after Steller's announcement, some Orcutt residents learned that the new owner of the building plans to apply for a cannabis retail permit in the location. To address these rumors, on May 7, Natural Healing Center acknowledged that it had purchased the building in a process that began 10 months ago.

Natural Healing Center is the retail side of Helios Dayspring's company, which includes seven cannabis cultivation sites in Tepusquet Canyon as well as some in San Luis Obispo County. In addition to a location in Grover Beach, the company has secured retail permits to open stores in San Luis Obispo and Morro Bay, as well as two in the Central Valley.

Nick Andre, the Natural Healing Center's chief operating officer, said the company identified the Orcutt property where the market is located as the best fit for its plans, as it's one of the few locations in Old Town that meets the county's zoning requirements for cannabis retail permits. Also, the building has one of the largest parking lots in Old Town Orcutt, which is needed to accommodate the 800 to 1,000 people who will visit the store daily, Andre said.

The company looks to open stores in downtown locations that'll help drive traffic to other nearby businesses.

"We think it's amazing for a downtown to have an influx of 800 people a day that weren't there before," Andre said. "That's what a downtown is built for is to ... be a center of commerce."

Andre said the company expected a strong reaction to this proposal but believes a lot of it is fueled by a negative preconceived notion of what cannabis retail stores are like.

He said the shop wouldn't be a dark, dingy place with criminals outside getting high. Instead, he describes it as a professional setting with an average customer age of 55 years old that offers cannabis to smoke, plus topicals, tinctures, and other products people use for medicinal purposes.

After the company officially purchased the building in late April, Andre said Dayspring met with Steller to try to work out an agreement that would assist Steller with the relocation of the market. After they weren't able to work out an agreement, the company sent Steller a 90-day eviction notice.

Steller told the *Sun* that it's true he met with Dayspring, but that the offer to help wasn't enough to cover all of the costs associated with moving to a new location. Given how difficult it is to open a business in Santa Barbara County, Steller said the process could take up to a year, which would be a long time without generating revenue.

"I just don't have the capital to pause and



OLD TOWN CHANGES: A cannabis company has purchased the building where Old Town Market is located with the intention of applying for a cannabis retail permit with the county.

do that," Steller said.

However, he said he's leaving his options open and is sure that he'll speak to Dayspring again. If the market closes, he said the community will lose a grocery store, a cultural center where civic groups would gather, and the main hub of Old Town Orcutt.

Andre said he hopes the two sides can come to some sort of agreement that results in the market remaining open. In the meantime, he said, Natural Healing Center plans to educate the community on the benefits the store would provide, such as tax revenue. And once the county begins accepting applications, the company will begin that process.

The county's existing ordinance allows for one dispensary within each of the county's six community plan areas, like Orcutt and Los Alamos. The process to determine which companies are awarded these lucrative permits is supposed to heavily weigh the company's background and its potential fit within a community.

Andre said that at the moment, the company is only pursuing a retail permit at the market's location and hasn't purchased any other properties in the county with the intention of applying for a permit.

In a Facebook post, 4th District Supervisor-elect Bob Nelson—who will replace the district's existing supervisor, Peter Adam, when his term ends early next year—said he is disappointed the market is closing but that neither he nor Adam can comment on the proposed plan prior to its reaching the Board of Supervisors. However, he said the community will have a chance to weigh in on any cannabis retail proposal in Orcutt.

"The permitting process is extensive, and before any permit is approved for retail cannabis, the members of the Orcutt community will have ample opportunity to make sure their voices are heard on this matter," Nelson said.

—Zac Ezzone

Lompoc prison has worst COVID-19 outbreak in the country, local officials ask for answers

The Bureau of Prisons updated its COVID-19 resource webpage over the weekend to reflect hundreds of newly confirmed coronavirus cases at the Lompoc Federal Correctional Institution, reporting 891 total positive inmate cases as of May 11.

While the Santa Barbara County Public Health Department began reporting the spike in cases on May 6, as of May 8, the Bureau of Prisons still stated on their website that there

NEWS continued page 4

Weekend Weather

Microclimate Weather Forecast
Dave Hovde
KSBY Chief Meteorologist

<p>Thursday</p> <p>COASTAL > High 71 Low 50 INLAND > High 78 Low 46</p>	<p>Friday</p> <p>COASTAL > High 72 Low 51 INLAND > High 80 Low 48</p>
<p>Saturday</p> <p>COASTAL > High 73 Low 51 INLAND > High 81 Low 49</p>	<p>Sunday</p> <p>COASTAL > High 71 Low 52 INLAND > High 77 Low 48</p>

Temps will cool with additional clouds and on-shore flow into Sunday. There is a minor shower chance as temps cool Sunday or Monday.

NEWS from page 3

were only 33 positive inmate cases. That day, the county reported 582 cases, 310 more than the day before.

At a May 8 press briefing, county officials attributed the increase to the bureau's effort to test all inmates. Public Health Officer Dr. Henning Ansorg said that 70 percent of those tested at the prison were positive, though many did not display any symptoms.

U.S. Rep. Salud Carbajal (D-Santa Barbara) told the *Sun* that his office spoke with Bureau of Prisons staff and found out the prison is only conducting universal testing in the low-security federal correctional institution (FCI), and not in the medium-security U.S. Penitentiary (USP). The FCI currently holds 1,162 incarcerated people, and the USP holds 1,542.

Bureau representative Justin Long told the *Sun* in a May 12 email that while the FCI has 891 cases (plus 20 recovered), the penitentiary has 21 positive inmates (plus 93 recovered). Long attributed this discrepancy to the prison's "effective strategic response" within the penitentiary.

"The number of positive cases have significantly reduced at the USP, and through mass testing and cohort isolation at the FCI, an equally high recovery rate is anticipated, thus shortening the time span of the virus infection within the institution," Long wrote.

The federal correctional institution's spike in positive cases occurred after universal testing was introduced. While the penitentiary's numbers are much lower, Carbajal said its inmates haven't received universal testing yet, so it's difficult to know how many of them are truly COVID-19 positive.

As far as the number of inmates currently hospitalized or in the ICU, Ansorg stated at the May 8 briefing that "the Bureau of Prisons does not want me to convey this information." A representative of Lompoc Valley Medical Center—where inmates were reportedly being treated—told the *Sun* on May 5 that they "are no longer releasing those numbers."

However, Carbajal said that his staff, along with staff from Sens. Kamala Harris and Dianne Feinstein's offices, were informed in a conference call with BOP staff that "12 to 14" inmates from the prison were hospitalized as of May 10 and that one is in the ICU.

Carbajal said that his staff also learned that two inmates have died so far in connection with the Lompoc prison outbreak. But the Bureau of Prisons' website reported the number of inmate deaths as zero on May 12.

County officials addressed discrepancies with the numbers at the May 8 conference.

"We report the numbers that our disease control team are able to process by noon of any given day," Ansorg said. "We are reporting total cases over the course of the outbreak."

In response to a question about the prison rejecting the county's offer to donate personal protective equipment, 2nd District County Supervisor Gregg Hart said, "I have been contacted by many members of families of people who are in the prison and they're very concerned about their loved one's medical situation. ... We want to know what's going on in the prison, and we have not been able to get adequate answers."

Carbajal expressed a similar frustration. Together, Carbajal, Harris, and Feinstein penned two letters to bureau leadership in April and didn't receive a response until May 7.

The prison's response letter, which Carbajal shared with the *Sun*, addressed concerns regarding personal protective equipment, stating that "despite media reports to the contrary, bureau institutions nationwide

have adequate supplies of personal protective equipment."

"I appreciate finally, after two letters, getting a formal response from the director of the bureau," Carbajal said.

But Carbajal also said that the letter didn't address some of his main concerns and questions, such as implementing a 50- to 100-bed field hospital.

Rather, the response reiterated "what we have read in the media," Carbajal said.

—Malea Martin

County letter to governor pushes back on reopening criteria

During the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors meeting on May 5, county Public Health Director Van Do-Reynoso said the county was on track to reopen businesses at an accelerated pace. A week later, Do-Reynoso had a different message for supervisors.

During the board's meeting on May 12, Do-Reynoso said that the state released additional details on May 7 that outlined how counties could become eligible to reopen businesses at a rate faster than the state. A few metrics in this criteria would be nearly impossible for the county to reach, she said.

"Last week seems like eons ago," Do-Reynoso said. "It's unreasonable for us to achieve [some of the metrics]."

Specifically, Do-Reynoso pointed to one metric that means the county could only reopen at a faster pace once its number of new COVID-19 cases is reduced to 45 in a 14-day period. Additionally, the state's criteria requires counties to reach a point where they record zero deaths in a 14-day period.

Regarding the latter metric, Do-Reynoso told the board that in her opinion, it doesn't make sense. Instead, she said, the state should look at how well counties can protect vulnerable populations and safeguard its medical system. According to her presentation, only a small number of the beds county hospitals opened up to handle a surge in COVID-19 patients are being used. The number of people in the county hospitalized from the virus has hovered around 40 for the last few weeks.

During the May 12 meeting, the Board of Supervisors voted to send a letter to Gov. Gavin Newsom's office pushing back on the state's use of these two metrics. This letter also includes a request from the county for the state to exclude the number of COVID-19 cases in the Lompoc federal penitentiary when reviewing the county's case for reopening.

In early May, Bureau of Prisons officials began mass testing inmates in the prison, which has dramatically increased the number of positive COVID-19 cases in the county. According to Do-Reynoso's presentation, from May 6 to 11, 787 inmates tested positive for the virus, compared to only 41 non-inmate community members.

"Santa Barbara County has no authority over this population, and while we have worked diligently in offering our assistance, we have no authority to impose disease mitigation strategies," the letter states.

—Zac Ezzone

Farm bureaus, community organizers react to workers' compensation order

After reports circulated that Gov. Gavin Newsom was considering an executive

order that would allow employees who contract COVID-19 to qualify for workers' compensation benefits, the governor officially signed the order on May 6, according to a press release.

If an eligible employee "tested positive for COVID-19 or was diagnosed with COVID-19 and confirmed by a positive test within 14 days of performing a labor or service at a place of work after the stay-at-home order was issued," then they will have a rebuttable presumption for accessing workers' compensation benefits, the release states.

A rebuttable presumption is when something is assumed to be true, unless contested and proven otherwise. The presumption in this case will remain in place until 60 days after the governor signed the order.

In response to the governor's decision, farm bureaus at the state and local levels expressed concern regarding the burden that the order could place on farming employers.

A coalition of California agricultural institutions—including the California Farm Bureau Federation, Agricultural Council of California, Western Growers, and California Fresh Fruit Association—issued a statement on May 7.

"This executive order will add more financial weight at a very difficult time," the coalition wrote. "Instead, if the goal is to restart California's economy, then the added economic burden of medical claims related to COVID-19 should be borne by the government, not the essential industries providing a public good during a global pandemic."

Teri Bontrager, executive director of the Santa Barbara County Farm Bureau, told the *Sun* that while local farming employers "want to make sure that their workforce is healthy," from her perspective, the governor's order is not the best way to achieve that end.

"We think that the governor's action was ill-advised and will result in employers being asked to bear additional costs for illnesses that may not be work-related, which isn't what worker's compensation is supposed to be about," she said. "It will unnecessarily and significantly drive up costs for all California employers at a time where they're struggling to keep their workforce employed."

Abraham Melendrez, a Santa Maria community organizer with the Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy, told the *Sun* that the governor's order is a much-needed protection for workers in an unprecedented situation.

"I think this is an important protection for our society's most essential workers who are putting their lives on the line so that we can all live our own lives, so we can all eat," Melendrez said. "What it's doing is removing the barriers for workers who are getting sick, specifically for COVID-19, and can't do their job, to have that vital safety net as quick as possible rather than having to deal with bureaucracy first before getting any help."

Bontrager said that local farmers are already struggling to yield their expected harvests.

"It really hits us hard," she said. "We're not able to get all of the workers that we need here and then we have all kinds of forces playing against us to get the harvest out."

Melendrez said that he believes these workers' compensation protections are essential to keeping a sustainable workforce.

"Workers are really what drive our economy, not huge corporations," he said. "If you don't have the workers sustaining these businesses, then the businesses will also not be there."

—Malea Martin

Sovlang looks at district elections

The city of Solvang is moving toward implementing district elections after receiving a letter from a Malibu-based attorney that claims the city's existing at-large voting system is racially biased.

In the letter, attorney Kevin Shenkman said he represents the Southwest Voter Registration Education Project and its members who live in Solvang. Citing U.S. Census Bureau data from 2010, Shenkman said in the letter that Latinos make up 29.2 percent of the city's population but have generally not been represented on the City Council.

"The contrast between the significant Latino proportion of the electorate and the historical underrepresentation of Latinos to be elected to the Solvang City Council is outwardly disturbing and fundamentally hostile towards participation from members of this protected class," the letter states.

Switching to a district-based election system, the letter states, may help a minority group elect its preferred representative. In the letter, Shenkman said that if the city doesn't voluntarily make this change, he and his clients will take the matter to court.

Shenkman has sent similar letters to other cities throughout the state in recent years claiming they are in violation of the California Voting Rights Act, which has been in place since 2001. In 2013, the city of Palmdale took the issue to court, lost the case, and was required to reimburse Shenkman's legal costs of about \$4.6 million, according to a *Los Angeles Times* story from 2017.

At the Solvang City Council meeting on May 11, a few weeks after the city received Shenkman's letter, City Attorney Chip Wullbrandt said the California Voting Rights Act makes it easy for an attorney to challenge at-large election systems and nearly impossible for a city to defend the system in court.

Wullbrandt said other cities in Santa Barbara County—including Santa Maria, Lompoc, and Buellton—have begun the transition to district elections in recent years. Buellton received a letter from Shenkman in 2018 and worked out a deal to start district elections in 2022, after the 2020 census. Wullbrandt said he'd try to work out a similar deal for Solvang.

As a result, the council directed city staff to move forward with a resolution stating that the city intends to shift to a district-based election system. This process will include at least four public meetings where residents can weigh in on the drawing of district maps. Wullbrandt said because of the way the city's charter is written, the process of electing the city's mayor will remain an at-large decision.

According to a report from the League of California Cities about litigation involving the California Voting Rights Act, cities that receive demand letters—such as the one Shenkman sent to Solvang—have 45 days to pass a resolution declaring their intent to change their election systems and an additional 90 days to adopt the change. Even if cities meet these deadlines, they often still have to pay \$30,000 in fees and costs to the plaintiffs who sent the letter.

Councilmember Chris Djernaes questioned whether this process is "legal extortion." Similarly, Councilmember Robert Clarke, who said he's not against district elections, called the situation a "racket."

The council must adopt a resolution stating its intent to switch to district elections by June 18. ○

—Zac Ezzone



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<p>This week's online poll 5/14–5/21</p>	<p>What's your take on the closure of Old Town Market in Orcutt?</p>	<p>Enter your choice online at: SantaMariaSun.com</p> 
	<input type="radio"/> We're losing a key piece of our community.	
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	<input type="radio"/> I'm excited to potentially have a dispensary in town.	
	<input type="radio"/> I'm still hopeful it can remain open or relocate.	

Pandemic adjustment

COVID-19 has affected everyone in some way, from essential workers to furloughed employees, daily life is different

BY SUN STAFF

Every single person on the Central Coast has felt the impacts of the novel coronavirus and resulting stay-at-home orders attempting to prevent its spread. No one is immune, not just to COVID-19, but to the disruption of day-to-day routines. The pandemic has completely changed lives, at least temporarily, but it's affected everyone just a little bit differently. We decided to check in with a variety of residents who make up the Central Coast community to try and understand what their lives are like now. We've compiled the profiles into our first true cover story since this all started.

—Camillia Lanham

Jane Quandt

Valley of the Flowers United Church of Christ Pastor

As the pastor of a small church just outside of Lompoc city limits, Jane Quandt quickly had to learn the ins and outs of hosting Zoom meetings as the COVID-19 pandemic escalated.

"We didn't sign up for this," Quandt said. "They don't teach you Zoom 101 in seminary."

And it wasn't just a learning curve for her. The 35 to 40 people who attend Valley of the Flowers United Church of Christ—many of whom are older—also had to adjust. Quandt sent out a newsletter about the change in late March and spent time calling congregation members to walk them through using the online platform shortly after learning how to use it herself.

There have been hiccups. During Quandt's Easter sermon, a participant accidentally shared their computer screen with the rest of the congregation—but the services are getting better. Quandt said the church recently had its first service that felt meaningful since the virtual gatherings began.

Despite the improvements, Quandt said digital services will never feel the same as in-person gatherings. Without music and other elements, services are only half as long as they are usually. Similarly, the large spread the church usually rolls out for its post-service lunch has been replaced by a digital coffee hour where people can talk.

"We have to unmute people one by one as people raise their hands and somebody else responds," Quandt said. "In some ways, we're listening to each other more carefully, so that's been kind of a positive."

Quandt is hoping this is just one of many positives that come out of this pandemic. She's heavily involved with social justice issues, and this virus, she said, has highlighted many societal problems. As one example, she points to data that public health departments have released that show people of color are dying from COVID-19 at a disproportionate rate.

Another issue is playing out just a few miles away from the church. The federal penitentiary in Lompoc is the location of one of the worst COVID-19 prison outbreaks in the country and had resulted in the deaths of two inmates as of May 7. Quandt said she's concerned with how this situation is being handled, but it's hard to advocate for changes when isolated at home.

"I'm trying to figure out how you organize in a digital time," Quandt said. "People who are into organizing are usually speaking face to face."

Quandt is also adjusting to keeping her distance from family and friends. When she moved to Lompoc from Riverside in 2018, she

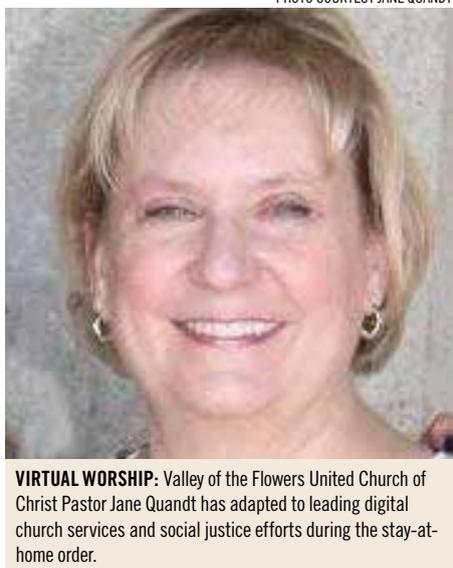


PHOTO COURTESY JANE QUANDT

VIRTUAL WORSHIP: Valley of the Flowers United Church of Christ Pastor Jane Quandt has adapted to leading digital church services and social justice efforts during the stay-at-home order.

did so with a plan that would allow her to visit her son, his wife, and their child for one week every month. But with the stay-at-home order in place, that's not happening anymore.

Instead, she talks to her family through video message platforms every few days. And Quandt said for her granddaughter, it's like she's right there with her.

"My face is on the screen and she decides to carry me around while playing hide and seek with her dad," Quandt said.

Although her family is in Riverside, Quandt isn't totally isolated in Lompoc. She has a pet dog that she takes on walks to get out of the house. Or she gets in the car and drives to Surf Beach or elsewhere to admire the Central Coast landscape.

Getting outside helps the days pass, but like most people, Quandt said she's eager for the existing circumstances to end. Yet she doesn't want life to go back to normal. Rather, she's hoping we move forward to a new place as a society and focus on improving the injustices and disparities that always existed, which have been highlighted over the last two months.

"Now what I'm interested in talking about is when this is over, how do we want things to be different?" Quandt said. "What new things do we want to be born out of this?"

—Zac Ezzone

Nick Harvey

UA Local 114 organizer/recruiter

As an organizer for UA Local 114, Santa Barbara County's plumber and pipefitter union—or as members call it, "the local"—Nick Harvey knows how to make an impression. "Being an organizer is about your ability to

talk with people," Harvey said of his work. "My job is to recruit people and companies to join the union."

While Harvey tried a variety of jobs before finding his current passion, it was perhaps his first position out of high school that best exemplifies his magnetic and convincing personality.

"Unintentionally, I found a job as a motivational speaker," said Harvey, who's originally from Washington state. "That's what brought me to California."

After falling in love with a "Goleta girl," Harvey found himself in Santa Barbara County working as a handyman, allowing him to rediscover some of the same satisfaction that he felt as a motivational speaker.

"Again, I got to help people," Harvey said. This first job in the trade industry eventually led Harvey to his passion: His experience with plumbing as a handyman led him to take the local union's plumbing test when he and his family fell on hard times in 2009 during the recession. At first, Harvey didn't hear from the union for 10 months.

"It got so bad that we ended up on welfare," Harvey said of the months before he heard back from the union. "It was really the worst time in our lives."

But then in April 2010, Harvey got a call from the union. Within a week, he was working as a pipefitter apprentice. Flash forward six years later, and he landed his current job as the union's organizer and recruiter.

"The thing with Nick is, he's a really honest guy," Michael Lopez, the union's business manager, told the *Sun*. "He doesn't want to BS anybody, and he doesn't like being BSed by anybody."

But Harvey said that COVID-19 is now presenting challenges to the position he's thrived in for nearly four years. His position was partially furloughed, so he's only getting about half of his usual hours and pay. He's also working from home, and the union's apprentice school is no longer able to teach students in person.

Harvey's job as an organizer and recruiter for the union naturally required a lot of in-person interaction before the pandemic, so Harvey said it's been an adjustment.

Because many workers are in need of work right now, Harvey said he's made a point of talking with contractors both in and outside of the union. He said the current situation exemplifies the benefits of being unionized,

PHOTO COURTESY OF NICK HARVEY



ADVOCATING FOR WORKERS: As an organizer with Santa Barbara County's plumbing and pipefitting union, Nick Harvey recruits new workers and contractors to join the union.

as people like him are there to help connect workers with jobs.

"Our goal right now is to see people working, even if it's a nonunion contractor," he said. "If there's a contractor that gets a big job, with the flood of people being out of work, you don't know who you're going to get. But I know that the workers that we have do a good job for these contractors."

Harvey said that a negative side to working in construction is it can force workers to have to choose between a paycheck and staying home when they're sick.

"This is why I fight so hard for workers," Harvey said. "There are a lot of low-income workers who won't stay home if they're sick because, in construction, you don't get paid if you don't go to work. ... If you're sick, you need to stay at home."

Harvey emphasized that if anyone knows personal protection, it's plumbers and pipefitters: A key to working in the field is understanding that invisible things can hurt you. This makes construction workers particularly good at navigating being an essential worker during a pandemic.

"You're in an environment where you can't see it, you can't touch it, but it can make you sick if you're not careful," he said. "That's where I look at this and say, 'We absolutely need to be responsible.'"

In his personal life, Harvey said he has an acquaintance who came down with COVID-19 and was hospitalized for weeks but is now recovering. Harvey remembers seeing the individual just days before they got ill, and said he was grateful in retrospect that he had practiced good social distancing and forwent shaking hands.

Harvey said he and his family continue to stay quarantined at home.

"We're doing what we can do to hopefully keep people safe," he said.

—Malea Martin

Jaimie Kelly

Battles Elementary School kindergarten teacher

Teachers in the Santa Maria-Bonita School District didn't know they would have such little time to prepare for distance learning. When the shelter-in-place order hit and schools sent everyone home to wait out the pandemic, the district, teachers, students, and parents were just trying to figure it out.

"It was just super shocking," Battles Elementary School kindergarten teacher Jaimie Kelly said. "Distance learning? OK, what's that? What's this going to look like. We hadn't been trained to do that, other than giving some of the students Chromebooks."

Volunteering, Kelly helped distribute the supplies that students needed to learn from home—notebooks, Chromebooks, book bags, and other school necessities; prepared QR codes that students in kindergarten through second grade could use to log in to the online learning platform; and researched different educational tools and spread that to her colleagues.

"It's just a learning curve. Because some teachers are savvy with technology and some teachers are not," she said. "Just like anything, humans adapt, and we get used to it."

Kelly and her fellow kindergarten teachers



DIFFERENT WORLD: As a Battles Elementary School kindergarten teacher, Jaimie Kelly has spent the last month adjusting to distance learning.

are completing the work they need to move ahead because they're not in the classroom. "I think that's really frustrating for most teachers."

The majority of her class are English language learners, and 17 students have at least one family member who speaks English. The district is attempting to bridge the language gap with Zoom meetings for parents who don't speak English, and Kelly said her instructional aide translates slides, directions, and assignments into Spanish.

Kelly said she's been working longer hours during the pandemic, learning new tools, prepping for the week ahead, contacting parents, and trying to ensure that as many of her students are engaged as possible. She doesn't mind though.

As a teacher of 19 years, 18 of which have been at Battles, she's always taught the new generation of students: kindergartners and first graders. They often have high educational demands, but she likes to put that time in. She said she enjoys teaching them.

"When they walk in they're just joyful. They want to be there, they're sponges, they just grow so much," Kelly said. "We want what's best for kids, and we want them to be successful when they go into that next grade."

—Camillia Lanham

Isabel hospitality industry

When the local shelter-at-home order went into effect in March, Isabel was in shock.

"I went through downtown San Luis Obispo and it was empty. All the businesses were closed, and I thought, 'Oh my lord it looks like a scene from a zombie movie,'" she said with a chuckle.

The eerie environment unsettled Isabel for a lot of reasons.

Due to the impacts of the coronavirus, she was laid off from her job at a local hotel. But unlike the many other people who can file for unemployment, Isabel doesn't qualify for the federal program because of her status.

As a single mother with undocumented status, Isabel, who spoke to the *Sun* in Spanish, asked not to use her full name to preserve her privacy.

She said she was very worried about providing enough food to feed her two teenagers, a 17-year-old son and an 11-year-old daughter—both citizens of the United States. At first, Isabel didn't talk to her children about her worries, but she said they could sense something was wrong because they overheard her phone calls seeking out assistance, if any, that she could receive during this time.

"They told me, 'Mom, we could eat less.' It's a sad thing, but I would tell them, 'No, we will figure it out.' But I had to hold in my emotions, which is hard because I do cry a lot," she said.

Isabel said her kids were worried about not getting enough toilet paper or paper towels as they would head to the grocery store to find empty shelves, but that was the least of her worries.

Between tears, Isabel said this has been very difficult for her especially, because she's

dealing with the effects of the pandemic alone. Three years ago, Isabel separated from her abusive husband and moved into a smaller apartment that she could afford.

She asked the father for some kind of help while she figured out what she could do to provide for her children during this time. Initially, he told her no, but after some time, Isabel said, he did help her with a little bit of money for rent—although she's not sure what changed his mind.

Isabel kept looking for help, kept making phone calls. She called her former place of employment and let them know that she was ready to get back to work if they needed someone or were hiring again.

Through the Disaster Relief Assistance for Immigrants Project, the California Department of Social Services is slated to provide one-time \$500 grants to undocumented persons who are 19 and older, ineligible for federal COVID-19 related assistance, and have experienced hardship because of the virus. Isabel said she's heard of the program but hasn't seen a dime of that assistance.

Amid her worries, she said she's thankful for the time she's recently had with her children. Isabel said she's been teaching her kids how to cook dinner or they'll play card games in the evening. During the day, she keeps herself busy and does so quietly as both her children continue attending school through the computer.

Things are starting to look up for Isabel; she said during the second week of May her former employer offered her work at reduced hours—seven hours a week. It's not a lot, but Isabel is thankful for some kind of relief as she continues to look for assistance.

—Karen Garcia

Penny Borenstein SLO County Public Health Officer

In late December 2019, Dr. Penny Borenstein read about the first few reported cases of an unknown communicable disease in Wuhan, China. She knew right then and there that the novel pathogen now known as COVID-19 had the potential to spread quickly and change lives across the globe, including her own. But she didn't know to what extent her fears would come true.

By early January, Borenstein and her staff at the SLO County Public Health Department had already started preparing for the worst, dusting off old emergency response plans and meeting regularly to discuss developing COVID-19 research. There weren't any known cases in the U.S. then, but nearly 30 years in public health taught Borenstein to think quickly and proactively.

The crisis escalated, and on March 11, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic.

Borenstein went from being a regular health officer to the incident commander of SLO County's emergency operations team, which consists of various agencies banded together in the fight against coronavirus. "Penny Borenstein" is now a household name in SLO County, and she's still getting used to it.

"People actually come up to me and thank me," Borenstein told the *Sun*. "I get 'thank you' notes from people, handwritten the old-fashioned way, emails. And it has been surreal, because I feel like I am just doing my job. I'm doing the job I was trained for."

For months now Borenstein has been working roughly 12 hours a day, seven days a week, meeting daily with a never-ending line

of public officials, agencies, and emergency operations staffers—all in need of accurate information and advice. She uses ever-changing data and research to make decisions that are, in some cases, literally life or death. Then at 3:30 p.m. on most weekdays, she translates it all into something the public can understand.

It's a hectic schedule, but Borenstein's ability to thrive amid chaos is renowned among her colleagues. When the health department isn't working through a crisis, it runs more than 40 programs and employs hundreds. Borenstein oversees them all and knows what's going on with each program every day, the employees running them, and budgets for each.

"Her mind is always alert and everything about her is energy," said Jennifer Shay, a public information officer for the department who's worked with Borenstein for more than a decade. "She thinks fast. She works fast. She moves fast. She even drives fast."

And that's how Borenstein tackles problems, Shay said—quickly and effectively, combining her vast medical knowledge with common sense and a passion for helping people. She truly listens, Shay said, because she truly cares.

"Behind all the science, behind all the decisions and everything," Shay told the *Sun*, "there's still a person who is very empathetic about the suffering clinically and the stress on the community."

That's partly because Borenstein can relate. She has two teenagers who are out of school and learning from home, one who has special needs and requires one-on-one attention. Luckily, Borenstein said, her sister offered to look after the kids during the pandemic.

Still, it's been tough to spend so much time away from her family, and she's made other sacrifices too. As the face of the county Health Department, Borenstein takes the brunt of the criticism in the local media and from residents online, some who feel their constitutional rights are being trampled. As the daughter of a Holocaust survivor, Borenstein said she finds

PHOTO BY JAYSON MELLOW



LEADING THE FIGHT: SLO County Public Health Officer Penny Borenstein shares the latest on COVID-19 at a press briefing on May 6.

comparisons of the shelter-at-home order to Nazi Germany "extremely troubling."

But to Borenstein, it's all just part of the job she's wanted to do ever since her time at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine.

"I know that people's patience is fraying," Borenstein said. "And so of late I have felt the need to ask, to whatever extent people are willing to listen, to not allow ourselves to turn on each other if we have different perspectives



PHOTOS COURTESY OF GLENDA ARCHAMBEAULT, MICHELLE BRIMER, AND OLIVIA LOVEJOY

DUTY CALLS: (From left to right) Sierra Vista Regional Medical Center registered nurses Glenda Archambeault, Michelle Brimer, and Olivia Lovejoy volunteered at hospitals in Detroit that were overwhelmed with COVID-19 patients.

COVID-19 from page 7

on what the best approaches are going forward.”

Borenstein has been here before, from the 2001 anthrax attacks to the 2009 swine flu pandemic. Although she’s never seen anything quite like the situation we’re in, she’s confident we’ll make it through.

“We will get past this, and we will have happy, light times again,” Borenstein said. “And, however far out that may be, we need to keep our eyes on that so that we don’t sink into a sense of futility.”

—Kasey Bubnash

Sierra Vista Regional Medical Center

Step Down Unit Clinical Supervisor **Glenda Archambeault**

Stroke & Sepsis Coordinator **Michelle Brimer**

Operating Room Clinical Supervisor **Olivia Lovejoy**

Glenda Archambeault, Michelle Brimer, and Olivia Lovejoy are all registered nurses at Sierra Vista Regional Medical Center, residents of SLO County, and mothers.

In early April, Tenet Healthcare put out a call to find employees willing to volunteer their time at sister hospitals in Detroit, and these women didn’t think twice.

“I was completely sincere in my desire to volunteer, but I was also incredibly shocked by the urgency, when I was asked to go on April 9 and was told I would be leaving the next day,” Archambeault told the *Sun* via email.

Before the coronavirus began impacting SLO County, all three women said their lives were pretty normal. Their day-to-day routines involved working, driving their daughters to school and after-school activities—Archambeault has one daughter, Brimer has three, and Lovejoy has three, as well—and doing their part in chores and errands.

But as the positive COVID-19 test results began to pop up around the United States, Lovejoy said Sierra Vista began preparing for potential coronavirus-infected patients experiencing severe symptoms.

While the virus is something the health care field has never tackled before, Brimer said she felt confident in the facility’s ability to deal with the potential impacts.

“Our hospitals were the first in the county to set up our tents outside of our emergency departments and have a plan. I am very proud of how quickly we mobilized and put our plans in motion,” she said.

The rapid response put the entire staff at ease.

However, Lovejoy said, in the beginning, she was anxious because nurses are “people of action.”

“It was difficult to sit and wait for it to strike us,” she said.

COVID-19 has impacted hospitals in other states more acutely than SLO County, and all three were looking for a way to help.

Archambeault said she was nervous going in because she didn’t know what the hospital conditions would be like or what to expect. At the time, they only knew that the volume of patients outnumbered the staffing situation—the Detroit nursing staff was overwhelmed, but they were ready.

Archambeault was assigned to a COVID-19 ICU, Brimer worked as an emergency room nurse for COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 patients, and Lovejoy is working in the medical-surgical and step down units.

Archambeault volunteered for three weeks, Brimer stayed for a week and a half as emergency room volume dramatically decreased while she was there, and Lovejoy has been in her units for 25 days. When Lovejoy spoke with the *Sun*, she was slated to return to the Central Coast May 8.

When asked how they felt at the end of their shifts, the nurses all had the same reply: They were physically exhausted and emotionally tired.

Brimer said it was difficult to see people suffering alone, without their family support.

“Many times that was something we took on, just trying to reassure them that they would be taken care of,” Brimer said. “Several patients would cry when they found out they were positive for the virus for fear that meant they were going to die.”

At the end of her shifts, Archambeault said a group of nurses would ride back to the hotel together, sharing stories and venting along the way. Once she reached her room, she would shower, make a quick call home, and go to bed.

Their Sierra Vista colleagues checked in on them daily, sending messages of support and encouragement, and supplying them with personal protective equipment.

None of the nurses regret their experience; if anything, they felt empowered by their profession and would gladly volunteer again. The trip also confirmed the reality of the virus and that it should be taken seriously.

“If everyone could see, first-hand, how many people are affected and how they are affected, maybe there would be a lot more kindness instead of anger,” Archambeault said.

She said she’s finding it very difficult to read the negative comments on social media regarding the legitimacy of the virus and its impacts.

Lovejoy said politics aside, people should be taking the virus very seriously, because she doesn’t believe it will be going away anytime soon.

—Karen Garcia

Izzy Pedego

Arroyo Grande High School class of 2020

Izzy Pedego doesn’t need an alarm to wake up nowadays. She tried one in an attempt to have some sort of schedule during these offbeat times but couldn’t make it work.

“Not having a particular rhythm that’s enforced by a school, I developed my own rhythm but it’s way out of whack from what it used to be,” Pedego said.

The 17-year-old Arroyo Grande High School student gets up around 10 a.m. after watching films until the late hours of the night. It’s a far cry from normal, but the new reality is similar to that of her fellow class of 2020 students.

While seniors normally prepare for their end-of-year activities during this home stretch, all that stopped with the COVID-19 pandemic and

resulting directives from state officials.

After a temporary closure started on March 16, Lucia Mar Unified School District—which Arroyo Grande High School is part of—announced on April 22 that schools would remain closed for the rest of the school year.

Overall, Pedego’s had her share of good and bad days in the midst of staying home.

“I’m not flourishing, and I’m not dying,” she said. “Generally speaking, I know there are people having much harder times than I am, and I know people that are having way more fun than I am, so I’m in between.”

It’s an abrupt ending to four years enshrined in pop culture that Pedego said she never got the chance to finish, while acknowledging her sentiment “sounds super cheesy and weird.”

“In American culture, at least, so many movies are made about ‘the high school experience’ and senior year and all of the milestones that come at the end of your senior year,” Pedego said. “And it just feels really strange not getting to experience any of them.”

No more high school theater shows to act in or audition for. No more looking for a prom dress, even though Pedego said she hates dances. No more counting down the days until walking across the graduation stage.

Classwork, though, still flowed online, as Pedego is enrolled in two Advanced Placement classes whose tests were May 11 and May 13. Assignments given at the beginning of the week had an end-of-week deadline for full credit, she said.

But Pedego said she forgot to account for her mental health, which has diminished her motivation to finish schoolwork, even for simple assignments.

Classes like the student newspaper were challenging to deal with. Pedego, the paper’s editor in chief, said with a chuckle that “even just getting people on the same Zoom call is insane and hard to do.”

With school closed, Pedego now spends most of her time with her parents—who work from home as public defenders—and her 14-year-old sister, who spends most of her time on calls related to extracurricular activities.

“It’s just a very crowded house,” Pedego said. “Even though there’s only four people, they’re four very busy people, so it feels very crowded.”

To escape the hectic home, Pedego drives out and parks her car just to read books or play Nintendo Switch video games in peace. But she and her father have found another thing to bond over: sci-fi literature.

Frank Herbert’s novel *Dune* was recommended by a friend, and Pedego said her father has read the book multiple times and also vouched for it.

Pedego and her father—while already close to each other—don’t overlap much on interests, she said, but *Dune* is a recurring conversation topic. She’ll point out small details, and her father will dive deeper into the book’s minutiae.

“It’s made us a bit closer, I think, even though our conversations about it are pretty brief,” Pedego said. “It’s really nice to feel that sense of ‘I know where I get this trait from now!’”

Through it all, though, Pedego knows this pandemic and its current impact will pass eventually. She said the greater class of 2020, both in high school and college, recognizes that.

PHOTO COURTESY OF IZZY PEDEGO



COVID BLUES: Izzy Pedego, 17, is part of the class of 2020 at Arroyo Grande High School—which won’t have a graduation because of the coronavirus pandemic.

COVID-19 continued page 9

“There’s a happy medium between ‘we can feel sad’ and not be so self-pitying that we can’t see the bigger picture,” Pedego said. “Not having a graduation is going to be for the greater good to keep more people safe. And as sad as it makes me, I recognize that it’s for the best.”

—Francisco Martinez

PHOTOS BY JAYSON MELLOM



ESSENTIAL: Shadoe Venezuela, 27, is a warehouse worker and driver for the SLO County Food Bank, which has seen the demand for its inventory skyrocket during COVID-19.

PHOTO COURTESY OF IZZY PEDEGO



GRATEFUL: Adam Harding, 35, is thankful to have a job at the SLO County Food Bank so he can provide for his family of four.

day. Skyrocketing food insecurity has placed tremendous pressure on the Food Bank and its resources, and warehouse workers like Harding are the ones responsible for safely handling the historic volumes of food—processing incoming orders, packing bags of groceries, and making deliveries to residents.

For these workers, that means long days at the Food Bank warehouse on Kendall Road and on the highway driving distribution trucks up and down SLO County. Their days run between eight and 12 hours each, and can involve up to six hours of driving.

“On any given day, I could start off with a drop-and-go at Paulding Middle School in Arroyo Grande around 9 or 10 a.m., come back to the warehouse, and load up for a distribution up in Paso and Creston,” explained Shadoe Venezuela, 27, another SLO Food Bank warehouse worker and driver. “I could be done with that one at 5 or 6 p.m., drive back to SLO, unpack my truck, clean up the warehouse, and be done for the day.”

Venezuela has worked at the Food Bank for a couple of years but said he’s never seen the demand for food rise to the level that it’s been during COVID-19. In the month of April alone, the nonprofit distributed more than a half-million pounds of groceries across the county, nearly three times its normal volume.

“It happened immediately,” Venezuela said. “As soon as we knew all this was going to be taking place, we knew resources were going to become very limited and the demand for our resources was going to skyrocket.”

A native of Hawaii, Venezuela moved to California at age 15 and has lived in SLO County for eight years. Right now, he lives with two roommates who are over age 65, so he said that warehouse safety and sanitation became his top priorities when COVID-19 struck. The last thing he wanted to do was spread the virus to his housemates or anyone else in the community.

“We have to do what we do because we’re going to be essential workers,” Venezuela explained, “so we need to make sure we’re not breathing and touching what we’re going to be handling.”

Warehouse work is neither glamorous nor high-paying—Venezuela works a second job to make ends meet. But in spite of the job’s risks and challenges, both workers feel happy to be in

a position to provide a critical service to the community right now.

“Before this [job], I was getting 16 hours of work a week,” said Harding, who joined the Food Bank in March just before the pandemic. “When I found out I could provide for my family and the community, I just felt grateful.”

Harding said that it’s been gratifying to see the impact of the Food Bank’s work.

“You make the orders, and you get to know these people from different walks of life,” Harding said. “You see how thankful they are.”

Venezuela agreed that connecting directly with the community is the most fulfilling part of the job—especially right now.

“We wouldn’t be at our jobs if we didn’t love them,” he said. “Everyone there does it out of the kindness of their heart. We know what we’re doing is helping others, and that’s what we enjoy to do.” ○

—Peter Johnson

Send comments through the editor at clahnam@santamariasun.com.

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Adam Harding & Shadoe Venezuela SLO Food Bank warehouse workers/drivers

When Adam Harding gets home after working a warehouse shift at the San Luis Obispo County Food Bank, he has his routine down pat.

He pulls up to his SLO residence in a car that only he is allowed to get into. His wife is there to hold open the front door, so he doesn’t have to touch the doorknob. He stores away his work boots in a place where his two young children—3 1/2-years- and 3-months-old—can’t reach. He sanitizes what he carried with him that day, like his phone and keys, and then makes a beeline to the shower.

“Then,” the 35-year-old told the Sun, “I can give my daughter a hug.”

As a SLO Food Bank employee, Harding finds himself in the thick of the COVID-19 crisis every

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Keeping spirits high

Put an end to your quarantine blues at The Greenhouse Collective

BY MALEA MARTIN

When orders to close all nonessential businesses first went into place, business owners across the state were forced to reckon with a new question: "Are my services essential?"

While places like banks and grocery stores clearly hold the "essential" status, many businesses are caught somewhere in the middle, including cannabis dispensaries. While some folks go into a dispensary looking to buy for recreational purposes, others walk in with a medical marijuana card, blurring the line between necessary and just-for-fun.

"At first, until it was confirmed that we were an essential business, it was a little chaotic," Laura Bonet, owner of The Greenhouse Collective in Lompoc, told the *Sun*. "You're talking about people who suffer from anxiety and depression, things they count on cannabis for, and now they were going to be home, secluded, not able to come out and get their medication."

Soon after issuing statewide stay-at-home orders, Gov. Gavin Newsom declared dispensaries "essential," likening bud rooms to pharmacies. For Bonet, a registered nurse, the medical benefits of cannabis hit close to home, and those benefits are the reason she first got into the industry.

"My brother is epileptic. He moved from Florida to California to start his own commercial grow and to see how it worked with his epilepsy," Bonet said. "It worked, so years ago he decided he was going to get into the dispensary business and he purchased a dispensary."

After helping her brother with the business end of his shop, Bonet started to notice a gap in the cannabis world.

"I would go and visit a bunch of different dispensaries and clubs, and I noticed there was a glitch for female products," Bonet said. "If I walk into a club and I'm looking for a female product—whether it's something for menopause or something for abdominal pain—I don't want to go and talk to a 20-year-old kid and ask him, 'What do you guys have for my menstrual cycle?'"

Bonet decided to fill the niche she found was missing. While searching for the perfect small town to open up shop, she stumbled upon Lompoc and "fell in love." After finding an ideal storefront in 2018 and going through the year-long licensing process, The Greenhouse Collective opened in August 2019.

With a 90 percent female staff, Bonet's dispensary caters to women's needs, and puts an emphasis on individualized treatments.

"We have time slots for patients who come in and just want that one-on-one, if it's their first time trying THC and the doctors refer them," Bonet said. "I like those patients the most

because I love the holistic side of it."

After getting the go-ahead from the governor to remain open as an essential business, Bonet was quick to adapt to the new guidelines and keep her customers safe.

"I've been in health care for a long time, so to me it was very simple: [Stay] 6 feet apart, we have to wear gloves, masks, goggles," she said. "We adapted very fast, and we have weekly meetings in the office to talk about how to stay healthy and sanitized. We clean the displays hourly and have protocols in place."

The store designated parking spots for curbside pickup so that elderly or immunocompromised people can get their orders without going inside. Bonet's shop also has a "no mask, no entry" policy, and provides a mask to anyone who needs one.

While COVID-19 has forced The Greenhouse Collective to get creative, Bonet emphasized that she's always prioritized putting in that extra care for her patrons.

"From the moment the patient walks in, they are greeted," Bonet said. "It's all about that one-on-one experience."

Highlights:

- The Santa Maria Joint Union High School District is working within social-distancing guidelines to make sure graduating seniors are still being celebrated. Righetti High School's 503 graduates picked up their caps and gowns in a drive-through celebration on May 8. Righetti's valedictorian, Ian Tosches, and salutatorian, Bridget Lee, received their certificates from Principal Karen Rotondi at their homes on May 4. Santa Maria High School held a drive-through ceremony celebrating seniors on May 1, and the school's valedictorian and salutatorian—Cristian Ramirez Morales and Isaac Ochoa, respectively—received home visits and honorary diplomas from Principal Steve Campbell. The district's four high schools combined are graduating around 2,000 seniors in the class of 2020 and will each hold virtual graduations in early June.

- The Santa Maria Valley Chamber of Commerce isn't letting quarantine stop the local business community from networking. The business organization's free monthly mixer is going virtual on May 21 from 5 to 7 p.m. The chamber encourages attendees to come ready to give a brief introduction, prepare a personal appetizer to enjoy from home, ask questions, and bring their A-game in business attire. ○

Staff Writer Malea Martin wrote this week's spotlight. Send tips to spotlight@santamariasun.com.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE GREENHOUSE COLLECTIVE



'COME IN AND SAY HIGH' Their motto says it all—The Greenhouse Collective is still open for business, all while adapting to social-distancing protocols.

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Online Poll

Do you think the county should try to reopen at a faster pace than the state?

- 50% Yes, we're in much better shape than other places.
- 30% No way. We shouldn't reopen anything yet.
- 20% We need to take it slow. We have too many new cases each day.
- 0% We should have reopened everything already. People need to go back to work.

10 Votes

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

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Tribalism remains

We're in this pandemic together, but we're not seeing it through the same lenses

BY LEAH BRAITMAN

I was at the grocery store the other day in my homemade hazmat suit, looking for something to eat for the next week, when suddenly the music stopped and over the loudspeakers came a soothing voice that told us “we’re all in this together.” I had to laugh. We may all be “in this together,” but we’re certainly all experiencing this pandemic from very different perspectives. It all depends what side of the aisle you’re on and where you get your news.

Even as late as mid-March the country was sharply divided on the looming crisis. The NPR-listening left, who had been aware of the gravity of the situation since January, had already started to distance themselves socially. While the Fox-watching right was still convinced that this new virus was actually just teeny-tiny Democrats set out to re-impeach President Trump. We may all be in this together now, but the tribalism remains.

A great example is the recent outrage (on both sides) about President Trump’s comments regarding UV light and the injection of disinfectants as remedies for COVID-19. As soon as the words left his mouth, each side pounced. Those of us on the left shook our heads and laughed and started making funny memes. Those on the right (after getting their talking points from Rush) defended his words by citing the pre-clinical trials going on at Cedars-Sinai with the “Healight” device, and smugly reminding us that chemotherapy is basically injecting poison into the body, isn’t it? And then the next day, come to find out, Trump was just being sarcastic, trying to rile up the press. But do you really want a president just riffing at a briefing? We’re going through the kind of pandemic that this nation, or the world for that matter, hasn’t seen in more than a century. Now is the time for thoughtful leadership, not a

peeing contest with the fourth estate.

Defenders of the president also like to supply us all with lots of numbers and statistics about the virus and talk about risk analysis. But the numbers of cases and deaths are rising so fast that their commentaries and letters are outdated a week later. Yes, in mid-April there were 26,182 positive cases in California, but as of late April there are now 45,200 positive cases. Of course, no one truly knows how many cases there really are because you have to be at death’s door to actually get tested, so we could actually have double or even triple that number of cases. Early modeling predicted that we would see 100,000 to 200,000 deaths, and those on the right rolled their eyes. But we’re already up to 56,752 American lives lost, which means we will unfortunately soon surpass the rosy, new modeling the administration offered of maybe 60,000 deaths tops. It’s true that thousands of Americans lose their lives to heart disease and cancer each year, but neither of these diseases is contagious.

Yes, the country has lived through other pandemics, but we haven’t seen this amount of death since 1918. The H1N1 pandemic, during the Obama administration only claimed 12,500 American lives. Even the Bush administration kept the death toll during the SARS pandemic down to less than a dozen.

Defenders of the president also like to bring up the Constitution whenever possible. Big, bad Gov. Newsom has his fancy Italian boot on the neck of our constitutional right to assemble and move freely. But defenders of the president are selective when they cite the Constitution. The one thing the Constitution mandates our government to do is to protect us from invasion. Since we have already been invaded, President Trump has declared that we are war, at war with an invisible enemy (I wish someone would tell him that it is actually a

WRITE NOW! We want to know what you think about everything. Send your 250-word letter to Sun Letters, 2450 Skyway Drive, suite A, Santa Maria, CA 93455. You can also fax it (347-9889) or e-mail it (letters@santamariasun.com). All letters must include a name, address, and phone number for verification purposes; may be edited for space or clarity; and will be posted to santamariasun.com.

microscopic enemy). President Trump has even declared himself a wartime president. If this is the case, then perhaps he should take a gander at Article 4, Section 4, which clearly states that the “United States shall guarantee to every state in this union a republican form of government, and shall protect each of them against invasion.”

It’s too late for the “protecting us from the invasion” part, but it is not too late to *liberate* no-excuse, mail-in voting for all citizens, guaranteeing our beloved republic in this time of war. The Constitution also offers a great argument against his opinion that each state should be in charge of its own testing. Since we are “at war” with the virus, then one of our most beautiful, powerful weapons is testing. Article 1, Section 10, prohibits states going it alone when it comes to war. Of course, those of you on the right with your handy pocket Constitution will immediately counter that each state has been “actually invaded,” so it is up to each state to fight its own battle. But most states don’t have the resources to fight this war on their own, so they’re probably not going to win their battle.

And now the right is just itching to get this economy rolling again. Spoiler alert: It’s going to be a slow roll. The good news is that we Americans have faced crisis and war before and prevailed. We’re going to get through this. And remember, we’re all in this together. ○

Leah Braitman writes from Lompoc. Send comments to the editor at clapham@santamariasun.com, or write a letter for publication to letters@santamariasun.com.

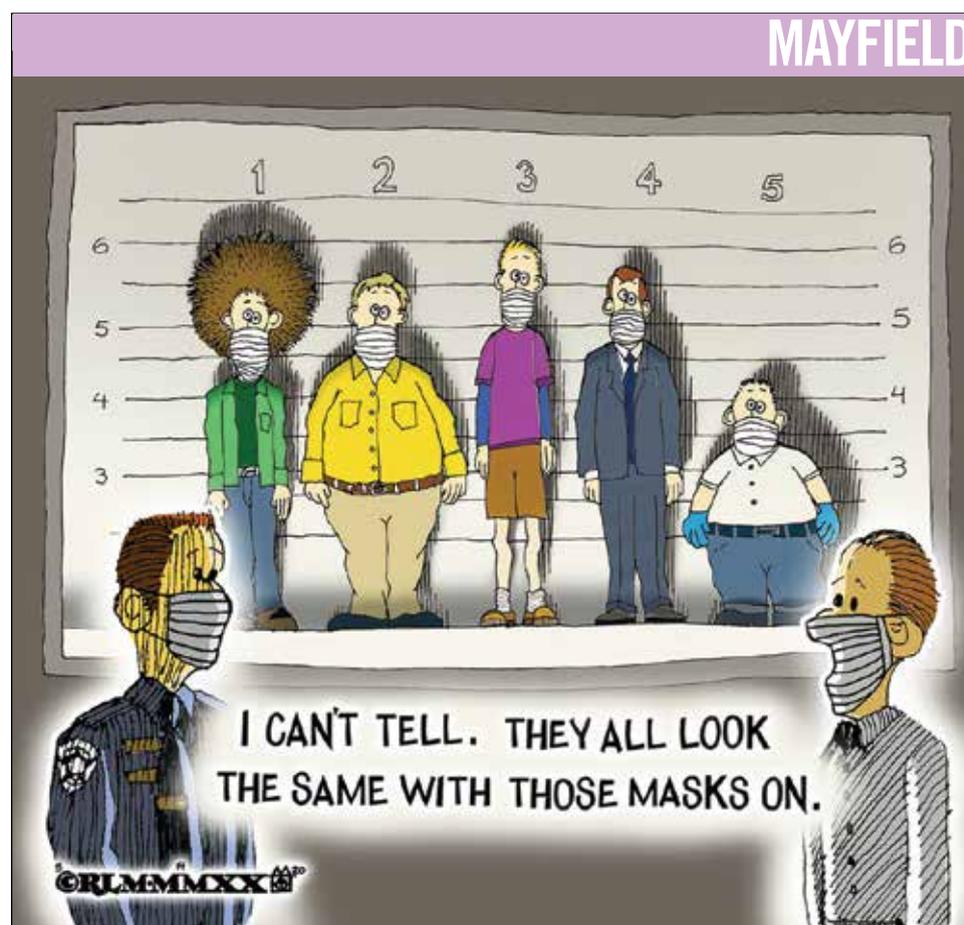
LETTERS

Cannabis lawsuit is scare tactic

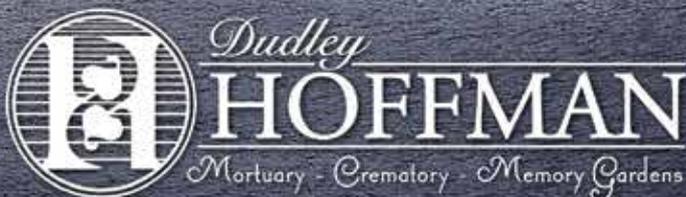
After months of research, I decided to move to California and build a lab testing business in Lompoc and serve the legal cannabis growers in the Santa Barbara County community. It was surprising to me to read in the Santa Maria Sun that the “Coalition for Responsible Cannabis” is now resorting to suing the county using an environmental law to attack organically grown, pesticide-free cannabis (“Battle in the valley,” April 30). The coalition’s claim that the county’s oversight and review of cannabis applications is inadequate is just a thinly veiled scare tactic to drive up costs for local cannabis farmers and the county staff costs.

Over the last year, I’ve had the pleasure of touring several of these local farms, most of them family run, and I met the dedicated people behind them. The kinds of cannabis business leaders that the Santa Barbara community and regulatory environment have invited are the primary reason that I had the confidence to move my family to the county and commit to serving this industry. I’ve watched the Board of Supervisors meetings for the last year and have been consistently impressed by their thoughtful deliberations and reasonable debate on the issues surrounding cannabis farms. I strongly support the county supervisors’ efforts to defend against this blatant attempt by a small minority of wealthy individuals to change the rules just because they didn’t like the result.

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Transparency is an option

I honestly don't understand why the **Federal Bureau of Prisons** is being so obstinate about the COVID-19 outbreak in the **Lompoc Federal Correctional Institute (FCI)** and **U.S. Penitentiary (USP)**. Or why they had to put two different facilities out there with different acronyms and treat them differently as well!



It's so confusing. Is it a prison, a penitentiary, a correctional institution? Is it all of the above? What do I call it?

At least the Bureau of Prisons—also known as the BOP (Another GD acronym!)—is trying to test every inmate at the prison. Well, that's just what **Santa Barbara County** (Or should I say SBC?) officials thought. But really, the BOP is only testing all of the FCI's prisoners, not the USP, according to **Salud Carbajal**, who's a USR in the HOR for D24.

So, while we may have semi-accurate numbers for the FCI, we definitely don't have them in the USP. The county's reported number of positive cases at the prison (that word covers both facilities) is different than what the bureau's been reporting. The numbers have been wildly different for weeks with the county giving the public a more accurate and much higher count than the BOP—but at least the bureau is consistently shady and not transparent. Just how we like our federal agencies! Not!

SBC says two prison inmates have died due to the virus. The BOP's website stated that zero had died as of May 12. As far as we know, there are almost 900 positive inmate cases in the FCI (with 20 recovered) and only 21 (with 93 recovered) in the USP, which holds about 400 more inmates. However, the BOP isn't "conducting universal testing" at the penitentiary because "the number of positive cases have significantly reduced at the USP," according to **BOP spokesperson Justin Long**.

But if the BOP tested everybody, there would probably be a lot more positive cases than 20. Then you would know who to isolate so another round of infections doesn't spread! See what I did there? Logic. The BOP should try it.

The BOP also asked SBC and the LVMC (that's **Lompoc Valley Medical Center** for all you crazy kids out there) not to release the number of inmates being treated in the hospital and the ICU (Another acronym!). And for some daft reason—even though the BOP isn't telling local officials what they want to know—the county acquiesced! What?

"The Bureau of Prisons does not want me to convey that information," **SBC Public Health Officer Dr. Henning Ansgor** told the press in response to questions about it.

Why? Why? Why?

The public has a right to know!

Luckily, the **Sun** has an inside line to the scuttlebutt flowing through Carbajal's office. OK, fine, I'm not that cool. It's not a rumor, because he told us. His staff talked to BOP staff and apparently there are "12 to 14" (Which isn't an exact number, now is it?) hospitalized inmates and one who's in the ICU.

OK, so how's that 50- to 100-bed field hospital coming along, BOP? Inquiring minds want to know, including Carbajal, including the county, including me. ☹

The canary is sick of not knowing things a canary ought to know. Send comments to canary@santamariasun.com.



That's FETCH!

Lifestyle Center

Bowtique ~ Beastro ~ Grooming Spaw

Grooming Spaw Reopening on Monday, May 18 with COVID Safety Modifications in Place

Shop the bowtique from our website or call in to purchase pet food, treats, toys, apparel, etc. to pick up curbside.

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Who Needs a SPAW Day?



Grooming Team: Colette Florey, Letti Lemus, Melissa Rosario, Amanda Brown & Kara Gould

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ONE



IN



FIVE

That is the number of Americans who will experience a mental health challenge in their lifetime. It might be you. Or a friend. Or a loved one.

The question is:

**Will you find the help you need?
Do you know who you should call?**

WE SHARE THE JOURNEY

Transitions-Mental Health Association has been providing services to Santa Maria and Lompoc for 30 years. These are the programs that serve your community.



Family Services

Do you have a loved one with mental health needs? Our team of Family Support Specialists can give you the education and confidence you need to navigate public and private mental health systems. Our one-on-one appointments and support groups are completely free and confidential. Whatever you're looking for – whether it's guidance to help a minor through a mental health challenge, assisting an adult relative on their wellness journey, or gaining insights into the judicial system – we are here for you.

"[TMHA] better enables me to cope with everyday life."

Growing Grounds Farm Santa Maria

Our picturesque farm combines the best of therapeutic horticulture and work experience to empower our clients while serving your neighborhood. Often a first stop for clients seeking to get back into the workforce, Growing Grounds gives adults of all ages with mental health needs an unparalleled training opportunity focusing on personal growth, quality interactions, and increased responsibility. Consider supporting us through our local farm stand located at 820 W. Foster Road.

"Part of me just feels like I don't belong anywhere...[TMHA] staff make one feel important, welcome, and wanted."



Recovery Learning Communities (RLC)

Our two RLCs in Santa Maria and Lompoc ("Helping Hands of Lompoc") are run entirely by folks with lived mental health experience. These supportive environments are designed to connect those who are just starting their journey with individuals who are further down the path, empowering clients in a safe and compassionate space. The RLCs affirm that elements of peer support, recovery education, social skills, and personal growth are vital to our clients' wellness.

"[Helping Hands of Lompoc] is an intimate, uplifting, and encouraging community where everyone is treated equally and encouraged to grow and thrive!"

Clinical Programs

From our Supportive Community Services in Santa Maria to our Lompoc Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) team, clients have access to regular and intensive services 24/7, 365 days a year. These clinical programs serve hundreds of adult clients with severe and persistent mental health needs each year. Our staff work together in a team approach to develop individualized recovery plans that align with clients' treatment goals.

"[TMHA] has helped me have a life that I can describe as 'Standing on my own two feet'."

HELP IS A PHONE CALL AWAY



Family Support Specialists, Youth and Adult Services

Maria Perez: 805-441-3325
Zandra Alfaro-Olea: 805-458-5487

Santa Maria Recovery Learning Community

805-928-0139

Lompoc Recovery Learning Community: Helping Hands of Lompoc

805-819-0460

Growing Grounds Farm

805-934-2182

Santa Maria Supportive Community Services

805-614-4940

Lompoc Assertive Community Treatment (ACT)

805-865-1940

Santa Barbara County Department of Behavioral Wellness

888-868-1649

Behavioral Health Crisis Triage Team

Contact the Crisis and Recovery
Emergency Services (CARES) Clinic
at 805-934-6315, or contact the
24/7 ACCESS Line at 888-868-1649

2-1-1

Call 2-1-1 for a complete list of
mental health resources

National Suicide Prevention Hotline

1-800-273-8255

California's Peer-Run Warmline

855-845-7415

For more information, visit us at www.t-mha.org.

SLO   
HOTLINE
(800) 783-0607
== MAKE THE CALL. ANY TIME. ==

**We are here for you 24 hours a day, 365 days a year,
free of charge.**

Don't be confused by the name—SLO Hotline is always available to residents of Santa Barbara County. SLO Hotline is a confidential telephone service for anyone in suicidal crisis or emotional distress. It is also available to answer non-emergency calls from anyone in need of emotional or mental health information or referrals.



Transitions-Mental Health Association

Inspiring hope, growth, recovery,
and wellness in our communities.

Let's talk.

If you've been looking for a sign to reach
out for help, this is it.

We know it's hard to start the conversation. Mental health and mental illness are difficult topics to bring up. Maybe you're worried about making someone feel uncomfortable, or you just want to avoid being judged. The truth is: it's okay to admit when you're going through a hard time.

You're not weak, and you're not alone.

We're here to support you.

Talk to us about how you're feeling. Call a trusted friend and let them know what's been going on. The more we talk about it, the more we end harmful stereotypes that keep us from seeking help.

Let's challenge the stigma of mental health together.

HOT STUFF

MAY 14 – MAY 21
2020

SEIZE THE DAY

Good Morning Lompoc streams live on Facebook every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, starting at 8:30 a.m. The show is hosted by Lompoc locals Michelle (pictured) and Jeremy Ball, who aim to keep the community connected while staying home at the same time. Episodes are also available to watch on YouTube after they're streamed live. Visit the show's Facebook page for more info.
—Caleb Wiseblood

PHOTO COURTESY OF GOOD MORNING LOMPOC

ARTS

SANTA YNEZ VALLEY

20/20: A RETROSPECTIVE This spring, the Wildling Museum of Art and Nature will mark its 20th anniversary with a special exhibition celebrating the Museum's 20-year history in the Santa Ynez Valley. View the exhibit online. Mondays, Wednesdays-Sundays, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. through Sept. 7 805-688-1082. wildlingmuseum.org/news/2020-retrospective. Wildling Museum of Art and Nature, 1511-B Mission Dr., Solvang.

NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION The theme of this competition's latest recurrence is Critters of the Tri-County Region, as applicants are encouraged to submit photos of all forms of wildlife—land and sea mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, insects—so long as they are found within the counties of San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, or Ventura. Through July 6 Wildling Museum of Art and Nature, 1511-B Mission Dr., Solvang, 805-688-1082, wildlingmuseum.org.

STARRY NIGHTS: VISIONS OF THE NIGHT SKY (VIRTUAL TOUR) Celebrates the awe-inspiring beauty and mystery of the night across a range of media, including painting and photography, as well as poetry curated by Dan Gerber. View the exhibit online. Mondays, Wednesdays-Sundays, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. through June 15 Free. 805-688-1082. wildlingmuseum.org. Wildling Museum of Art and Nature, 1511-B Mission Dr., Solvang.

SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS

ART BUZZ KIDS VIRTUAL STUDIO: RACHEL RACCOON Painting kits to follow along with artists, as they paint "Rachel Raccoon", are available for pickup at the studio. **May 15**, 11 a.m. \$20 per kit. Wine and Design, 3420 Orcutt Road, suite 105, Orcutt.

PCPA READS AT HOME A literacy project that uses our students' learning to serve children and parents who are learning at home. Co-hosted by Allan Hancock College and the Santa Maria-Bonita School District to bring a love of stories and language to people right in their homes. ongoing PCPA: The Pacific Conservatory Theatre, 800 S. College, Santa Maria, 805-922-8313, pcpa.org.

SMPL VALLEY READS BOOK CLUB The Valley Reads Book club meets every month on the fourth Tuesday (now over the phone). Interested community members should email jgaytan@cityofsantamaria.org to join. ongoing 805-925-0994. Santa Maria Public Library, 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria.

TECH TALKS: LIVE ON INSTAGRAM Every Tuesday

sit down with one of our technical staff and learn about the ins and outs of their craft. Get the exclusive with our host Erik Stein. Tuesdays, 3:30 p.m. PCPA: The Pacific Conservatory Theatre, 800 S. College, Santa Maria, 805-922-8313, pcpa.org.

VIRTUAL STUDIO: HUMMINGBIRD Online reservations are required. Pick up your Take Home Paint Kit anytime from 1 to 5 p.m. on week days. Kits include canvas, paints, and brushes to follow along with the artist on Facebook. **May 19**, 6 p.m. \$30. Wine and Design, 3420 Orcutt Road, suite 105, Orcutt.

VIRTUAL STUDIO: PRINCESS FLOWER Online reservations are required. Pick up your Take Home Paint Kit anytime from 1 to 5 p.m. on week days. Kits include canvas, paints, and brushes to follow along with the artist on Facebook. **May 22**, 11 a.m. \$20. Wine and Design, 3420 Orcutt Road, suite 105, Orcutt.

VIRTUAL STUDIO: TULIPS IN MAY Online reservations are required. Pick up your Take Home Paint Kit anytime from 1 to 5 p.m. on week days. Kits include canvas, paints, and brushes to follow along with the artist on Facebook. **May 22**, 6 p.m. \$30. Wine and Design, 3420 Orcutt Road, suite 105, Orcutt.

WINE AND DESIGN VIRTUAL CLASSES Check Wine and Design's Orcutt website for the complete list of virtual classes online, for various ages. ongoing Varies. wineanddesign.com/orcutt. Wine and Design, 3420 Orcutt Road, suite 105, Orcutt.

WORKSHOPS VIA ZOOM Sara Curran Ice, PCPA's Technical Theatre Program Coordinator/Designer, is conducting Workshops via Zoom for local high school drama students. Check site or call for more info. ongoing PCPA: The Pacific Conservatory Theatre, 800 S. College, Santa Maria, 805-922-8313, pcpa.org.

SOUTH COAST SLO COUNTY

TEACHER AND STUDENT GRANTS Since the program's start in 2004, the Clark Center has provided more than

\$150,000 in scholarships and grants to students and teachers. Grant applications are due June 30. Through June 30 Clark Center for the Performing Arts, 487 Fair Oaks Ave., Arroyo Grande, 805-489-9444, clarkcenter.org.

SAN LUIS OBISPO

CALL FOR ARTISTS: LIBRARY CARD A call for artists to have an original art piece featured on the 2021 library cards. We are asking that there be a literary connection to the artwork submitted. Recognition of the artist will be on the library card. Check site or call for details. Through June 15 San Luis Obispo Library, 995 Palm St., San Luis Obispo.

CALL FOR ARTISTS: A DIGITAL ART SALON The San Luis Obispo Museum of Art (SLOMA) will be hosting A Digital Art Salon from Sept. 4 through Nov. 1 in partnership with the Digital Art Group. This juried exhibition will feature the diverse artwork being created by contemporary California digital artists. Through July 3 805-543-8562. artist.callforentry.org. San Luis Obispo Museum of Art, 1010 Broad St., San Luis Obispo.

CALL FOR ENTRIES: DIGITAL SHORTS FILM FESTIVAL The San Luis Obispo Museum of Art (SLOMA) will be hosting the first Digital Shorts Film Festival on Sept. 26 in partnership with the Digital Art Group. This one-night-only event will feature digital shorts by artists from across California. Through July 3 805-543-8562. sloma.org/call_for_artists/digital-shorts/. San Luis Obispo Museum of Art, 1010 Broad St., San Luis Obispo.

THE INTERMISSION SHOW This brisk 8- to 10-minute show is set up like a socially distanced talk show with SLO Rep's Managing Artistic Director Kevin Harris at the helm, clad in a tacky suit and tie with a faux alcoholic drink nearby. Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, 3 p.m. San Luis Obispo Repertory Theatre, 888 Morro St., San Luis Obispo, 805-786-2440, slorep.org/.

VIRTUAL ART GALLERY Every Friday, we publish our Virtual Art Gallery to our blog and newsletter. Featuring artworks from customers and the community. Fridays, 9

a.m.-1 p.m. Free. 805-747-4200. artcentralslo.wordpress.com/category/gallery-exhibits/virtual-gallery/. Art Central, 1329 Monterey St., San Luis Obispo.

VIRTUAL STUDENT EXHIBITION This year, the Cuesta College Harold J Miossi Student Exhibition went online. View student work, including the Salon des Refuses, on the website. Mondays-Sundays hjmgallery2020studentshow.org/. Harold J. Miossi Gallery, Highway 1, San Luis Obispo, 805-546-3202.

NORTH SLO COUNTY

FREE VISUAL AND PERFORMING ART CLASSES (ONLINE) Check the foundation's site for various classes offered, for ages 5 to 18. Through Oct. 31 Paso Robles Youth Arts Foundation, 3201 Spring St., Paso Robles, 805-238-5825, pryaf.org.

NORTH COAST SLO COUNTY

CALL FOR ARTISTS: THRU THE LENS III Opening date for submissions to this juried photography exhibit is April 1, 2020. Chuck Jennings serves as judge. Please see prospectus on the exhibit schedule online. Through June 15 Varies. 805-772-2504. artcentermorrobay.org. Art Center Morro Bay, 835 Main St., Morro Bay.

ROOTED AND RISING: A BOOK DISCUSSION Rooted and Rising draws together stories from people of a wide range of different faith perspectives about how they keep themselves encouraged and hopeful in a time of climate crisis. This is a Zoom meeting (call for meeting ID). **May 14**, 2 p.m. and **May 21**, 2 p.m. Free. stbenslosos.org. St. Benedict's Church, 2220 Snowy Egret Ln., Los Osos, 805-528-0654.

CULTURE & LIFESTYLE

LOMPOC/VANDBERG

GOOD MORNING LOMPOC The show is hosted by Lompoc locals Michelle and Jeremy Ball, who aim to keep the community connected while staying home at the same time. Episodes are also available to watch on YouTube after they're streamed live. Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, 8:30 a.m. Facebook, Online, Inquire for Facebook address.

SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS

BIZ MASTERS TOASTMASTERS TUESDAYS: ZOOM Learn more about Toastmasters, prepare

CULTURE & LIFESTYLE continued page 18

SUBMIT YOUR EVENTS

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

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MAY QUEEN

Wine and Design in Orcutt hosts its next Art Buzz Kids Virtual Studio event on May 15, live on Facebook, starting at 11 a.m. Painting kits to follow along with artists as they paint "Rachel Raccoon" are available for pickup at the studio, located at 3420 Orcutt Road, suite for 105, Orcutt. Each kit costs \$20. Visit wineanddesign.com/orcutt for more info.

—C.W.



ENEMIES OF THE AIR BEWARE

The Morro Bay Audubon Society hosts its next monthly video conference through Zoom on May 18, starting at 7 p.m. Guest speaker Gillian Martin from Tree Care for Birds will discuss the ways in which dying trees provide a beneficial habitat for birds and other wildlife. Admission to join the meeting is free, and all ages are welcome. Visit morrocoastaudubon.org to find out more.

—C.W.



FILE PHOTO COURTESY OF THE SLO BOTANICAL GARDEN

CULTURE & LIFESTYLE from page 17

for 'Your Competitive Future', and improve your communication and leadership skills. Zoom Meeting ID: 317 198 472 (Password: 630). Tuesdays, 6:30-8 p.m. through Dec. 15 Free. 805-570-0620. Santa Maria Airport, 3249 Terminal Dr., Santa Maria.

SOUTH COAST SLO COUNTY

WEBINAR: THE TRUTH ABOUT DEMENTIA AND CAREGIVING Host will interview local experts and you will be able to ask them your own questions directly during the webinar. **May 14**, 10-11:30 a.m. Free. 805-710-2415. seacoastseniors.org/. Sea Coast Seniors, Online Webinar, Pismo Beach.

SAN LUIS OBISPO

CONTINUING TAI CHI ONLINE Continuing Tai Chi covers the completion of the 40 form, further refining basics. For returning students and anyone with Tai Chi experience and brave beginners. Mondays, Wednesdays, 10:15-11:15 a.m. through June 10 \$36. 805-549-1222. ae.slcsud.org. Online, 1500 Lizzie Street, San Luis Obispo.

MEDITATION, BREATHWORK, AND GRATITUDE PRACTICE: LIVE ON ZOOM This social-distancing style practice and help you stay vital during these uncertain times. Practices include breathing techniques to calm the nervous system, guided meditation for balanced relaxation, mantra practice to calm the mind, and tips to help you cultivate and maintain a home practice. Wednesdays, 12-12:45 p.m. through Sept. 16 \$10 for SLO students and members/\$15 for non-members. 805-540-1762. eventbrite.com. San Luis Obispo Botanical Garden, 3450 Dairy Creek Rd., San Luis Obispo.

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH DRIVE THRU Social-distancing style. Drive by Anytime between 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. to learn about all the ways you can receive virtual mental health supports during the COVID-19 pandemic. **May 15**, 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Free. Transitions-Mental Health Association, 784 High St., San Luis Obispo, 805-540-6500, t-mha.org.

METABOLIC CONDITIONING We use primarily our own body weight in this interval training class to run through exercises and drills to raise the heart rate, condition our muscles, and stay flexible. This advanced class also incorporates hand weights and sand bags, if you have them. Mondays-Thursdays, 8:15-9:15 a.m. \$72. 415-516-5214. ae.slcsud.org. Online, 1500 Lizzie Street, San Luis Obispo.

MORRO BAY AUDUBON SOCIETY: VIDEO CONFERENCE Guest speaker Gillian Martin from Tree Care for Birds will discuss the ways in which dying trees provide a beneficial habitat for birds and other wildlife.

Admission to join the meeting is free and all ages are welcome. **May 18**, 7 p.m. Free. morrocoastaudubon.org. Zoom, Online, Inquire for Zoom ID.

RESTORATIVE FLOW YOGA ON ZOOM Join us for a 60-minute Restorative Flow Yoga Class. Pre-registration is required. Payment to be made online only at this time. Zoom meeting info will be included in your registration confirmation email. Mondays, 4-5:15 p.m. through June 1 \$15. themondayclubslslo.org. The Monday Club, 1815 Monterey St., San Luis Obispo, 805-541-0594.

STRENGTH FOR 55+ We begin the session in the Static Back position, then progress onto movements, using primarily our body weight. We perform a variety of exercises to maintain function, balance, and mobility. Strength will be enhanced with and without the use of hand weights. Mondays, 9:30-10:30 a.m. through June 11 \$72. 415-516-5214. ae.slcsud.org. Online, 1500 Lizzie Street, San Luis Obispo.

VIRTUAL SPRING FUNDRAISING PLANT SALE The sale includes a variety of drought-tolerant plants grown by volunteers at the garden. All purchases are tax-free and membership holders will receive an additional 10 percent discount. Through May 17 slobg.org. San Luis Obispo Botanical Garden, 3450 Dairy Creek Rd., San Luis Obispo.

WILSHIRE HOSPICE ONLINE TRAINING The work of Hospice continues during this challenging time and the need for volunteers continues. The first-ever ZOOM-based Volunteer Training begins May 19. Classes will be held through Zoom, secure links will be sent to each participant for each session. **May 19**, 10 a.m.-noon, **May 20**, 10 a.m.-noon and **May 21**, 10 a.m.-noon Free. 805-547-7025 ext 2021. Wilshire Hospice, 277 South St., Suite R, San Luis Obispo.

NORTH SLO COUNTY

PASO DRIVE: MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH DRIVES THRU Come celebrate May Mental Health Awareness Month social-distancing style. Drive by anytime between 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. to learn about all the ways you can receive virtual mental health supports during the COVID-19 pandemic. **May 22**, 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Free. Paso Robles City Library, 1000 Spring St., Paso Robles, 237-3870.

NORTH COAST SLO COUNTY

ONLINE GENTLE YOGA Using traditional yoga moves as well as active and resistant stretching and moves from the foundation training method, we create a healthy back a flexible body and increase our lung capacity to



KEEP IT GREEN

The San Luis Obispo Botanical Garden hosts its Virtual Spring Fundraising Plant Sale through May 17. The sale includes a variety of drought-tolerant plants grown by the garden. All purchases are tax-free, and membership holders will receive an additional 10 percent discount. To view the complete plant selection or for pickup options and other info, visit slobg.org.

—C.W.

try to chew breathing exercises; all in the privacy of your own home. Mondays-Thursdays, 10:45 a.m.-noon through June 12 \$5 per session. 415-516-5214. Online (Location address included), 1297 13th Street, Los Osos.

FOOD & DRINK

SOUTH COAST SLO COUNTY

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

SAN LUIS OBISPO

SLO FARMERS MARKET Hosts more than 60 vendors. Saturdays, 8-10:45 a.m. World Market Parking Lot, 325 Madonna Rd., San Luis Obispo.

NORTH SLO COUNTY

DRIVE THRU FRIDAYS IN TIN CITY Join us and all your Tin City favorites every Friday for curbside booths

and social distancing fun. We have everything for your quarantine cooking, including the freshest olive oils and more. Fridays, 12-5 p.m. through May 29 Free. 805-227-4223. Olivas de Oro in Tin City, 2989 B Limestone Way, Paso Robles, olivasdeoro.com.

TED ED: A VIRTUAL WINE TASTING WITH ED PLEMONS A virtual wine tasting experience. These bottles were carefully chosen by Plemons himself. Take this opportunity to ask him all of your burning questions about this delicious selection of wine and more. **May 15**, 4-5 p.m. and **May 22**, 4-5 p.m. \$275. my805tix.com. Cass Winery And Vineyard, 7350 Linne Rd., Paso Robles, 805.239.1730.

NORTH COAST SLO COUNTY

MORRO BAY FARMERS MARKET A delightful mix of local farm fresh products, baked goods, crafts, and more. Thursdays, 2-4:30 p.m. Morro Bay Main Street Farmers Market, Main Street and Morro Bay Boulevard, Morro Bay, 928-350-5960, facebook.com/MorroBayMainStreetFarmersMarket/. ☺



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**Ted Ed:
A Virtual
Wine Tasting**
FRI, MAY 15
Online with
CASS Winery



**Virtual Cocktail
Making Class:
Summer
Slushies**
SAT, MAY 16
Online with
Make &
Muddle



Classical Giants
SUNDAY, MAY 17
Mission
San Miguel



**Virtual Cocktail Making Class:
Tiki Talk**
SATURDAY, MAY 23
Online with Make & Muddle



Patriot Cruise of San Luis Bay
SUNDAY, MAY 31
Point San Luis
Lighthouse



**Central Coast Aquarium
Summer Camp**
SELECT WEEKS AVAILABLE
JUNE-AUGUST



Family Fun Bingo Night
FRIDAY, JUNE 5
Avila Beach
Community Center



**INCENDIO-
Summoning the Muse**
SUNDAY, JUNE 7
Cambria Concerts Unplugged



Carbon City Lights
SATURDAY, JUNE 13
Point San Luis
Lighthouse



**Barrel Room Concert:
Moonshiner Collective**
SUNDAY, JUNE 14
CASS Winery



**Tiny Porch Summer Concert Series:
Ley Line with Abby and the Myth**
SUNDAY, JUNE 14
King Gillette Ranch



Canadian Lights
THURSDAY, JUNE 18
Monarch Club
at Trilogy



**Krav Maga Level 2
Weekend**
JUNE 20-21
Sleeping Tiger Fitness



Sunset Photo Shoot
FRIDAY, JUNE 26
Point San Luis
Lighthouse



Murder on the Orient Express
JUNE 26-JULY 17
By The Sea
Productions



Summer Sipping 2020
JUNE 27-JUNE 28
Foxen Canyon
Wine Trail



**Avila Beach 4th of July
Doggie Parade**
SATURDAY, JULY 4
Avila Beach Promenade



The Mother Corn Shuckers
SATURDAY, JULY 11
Point San Luis
Lighthouse



**Bang Muay Thai
Curriculum Review**
SATURDAY, JULY 11
Sleeping Tiger Fitness



**Stevie Nicks Illusion - A Tribute to
Stevie Nicks and Fleetwood Mac**
SATURDAY, JULY 11
Rava Wines + Events



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Arts Briefs

Blue Sky Center receives \$17,500 in funding from California Arts Council

FILE PHOTO BY JAYSON MELLOM



The Blue Sky Center, a Cuyama-based nonprofit, recently received both the Organizational Development Grant and the Artist in Communities Grant—totaling \$17,500 in funding—from the California Arts Council, a state agency dedicated to supporting arts infrastructure through grants, initiatives, and other services.

The grants were given in support of the Blue Sky Center's variety of arts programming, including an upcoming artist residency of photographer Noe Montes, who will lead a series of free professional development workshops for adult students. Participants of the series will also collaborate with Montes to curate a special newsprint publication of Cuyama-based photography, funded by the Artist in Communities Grant.

The Organizational Development Grant will allow Blue Sky Center to partner with graphic designer Corbin LaMont on creating an arts-focused consulting service. The new service will include comprehensive infographics of survey data collected throughout the Cuyama Valley and will be available online through the Blue Sky Center's social media platforms.

For more info on the Blue Sky Center and its arts programming, visit blueskycenter.org. To find out more about the California Arts Council and its grant offerings, visit arts.ca.gov.

Santa Maria holds a student illustration contest for an upcoming bilingual children's book

The Santa Maria Recreation and Parks Department, the Santa Maria Valley Chamber of Commerce's Leadership Program Class, and The People for Leisure and Youth (PLAY) are partnering to publish a new bilingual children's book. The story is titled *Strawberry Moon Says, Goodnight* and is set in and around the Santa Maria Valley. An illustration contest, open to Santa Maria-based students (grades 4 through 12), for inclusion in the book began on May 4.

Participants of the competition are given verses from the new book, which they are instructed to illustrate. Contestants can pick up illustration templates and other supplies at the Abel Maldonado Community Youth Center, which is located at 600 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria. Artwork submissions can be dropped off at either the youth center or any Community Bank of Santa Maria or Santa Maria Mechanics Bank location (the deadline to enter the contest is Sept. 25).

Proceeds from the future sales of *Strawberry Moon Says, Goodnight* will support Northern Santa Barbara County United Way's literacy programs in Santa Maria, Orcutt, and Guadalupe, as well as various recreational arts programs for local youth. To find out more about the book or the illustration contest, call the Santa Maria Recreation and Parks Department at (805) 925-0951, Ext. 2260. ○

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



PHOTO COURTESY OF A. ARTHUR FISHER

EMPTY CHAIRS: "Most relief funding, as well as traditional grant programs and donations, have mostly been redirected to nonprofits meeting critical needs, which leaves little for the arts and culture sector," said Hannah Rubalcava, county Office of Arts and Culture grants and contracts manager. "So ... these organizations have even fewer opportunities for support."

Access granted

Santa Barbara County launches new COVID-19 relief program to benefit arts and culture nonprofits

BY CALEB WISEBLOOD

More than \$75,000 will be disbursed—in two cycles—to support Santa Barbara County arts and culture nonprofits impacted by COVID-19, as part of a new relief grant program, according to the county.

The grant was created in recognition of the arts sector's influence on the county's economy, among other reasons, and will be administered by the Santa Barbara County Office of Arts and Culture.

"We realized quickly how devastating the COVID-19 closures would be for our local arts nonprofits and their employees," said Hannah Rubalcava, grants and contracts manager of the office.

"Immediately our office wanted to help in any way we could as fast as we could."

Submissions welcome

To apply for the new COVID-19 relief grant or learn more info about the program, visit sbac.ca.gov/county-grants.

A collaboration between the Santa Barbara Foundation, the Santa Barbara Bowl Foundation, and the Santa Barbara County Arts Commission, Rubalcava hopes the new program will provide much-needed funding to arts organizations struggling to stay afloat during this difficult time.

"Most relief funding, as well as traditional grant programs and donations, have mostly been redirected to nonprofits meeting critical needs, which leaves little for the arts and culture sector," Rubalcava said. "So on top of the closures, cancellations, and lost fundraising opportunities, these organizations have even fewer opportunities for support."

Sarah York Rubin, executive director of the County Office of Arts and Culture, also believes the arts sector should be seen as an essential component of the economy.

"I think the 'nonprofit' moniker is confusing because it's really a business industry when you look at it," York Rubin told the *Sun*. "We have these great numbers—the 5,600 full-time jobs that the sector generates for the county a year; the \$20 million in state and local taxes."

In 2016, Santa Barbara County conducted an economic impact study in which 93 arts and culture nonprofits participated. The participants generated nearly \$200 million, according to the county, and directly contributed \$4.6 million in local government revenue.

"I also have hope that the community will see this [relief program] and ideally step in to support the arts and culture institutions they cherish," York Rubin said, "that people will take a cue from this grant and donate to their favorite museums, or buy a subscription to their favorite theater, or donate a refunded check back to a concert venue."

Santa Barbara County holds the largest number of arts and culture nonprofits per capita in California, according to county officials.

"These organizations provide one of the most important services in the county," said Dennis Smitherman, chair of the Santa Barbara County Arts Commission. "They support our community through the lens of thousands of jobs, provide income to our cities, and make life more enjoyable for our residents and visitors."

Funding for the new relief program is mainly provided through the Santa Barbara Bowl Foundation as part of its lease agreement, where 50

cents from every concert or event ticket sold goes into a fund for arts and culture grants. An additional \$25,000 was provided by the Santa Barbara Foundation, and other contributions have already been pledged by the Santa Maria Arts Council and some private donors as well.

The grant is designed to support arts and culture nonprofits with an annual operating budget of less than \$1 million. Applications for the grant are currently open online (sbac).



ART SCENE

PHOTO COURTESY OF A. ARTHUR FISHER

TICKET TO RIDE: Funding for the new relief program is mainly provided through the Santa Barbara Bowl Foundation as part of its lease agreement, where 50 cents from every concert or event ticket sold goes into a fund for arts and culture grants.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE SANTA BARBARA COUNTY OFFICE OF ARTS AND CULTURE



LIFELONG CENTRAL COASTER: Hannah Rubalcava, grants and contracts manager at the Santa Barbara County Office of Arts and Culture, was born and raised in Arroyo Grande. She currently resides in Santa Maria.

ca.gov/county-grants), and submissions are due by May 24.

"We are so fortunate to live in a place with such incredible arts and culture spaces," Smitherman said. "Hopefully this grant can help keep their doors and businesses open."

"While a majority of our residents are following the stay-at-home order," he added, "I would pose the questions, 'How would you respond during this pandemic if there were no arts?' and 'What are some of the activities you are looking forward to doing when this order is lifted?' Chances are, they are arts and culture related." ○

Send story tips to Arts Editor Caleb Wiseblood at cwiseblood@santamariasun.com.

FILE PHOTO COURTESY OF DENNIS SMITHERMAN



BACK TO THE FUTURE: Dennis Smitherman posed these questions: "How would you respond during this pandemic if there were no arts?" and, "What are some of the activities you are looking forward to doing when this order is lifted?" He said that no doubt the answers would be arts and culture related.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CORRINE ARDOIN



LOCAL AUTHOR: *Fathers of Edenville* marks Santa Maria author Corrine Ardoin's (pictured) first fiction novel, although she previously penned *A Natural History of the Nipomo Mesa Region*.

Finding Eden

Santa Maria author Corrine Ardoin revisits her rural town roots in her new novel, *Fathers of Edenville*

BY CALEB WISEBLOOD

Repressed childhood memories haunt four residents of a quiet mountain community in *Fathers of Edenville*, Corrine Ardoin's first novel. The Santa Maria author previously penned a local historical text, *A Natural History of the Nipomo Mesa Region*, but *Edenville* marks her first foray into long-form fiction.

The novel hit virtual book stands on April 16 (available to order through Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and other outlets), but invitations had already been mailed out for Ardoin's private launch party before stay-at-home guidelines went into effect. The local writer also had book signing events lined up at the Book Loft in Solvang, the Lompoc Bookstore, and the Dana Adobe in Nipomo, throughout the month, which were inevitably canceled.

While the future seems full of more universal uncertainties than usual, Ardoin's *Edenville* offers readers a somewhat cathartic dive into the past—but not just any past, rather her own past. Although the characters are fictional, Ardoin used memories of her own rural upbringing to help realize the town of Edenville (a setting she plans to explore even further in three upcoming sequels).

The novelist recently opened up to the *Sun* about her new book and the morbid real-world fear behind its poignancy.

Sun: What inspired you to write *Fathers of Edenville*? And is it true that writing the book was therapeutic for you?

Ardoin: I wrote to help me cope with the impending loss of my own father. Several years ago, I had a friend who lost her father and was not coping very well with that. I also lost two friends to cancer and, then, my sister. Death was huge in my life at that time, and I began to sense my own father's end of life coming soon. I decided to write about what it would be like to

Further reading

Find out more about Corrine Ardoin and her new novel, *Fathers of Edenville*, at corrine.ardoin.us.

lose a father, and the result was my first novel, *Fathers of Edenville*.

Sun: What made you choose to tell this story as a novel? I understand you wrote the book, and several others yet to be published, before writing *A Natural History of the Nipomo Mesa Region* (although the former was published after the latter).

Ardoin: I always wanted to write literary fiction, much in the vein of other California authors, like John Steinbeck and Jack London. Ray Bradbury was a major influence on me. One of the things Bradbury taught me was that, if you want to write

While the future seems full of more universal uncertainties than usual, Ardoin's *Edenville* offers readers a somewhat cathartic dive into the past—but not just any past, rather her own past.

a novel, begin by writing one page a day. By the end of the year, you will have written a book. I followed that religiously and have since written maybe a dozen books. I sit down to write and, without any hesitation or trying to think about what I should say, I just start writing.

Sun: What's the key to handling a rigorous writing schedule like that?

Ardoin: I find it necessary to discipline myself, treat my writing like a job, schedule my day loosely. Working at home, there are always chores nagging and an itch to get outdoors, so I try to take these into consideration when I lay out my work for each day. I write every day, though not always with a

goal in mind, simply because I need to write and it helps me process day-to-day concerns as well.

Sun: Did it take a year to finish writing the novel? (As Bradbury would have predicted). Or is your average output less or more than a page a day?

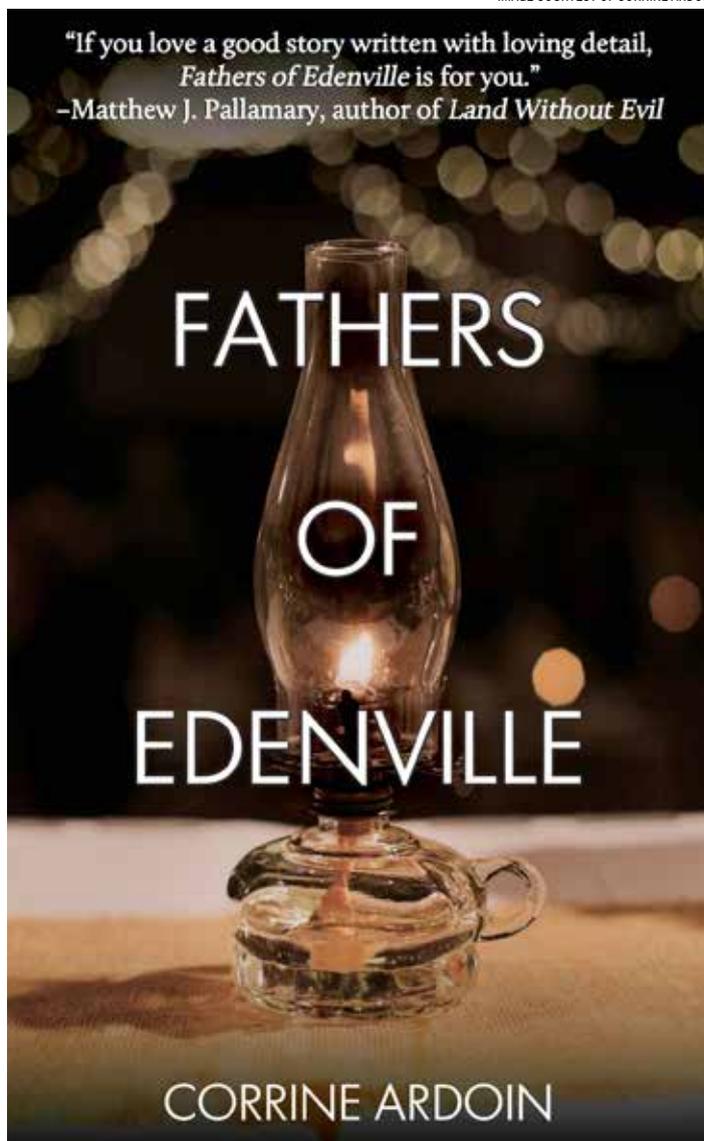
Ardoin: Sometimes it ends after a page or a few pages, but with this book, I kept going and got so interested in the story, having so much fun letting my imagination and sense of humor run, that I was done in a few months with the rough draft.

Sun: What were some of the most challenging roadblocks for you in terms of getting the novel published?

Ardoin: Two months after I completed the rough draft for *Fathers of Edenville*, my father passed away. I tried to get the book published over the next couple of years, but compounded grief took its toll and I put the book in the closet. I wrote other books,

but repeated rejection letters can get tiresome. My *Natural History of the Nipomo Mesa Region* was a great success and kept me going. Fortunately, I revisited my novel a few years ago, fell in love with it again, and found myself writing the first sequel, *Mothers of Pine Way*, and then two more sequels. I felt my confidence grow, so I sent query letters out again and got a response immediately from Black Rose Writing. They wanted to see my book and, within two weeks, I signed a contract with them. I guess the timing was right! ○

Arts Editor Caleb Wiseblood loves hearing from local authors. Contact him at cwiseblood@santamariasun.com.



AVAILABLE NOW: Corrine Ardoin's first novel, *Fathers of Edenville*, was released on April 16 (available to order through Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and other online outlets).

55 Fiction

A brief story, fifty-five words or less, with a headline no longer than seven words.

Entries for this year's contest are due by 5pm on Monday, June 8, 2020.

The winning stories will be published on July 9, 2020.

For more details: bit.ly/55Fiction

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PHOTO COURTESY OF ENTERTAINMENT ONE

Midlife crises

Created by Vicki Jones, this HBO limited series is about Ruby Richardson (Merritt Wever) and Billy Johnson (Domhnall Gleeson), who as college lovers made a pact that if one of them texted the word "RUN," and the other responded with "RUN," they'd both drop everything they were doing and rush to NYC's Grand Central Station, from which they'd embark on a trip across the U.S. together. In episode 1, as she's taking a call from her husband, Laurence (Rich Sommer), in her car in a Ralph's parking lot in LA, Ruby gets the text from Billy, responds with the magic word, and soon books a flight from LAX into New York, meeting Billy at the station where they board a train bound for Chicago. (Seven approximately 30 min. episodes).

Glen: Only the first five episodes have been released in this limited series, with the final two episodes coming in the next couple of weeks—so where it will end up, I do not know, but so far it's a very quirky story about two 30-somethings leaping headlong into a shared midlife crisis. It's certainly a promising premise. Ruby and Billy haven't seen each other in almost two decades, and I get the feeling that they're infatuated with idealized versions of each other that probably never existed. What's clear is Ruby's life isn't filled with the excitement she'd hoped for, and she obviously remembers her relationship with Billy as passionate and even a little bit dangerous—everything that's missing from her average life. Billy is a little bit more of a

mystery. He's some sort of motivational speaker/lifestyle guru, and in a later episode (it's not a spoiler... they show a bag of cash in the series trailers), he withdraws a large sum of money that he's trying to protect from his personal assistant, Fiona (Archie Panjabi), who somehow feels Billy owes her. Billing itself as a black comedy mystery, I must admit it's so far very good at keeping me mystified. I have no idea where this is going, but it's a fun ride so far.

Anna: With episodes only running 30 minutes, they pack a lot of punch into a short glimpse of this haphazard adventure. Ruby feels saddled with her day-to-day life with Laurence and their two boys and wistful for the life she could have had but didn't. Billy is definitely the mysterious one in the pair—why he is running and from whom still isn't quite clear to me even after five episodes. The complications that come with dropping your life and running away are inevitable and come to the pair quickly. Ruby's lie of attending a yoga retreat unravels fast, and Laurence has little patience for her tomfoolery. Fiona is a vindictive stalker who will pretty much do anything to get her hands on Billy's cash. It's a quick-pulsed adventure, and the leads are clearly having a good time playing off one another. I can hardly believe they'll be able to wrap it all up in two more episodes, but I'm looking forward to seeing if and how they pull it off.

Glen: Episode 5 definitely upped the ante. The first few episodes are slow in comparison. Maybe one of the reasons I'm finding the show so bracing is because of nostalgia for close-quarter travel, spontaneity, and the freedom to just get up and go! The reality of *Run* is so foreign to our new normal of sheltering in place. Gleeson and Wever are both great in these

roles. There's something slick and shallow about Billy and something broken about Ruby. They both have secrets and regrets, and as this adventure plays out, they'll both have ramifications to deal with. How can Ruby, who seems like a genuinely sweet person, leave her family on a lark? I wasn't entirely sold on this show after the first episode, but I'm glad I stuck with it. I'm all in now and look forward to seeing how Vicki Jones, who previously was a script editor on the hilarious series *Fleabag*, manages to tie all of these strings together.

Anna: The frenetic energy of the show can be pretty inconsistent, but this latest episode really hooked me. It seems like such a crazy thing for Ruby to leave her family that she seemingly loves and is worried about—but we soon realize that she feels like life has simply passed her by. She never became the big-time architect she dreamed of, and she married the safe guy and had his kids. She's wistful for her lost youth and all the freedom that Billy represents. It's pretty clear from the start that Billy himself is even more of a mess, though a much more believable candidate to flee from his life. The two work well together, and while it feels a bit like



ROAD TRIP: Ruby (Merritt Wever) and Billy (Domhnall Gleeson) go on an impromptu adventure based on a pact they made years earlier in college to drop everything and run away with each other if one or the other texted "RUN," in HBO's limited series *Run*.

watching a train wreck, it's also fun to watch the chaos around these two. I can't wait to see how they wrap this series up. ○

New Times Senior Staff Writer Glen Starkey and freelancer Anna Starkey write Sun Screen. Glen compiles streaming listings. Comment at gstarkey@newtimeslo.com.

RUN

What's it rated? **TV-MA**
Where's it showing? **HBO**

TV Reviews

PHOTO COURTESY OF JIGSAW PRODUCTIONS



DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE: Shannon O'Neill stars as drug-abusing lab technician Sonja Farak in reenactments for the four-part Netflix documentary series *How to Fix a Drug Scandal*, about the 2013 Massachusetts crime drug lab debacle.

HOW TO FIX A DRUG SCANDAL

What's it rated? **TV-MA**
When? **2020**
Where's it showing? **Netflix**

Erin Lee Carr (*Mommy Dead and Dearest, Dirty Money*) directs this four-part crime documentary that chronicles the 2013 Massachusetts drug lab scandal, one involving Annie Dookhan, who in her competitive desire to be the best lab technician and a favorite among law enforcement tampered with or forged narcotics tests, imperiling tens of thousands of convictions. And on the other side of the state, lab technician Sonja Farak, who it turns out was using both the "standards"—samples of pure drugs to compare to confiscated street drugs such as cocaine, meth, and LSD—as well as the street drugs sent for testing.

It's a fascinating look at the shoddy state of Massachusetts' drug labs, which were clearly more interested in cutting costs than properly overseeing their workers. Dookhan's supervisor should have known she couldn't turn out work at the pace she was going without forging many tests, and Farak's workmates must have been completely blind to the fact that she was cooking crack and smoking it in the lab.

In Farak's case, some scenes are reenacted by actress Shannon O'Neill. We also see interviews with Farak's real-life sister and mother, as well as journalists, prosecutors, and defense attorneys. It turns out a lot of people were given lengthy prison sentences based on fabricated tests, which makes you question our criminal justice system. It's made worse by the

system refusing to release potentially innocent people. (Four episodes totaling 211 min.)

—Glen Starkey

LIFE BELOW ZERO

What's it rated? **TV-PG**
When? **2013-present**

Where's it showing? **Disney Plus and National Geographic**

If you told me I'd find a reality TV series I liked, I would have told you you're crazy. The genre is, generally speaking, annoying. *Survivor, Big Brother, Idols*—I couldn't get into any of them. *Life Below Zero*, however, follows seven people living north of the Arctic Circle in remote parts of Alaska, where every day is a fight for survival.

Sue Aikens lives alone at the Kavik river camp. Chip and Agnes Hailstone—he white and she an Inupiaq native Alaskan—live with their seven children. Glenn Villeneuve moved from Vermont and lives alone. Jessie Holmes is a dogsled racer who lives with his 40 dogs. Andy Bassich lives with his 25 sled dogs. Erik Salitan lives alone in the wilderness. Ricko DeWilde, an Alaskan Athabaskan, lives in a remote cabin and later teaches his son about subsistence living.

Not only are the characters engaging for various reasons, but it's fascinating to consider what sorts of personalities would be willing to live in such utter deprivation. Literally one mistake could mean the different between living and dying. Many of them are truly living off the land—only eating protein they acquire themselves. There's something romantic about these various lifestyles, but also something sad. To live without a support system to fall back on feels truly lonely. (approximately 40 min. episodes) ○

—Glen

PHOTO COURTESY OF BBC WORLDWIDE PRODUCTIONS



SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST: Sue Aikens is one of several people included in the National Geographic reality TV series about Alaskans living in life-threatening conditions, *Life Below Zero*, which is currently available on Disney Plus.

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PHOTOS COURTESY OF S.Y. KITCHEN



COCKTAIL HOUR: A little adult beverage never hurt anyone, and S.Y. Kitchen bottles libations to-go in two sizes for your drinking pleasure. Purchase at the market in front of the Santa Ynez restaurant, daily.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF S.Y. KITCHEN BY ROB STARK



SAVOR THE FLAVOR: S.Y. Kitchen's wild mushroom pappardelle with fresh wild mushrooms, thyme, Parmigiano is made to order for your dining room table.

PHOTO COURTESY OF S.Y. KITCHEN BY ROB STARK



INDULGE IN A STARTER: Eating fine dining to-go should always include an appetizer like S.Y. Kitchen's warm octopus salad served with taggiasca olives, potatoes, cherry tomatoes, and haricot verts.

Restaurant-to-home

S.Y. Kitchen adapted to the pandemic by adding a market for to-go options that include cocktails, pasta, and gelato

BY CAMILLIA LANHAM

Everything changed in a matter of days, and it took a while for S.Y. Kitchen to adjust.

The Santa Ynez fine dining restaurant had to let most of its employees go after California and Santa Barbara County put stay-at-home orders into place. Then it had to figure out how to make things work with a new supply chain for a different kind of service than it was used to.

"It's like opening a new restaurant almost," General Manager Dario Dell'Anno said. "We had to basically change everything. ... The only thing that we did keep is the quality of the food and what we actually do. We prepare to-order, so that when people pick up their food, it's freshly cooked."

The whole process took about two to three weeks. Dell'Anno said the entire kitchen had to adjust from making cuisine for dine-in patrons to dishes that would be good for takeout. The food S.Y. Kitchen was serving before wasn't meant to leave the restaurant.

Salad and pasta portion sizes increased a little bit as the kitchen learned how to cook food that wasn't going to get eaten right away. And the cocktails had to change, too, because fresh-squeezed juices are better to drink as soon as they're made.

Plus, the point-of-sale system wasn't set up for to-go either.

"Operationally, it was hard, and getting product, and getting the product to do all the labeling and the packaging," he said. "We had to basically come up with labels and packaging in just a few days, and make sure it looks good."

At the beginning, getting products from vendors was tricky, because distributors were forced to adjust to the pandemic as well. With less demand from restaurants, delivery schedules changed and so did the drivers as

some got furloughed. Certain vendors just cut the restaurant off completely, Dell'Anno said, but wouldn't say why.

Imports from Italy, which make up the base of S.Y. Kitchen's menu, stopped altogether. No more Italian mozzarella, olive oil, or tomato sauce. No more special flours that S.Y. Kitchen has used for years to make fresh pizza dough and pasta.

Dell'Anno said that the restaurant tracked down local purveyors and the ingredients are fresh and high quality, they're just different. With new varieties of flour, for instance, the restaurant had to experiment to see what would work.

"We used three different types of flour that we got from this one Italian company, so we had to adjust the pasta and the pizza. Now we get the same quality flour and it's a little

bit more expensive, but we had to make it a little differently," he said. "It takes a few days of trying to figure it out."

Simply revamping the menu for to-go orders and adjusting recipes for the new normal isn't enough to pay the bills. Rent and utilities stay the same, Dell'Anno said. So S.Y. Kitchen decided to try an outdoor market in front of the restaurant.

Fresh-made pasta and pasta sauce you can take home yourself. Ragu, lamb Bolognese, three-cheese sauce, truffle sauce, basil pesto. Fresh produce. Fresh jam. Cheese. Tiramisu. Panna cotta. Olive oil. Organic chicken broth. Gelato on the weekends.

There might even be a grill in the market's future.

"Every day we try different stuff to see what's selling and what's doing well," Dell'Anno said. "It's been doing really well. We were really surprised."

Don't worry, S.Y. Kitchen didn't forget to

Get your fix

Don't resist the urge to get takeout. Especially when it's so good. S.Y. Kitchen has a Dinner At Home menu with some of the restaurant's favorites. Food is available for pickup from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. Check it out at sykitchen.com. Visit the market to peruse delectables in the open air from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, 1110 Faraday St. in Santa Ynez.



PORTION CHECK: S.Y. Kitchen increased the sizes of their salads for that pandemic, food-to-go lifestyle, but you can still get the freshest ingredients in menu items like the pea salad, which comes with arugula, fresh peas, dry ricotta, celery root, and walnuts.

offer up those famous cocktails to-go, which might be the most fabulous thing to come out of the pandemic. Dell'Anno said the restaurant is selling bottles of four signature pre-mixed cocktails that come in sizes made for two and four people. And they're popular, because after a long day in quarantine, there's still nothing like a good cocktail to ease that worried mind.

"People want to pick a cocktail up and take it home and pour it over ice with a little garnish," Dell'Anno said. "People love it. I think, the people, they appreciate it."

Any extra proceeds from the market are pooled into an employee distribution fund, which the restaurant started almost immediately after it had to close for dining. Restaurant regulars also contribute to the fund, which gets divided up among the staff that were laid off, depending on their position as a full-time or part-time employee.

"Just something extra for the staff because we closed down, and nobody had a job and everybody was worried, and nobody knew what was going to happen," he said. "They've been very good to us and so we try to do something for them, too."

He's looking forward to getting back to normal, although he isn't sure that things will be like they were before the pandemic happened. S.Y. Kitchen applied for a small business loan through the federal government, but Dell'Anno said even if they get approved, they won't be able to hire everybody back on.



CARRY OUT: The new wave of S.Y. Kitchen includes a market set up right in front of the restaurant with packaged fresh pasta and sauces that you can take home and make yourself.



WEEKEND SWEET: On the weekends, S.Y. Kitchen's new market includes a gelato stand, with fresh-made frozen treats for your tasting pleasure.

"Let's say we get the loan. What are we going to do when we reopen?" he said. "Most likely we aren't going to get the same revenue, which is going to change everything."

Really, though, S.Y. Kitchen, like every other restaurant, is waiting for the government to tell them what they can do in the next couple of months, so they can start planning for reopening. At least, in a limited capacity. Being able to do takeout, the market, and have dine-in customers could be the ticket to staying afloat, Dell'Anno said.

"Hopefully we can survive and keep the doors open," he said. "That's what all restaurants are afraid of." ○

Editor Camillia Lanham is ready for a trip to Santa Ynez for gelato, pasta, and a to-go cocktail. Send food and drink tips to clanham@santamariasun.com.



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