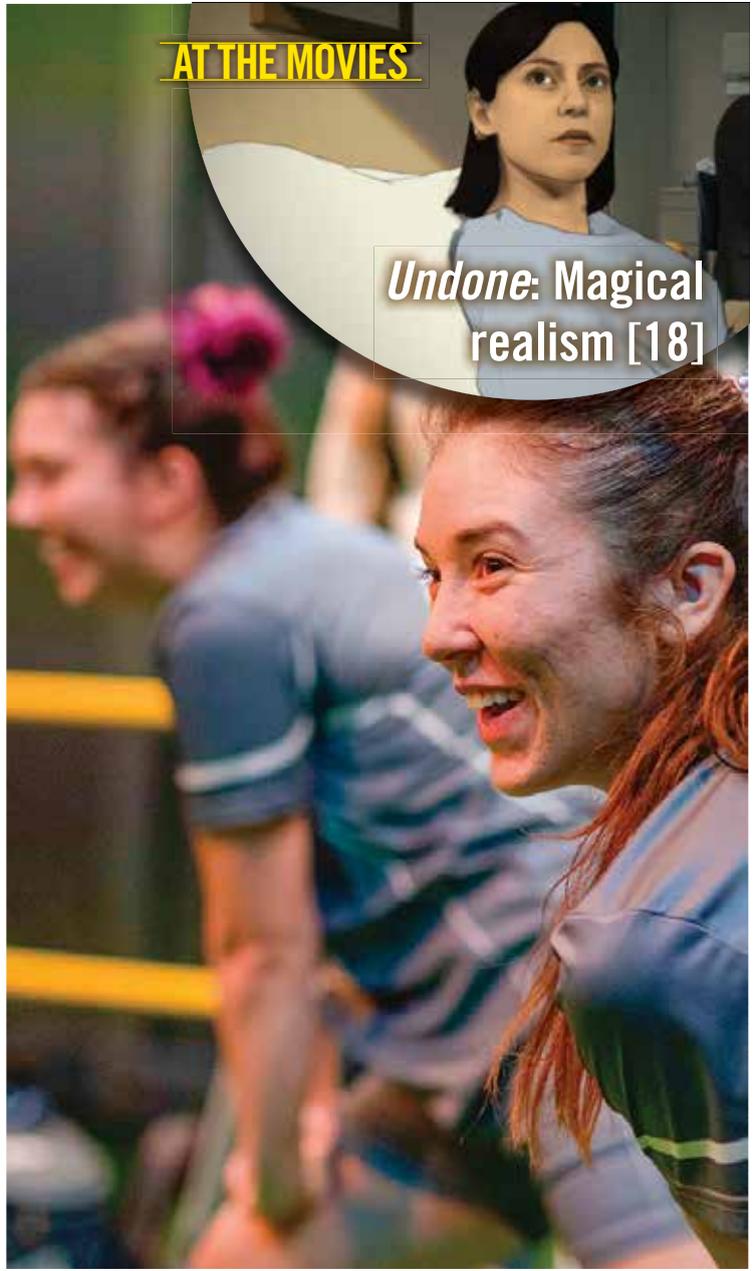


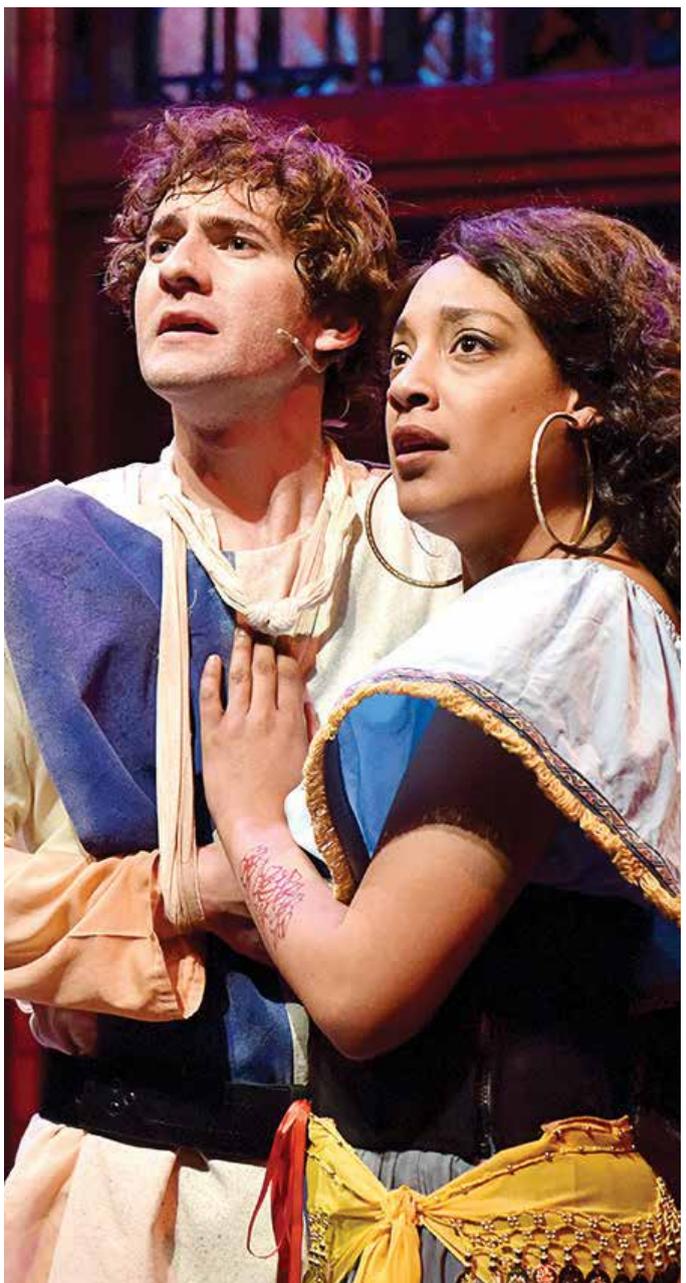
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AT THE MOVIES

Undone: Magical realism [18]

# Embrace the unknown



*PCPA just canceled its summer season, but actors, directors, and designers are still crafting and creating virtually with online workshops and talk shows [15]* **BY CALEB WISEBLOOD**



**NEWS** Santa Ynez school district settles discrimination claims [7]

**ARTS** Events are back in the *Sun!* [12]

**EATS** Sweet Baking Co. goes on a cupcake binge [19]

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MAY 21 - MAY 28, 2020 VOL. 21 NO. 12

This summer isn't going to be like last summer, Toto. The Solvang Festival Theater won't ring with the boisterous voices of PCPA actors or sing with the claps from a delighted audience. After holding out for as long as it could, the conservatory took the plunge and canceled the summer season of plays. But don't worry, PCPA is adapting and helping you take a look behind the scenes instead, by joining a couple of different livestreams hosted by Casting Director Erik Stein. Arts Editor Caleb Wiseblood can give you the skinny [15].

This week, you can also read about Santa Ynez Valley Union School District's settlements with former employees [7], how substance abuse treatment providers and their clients are being forced to adapt [8], a music-making father-son duo [16], and a delicious bakery in Lompoc that's dishing out cupcakes and more [19].



**CANCELED:** PCPA was forced to cancel its spring and summer seasons of plays. But actors, designers, and directors are adapting.

Camillia Lanham  
editor

Cover photos courtesy of PCPA > Cover design by Alex Zuniga

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## Political Watch

• **Gov. Gavin Newsom** announced in a May 12 press release that the state has so far administered more than 1 million COVID-19 tests. Daily testing now averages at more than 35,000 across the state, an increase attributed to more than 80 new, community-based testing sites throughout California. Three of those are now operational in Santa Barbara County—in Santa Maria, Lompoc, and Santa Barbara. “Ramping up our testing capacity is critical as we begin modifying our stay-at-home order,” Newsom said in the release. “Soon Californians will be able to get tested when they pick up their prescriptions at some pharmacies across the state.” As stated in the governor’s Resilience Roadmap, regional testing and contact-tracing capacities are key indicators of the ability to move through the gradual phases of reopening.

• On May 11, **Assemblymember Jordan Cunningham** (R-San Luis Obispo) and some North Santa Barbara County elected leaders, including Lompoc **Mayor Jenelle Osborne** and Santa Maria **Mayor Alice Patino**, sent a letter to the California Department of Public Health asking the state to separate Santa Barbara County’s COVID-19 case count from the Lompoc federal prison’s. “In order for Santa Barbara County to move into the latter half of the state’s phase two,” a press release from Cunningham’s office states, “it must have less than one new COVID-19 case per 10,000 residents over 14 days. However, if the cases at the federally controlled prison are counted, it could take weeks for Santa Barbara County to meet that threshold.” The letter emphasizes that the prison is controlled federally and is not within the county’s jurisdiction to manage the outbreak there. “The outbreak only occurred at this magnitude because of FBP’s [Federal Bureau of Prisons] failure to act in a timely manner,” the letter states. “In short, the failure to contain this virus lies totally at the feet of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, not the Santa Barbara County Department of Public Health.”

• **Assemblymember Monique Limón** (D-Santa Barbara), **State Sen. Hannah Beth Jackson** (D-Santa Barbara), and **U.S. Rep. Salud Carbajal** (D-Santa Barbara), came together on May 13 for a town hall teleconference to discuss and answer questions about phase two of the county’s reopening. The conference touched on child care, retirement care facilities, and the impact on small businesses. “We have to be very careful of the fact that this virus is no more contained today than it was when it broke out two months ago,” Jackson told the *Sun* before the teleconference. “We have to emphasize the importance of being thoughtful and cautious, and recognize that protecting human life is our primary responsibility. That being said, it is important that we try to minimize the risk of exposure while we try to gradually, thoughtfully, and rationally expand the opportunities for people to engage in commerce.”

• On May 12, House Democrats introduced The HEROES (Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions) Act, a \$3 trillion coronavirus response bill that targets relief toward state, local, territorial and tribal governments; hazard pay for essential workers; coronavirus testing; and a second round of economic impact payments of \$1,200 per family member. **U.S. Rep. Salud Carbajal** (D-Santa Barbara) supported the bill on Facebook, writing, “This bold plan ensures we take care of our workers, small businesses, families, and make necessary investments in our economy to ensure a full recovery from the coronavirus.”



**BETTER KEEP 'EM SEPARATED:** Santa Barbara County successfully lobbied the state to exclude the Lompoc penitentiary’s COVID-19 outbreak from county coronavirus numbers, enabling the county to move toward reopening more quickly.

## County successfully lobbies state to allow for faster reopening

After a few weeks of uncertainty, Santa Barbara County finally appears ready to begin moving faster through a roadmap that outlines modifications in the existing COVID-19 stay-at-home order.

On May 8, Gov. Gavin Newsom allowed some businesses to reopen throughout the state in limited ways, such as retail stores only providing curbside services. He also announced that if counties meet certain metrics, dine-in restaurants, offices, and shopping malls could also reopen.

During a county Board of Supervisors meeting on May 12, county Public Health Director Van Do-Reynoso told the board that some of the metrics the state announced would be impossible for the county to reach. As a result, the county lobbied for the state to make certain changes in this criteria.

“It’s unreasonable for us to achieve that and I think that’s why we crafted the letter for your board to consider,” Do-Reynoso said.

In this letter, the county asked the state to exclude the number of COVID-19 cases in the Lompoc federal penitentiary when reviewing the county’s case for reopening. The county also pushed back on metrics regarding limitations on new cases and COVID-related deaths in a two-week period.

During the board’s May 19 meeting, Do-Reynoso said the county was successful. The initial metrics were replaced with different, more percentage-based ones that the county has already reached. Because of this, the county is preparing to begin working with the state to reopen more businesses.

Through this process, the county Public Health Department submits various documents to the California Department of Public Health, including letters of support from local hospitals and the Board of Supervisors, attesting to the county meeting the state’s criteria.

The state health department will review the material and post it online, where it’ll

be publicly accessible. Then the county will release a new public health order dictating what businesses can reopen and guidance on steps they must take to do so safely, Do-Reynoso said.

“There is freedom for movement, but with freedom comes responsibility,” Do-Reynoso said.

Additionally, during the meeting, county staff presented the board with the county’s own guide called Reopening in Safe Environment, or RISE. This document is supplemental to the state’s reopening roadmap, Assistant County Executive Officer Nancy Anderson said.

The county developed the plan with the regional economic group REACH, and spoke with industry representatives as well as medical experts. RISE includes guidelines for industries that are already approved to open, as well as those that aren’t, so they can begin preparing.

But ultimately, the governor decides when the entire state moves into the next reopening phase, which would include bars, wine tasting rooms, hair salons, tattoo shops, gyms, churches, and other industries.

Fourth District Supervisor Peter Adam continues to be vocal about his displeasure over the county’s reopening pace. He said he “vehemently” disagrees with the state’s and county’s strategies and the financial constraints residents are facing because of it.

“The longer this goes on, the worse it’s going to get and the deeper it’s going to be, and the harder it’s going to be to dig out of,” Adam said.

First District Supervisor Das Williams said where the county goes from here is incredibly important. Historically how a society reacts to a disease, he said, usually affects people more than the actual disease. But he described the county’s approach detailed in the RISE guide as reasonable.

“We can create patterns that maximize our safety but still allow people to do business, and more importantly than doing business, provide for their families,” Williams said. “I think that is the kind of pattern we need to set as a county and a society moving forward.”

—Zac Ezzone

## Virtual ceremonies and more planned for graduating seniors

The Santa Maria Joint Union High School District’s four schools are celebrating their seniors with a mix of virtual graduation ceremonies, drive-through celebrations, and pre-recorded speeches.

District Public Information Officer Kenny Klein told the *Sun* that there are no plans to reschedule in-person graduations for later dates—these will be the official proceedings in these “historic times” for the roughly 2,000 seniors the district is graduating this year.

“What we’re working on with the virtual [graduations] is we’re going to record speeches for the valedictorian, the salutatorian, the

NEWS continued page 5

## Weekend Weather

**KSBY NEWS**

Microclimate Weather Forecast  
**Dave Hovde**  
KSBY Chief Meteorologist



**Thursday**



**COASTAL** > High 75 Low 50  
**INLAND** > High 82 Low 47

**Friday**



**COASTAL** > High 72 Low 51  
**INLAND** > High 80 Low 48

**Saturday**



**COASTAL** > High 71 Low 50  
**INLAND** > High 79 Low 46

**Sunday**



**COASTAL** > High 71 Low 51  
**INLAND** > High 82 Low 48

Some early marine clouds for the weekend but looking near average for temps. Monday will gain another 3 to 5 degrees.

NEWS from page 4

principal,” Klein said. “But discussions are still happening as we speak.”

Santa Ynez High School is opting to postpone official celebrations until later this summer in hopes that its seniors can have a “traditional, in-person ceremony by then,” a May 4 letter from Principal Mark Swanitz to the class of 2020 states.

“I think to settle for anything less just to stick to a schedule does not adequately honor all that you have done and accomplished,” Swanitz wrote in the letter. “I, like you, am optimistic that we can give you the ceremony you want and deserve by postponing it.”

The graduation ceremony was pushed to July 24, but the high school is handing out senior yard signs and diploma covers on May 22.

Lompoc Unified School District’s plan depends on how public health recommendations unfold, the district’s website states. If restrictions allow for public gathering by May 21, graduation ceremonies will take place as planned. If not, Maple High School will have a drive-up celebration from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on June 3, and Lompoc and Cabrillo high schools will have a drive-through celebration at the same time on June 4.

Cabrillo High School Principal Isidro Carrasco told the *Sun* in an email that the district is waiting until May 21 to make the final call.

Santa Maria’s virtual celebrations will commence with Delta High School on June 4. Senior Delta Dragons will be celebrated in a video commencement, through a link on the school’s website, at 2 p.m. According to a district press release, “It will include speeches, a guest speaker, and photos of the students.”

There will also be a drive-through event from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. on May 28.

Santa Maria High School’s virtual ceremony starts at 11 a.m. on June 5, with the link to the ceremony accessible via the Santa Maria Saints’ website. Later that day at 1 p.m., graduates can get their diplomas at a drive-through celebration near campus on Thornburg Street. On May 6, the school’s valedictorian, Cristian Ramirez Morales, and salutatorian, Isaac Ochoa, received socially distanced home visits and honorary certificates from Principal Steve Campbell.

The Righetti Warriors will also celebrate virtually on June 5 with a YouTube link set to go live at 9:30 a.m., Klein said. The link will be posted on the school’s website and sent to all families of seniors. On May 4, Valedictorian Ian Tosches and Salutatorian Bridget Lee received their certificates from Principal Karen Rotondi at their homes.

“Normally, the honors involve a handshake too—but this year it was facemasks and social distancing,” a press release said.

Pioneer Valley High School’s drive-through celebration is planned from 9 a.m. to noon in the student parking lot. The school is still working out the virtual element, but a link will be available on Pioneer’s website at 5 p.m. the day before. In step with the other local high schools, Pioneer Valley’s valedictorian and salutatorian—Naomi Mau and Damian Magana—received their certificates in a home visit from Principal Shanda Herrera.

“Our graduation plans are based on mandates from state and local authorities. Despite the restrictions that keep changing day to day during this crisis, we’re committed to creating memories for the class of 2020,” Klein

said of the historic ceremonies. “Our students, in 20 years or in 25 years, will be telling their kids about this.”

—Malea Martin

## Buellton considers joining Monterey Bay Community Power

Two years after opting not to pursue joining a community choice aggregation program, the city of Buellton is reconsidering.

During its meeting on May 14, the Buellton City Council directed staff to invite a representative from Monterey Bay Community Power—a community choice aggregation agency that’s expanding throughout the Central Coast—to speak with the county about the city potentially joining the group. City Manager Scott Wolfe told the *Sun* that this conversation could take place during the next City Council meeting on May 28.

Community choice aggregation agencies are governed by a board of directors made up of officials from participating cities and counties. The organizations handle generating and purchasing energy, while leaving companies like Pacific Gas and Electric Company responsible for transmission and distribution.

One incentive to join a community choice aggregation agency is that rates are usually lower than those from private utility providers, so residents save money on their bills. The public energy provider also relies on a higher percentage of renewable sources of electricity—such as wind and solar—and allocates funding to local renewable energy projects, according to Monterey Bay Community Power.

When the Buellton City Council first took

up the issue in 2018, Santa Barbara County was considering creating its own agency. Wolfe said the council at the time felt there was too much uncertainty to move forward. Since then, most cities in the county, and the county itself, have opted to join Monterey Bay Community Power.

“This agency is already well established, and the county and other cities felt it was a smoother path,” Wolfe told the council.

The council agreed it was worth reconsidering given the size and experience of Monterey Bay Community Power.

“This one’s been established,” Mayor Holly Sierra said. “I personally think it would be interesting to hear what they have to say.”

Currently, Monterey Bay Community Power serves Monterey, Santa Cruz, and San Benito counties, as well as the cities of San Luis Obispo and Morro Bay. Next year the agency will begin serving cities in Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties that opted to join in 2019.

Wolfe said Buellton is approaching a deadline if it wants to begin service in 2022. Although, he told the *Sun* he wasn’t sure on the exact date. Last year, most of the local governments that opted to join Monterey Bay Community Power voted to do so in July and August.

—Zac Ezzone

## New school named to honor former Boys and Girls Club director

On May 13, the Santa Maria-Bonita School District (SMBSD) board of education

NEWS continued page 6

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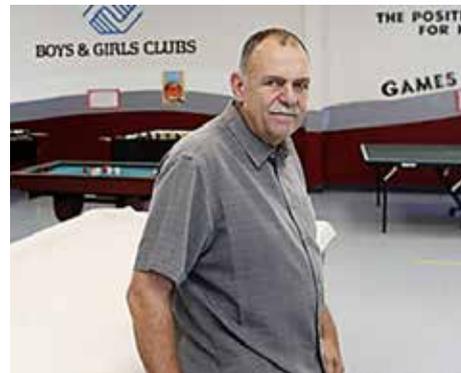
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**SANTA MARIA ROOTS:** The Santa Maria-Bonita School District's new elementary school will be named after William "Bill" Libbon, a Santa Maria resident of nearly 60 years who worked with local youth for the last 50.

#### NEWS from page 5

unanimously voted to name the district's new elementary school after Bill Libbon, who worked with the Santa Maria Valley Boys and Girls Club for 40 years.

William "Bill" Libbon Elementary School is still under construction but is expected to be ready for students in the fall—though when schools will reopen remains uncertain.

"The new school campus will open when the other 20 schools in the Santa Maria-Bonita School District reopen their campuses," SMBSD Public Information Officer Maggie White wrote in an email announcing the new name. "Learning for students at Libbon Elementary will begin on Aug. 13, 2020, as it will for all SMBSD students for the 2020-21 school year."

The man behind the new school's name moved to Santa Maria with his family in 1961, and still lives in the community today.

"It's an unbelievable honor. I'm really grateful to the community for all their support," Libbon said. "It's the climax of my career, you could call it—something I never thought would happen or dreamed of."

Libbon attended five different local schools as he completed his elementary, middle, and high school education. He then went to Allan Hancock College for a couple of years.

While studying at Hancock, Libbon got his first taste of working with the Boys Club in Santa Maria: The director at the time asked him to coach the club's sixth grade basketball team, which he did as a volunteer for two years while attending Hancock.

Libbon decided to get his bachelor's degree at Long Beach State. After getting his degree, he once again found himself back home, with his eyes set on getting a physical education teaching credential from Cal Poly. But a different opportunity arose: The Boys and Girls' club had a position open up, and they wanted Libbon for the job.

"I was hired as the program director," he said. "I started there at the Boys and Girls Club on Jan. 15, 1975. From program director I became director of operations, and eventually the executive director."

Since retiring in 2014, Libbon continues to work part time helping Santa Maria's parks department with its sports programs.

"It keeps me busy, and it's a lot of fun too," he said. "I've been working with kids since I graduated high school in 1969, so it's been five decades of working with kids in Santa Maria Valley."

Public comments submitted ahead of the May 13 school board meeting included one from city resident Andrea Ford in support of using Libbon's name for the new school.

"I'm a born-and-raised Santa Maria resident. I'm 37 years old, and I can proudly say that out of my 37 years of living here I was a Boys and Girls Club member from age 9 until I was

probably 19 years of age," Ford said. "There are so many teenagers that were so grateful for the events that were allowed to go on because Bill gave us the OK. [He] always believed that the teens needed a place to be, otherwise everyone would just end up in trouble or on the streets."

—Malea Martin

### Guadalupe's LeRoy Park, community center project could receive funding boost

Guadalupe recently applied for more funding to rehabilitate LeRoy Park and its community center.

The park project, along with the city's community resilience plan, already received \$4.5 million from a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) in 2018. But because of the COVID-19 crisis, the CDBG program received additional funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, allowing the program to allocate more money—a 20 percent increase—to some previously funded projects.

Guadalupe's LeRoy Park rehabilitation project fits the bill for this funding boost, according to Tom Brandeberry, CEO and president of the Rural Community Development Corporation of California. Brandeberry, who formerly ran the state's CDBG program, started his nonprofit to help rural communities like Guadalupe make it through the grant application process. His agency helped the city secure its original grant back and continues to help Guadalupe navigate new funding opportunities.

Brandeberry said that for Guadalupe to apply for the additional funds—\$820,000—the city needed to submit a number of documents, including a resolution to apply that passed at the May 12 City Council meeting. After that, Brandeberry sent all the necessary documents to the state and told the Sun that Guadalupe should know whether it gets the funding within two to three weeks.

In other news, Brandeberry said that the long awaited LeRoy Park and community center rehabilitation project is on track and moving forward.

"We've gone through all of the design process, the community involvement in determining what the revised park and community center should be, and the final plans and specs for the building being approved by the city," he said.

From March 30 to April 30, the city accepted bids from contractors interested in completing the project. Brandeberry's nonprofit is reviewing the bids and will make a recommendation for the City Council to consider at the May 26 meeting.

Sonia Rios-Ventura, the nonprofit's community development manager based in Guadalupe, told the Sun what a rehabilitated community center will mean for the city.

"[LeRoy Park] used to be the unofficial town square. It was where everything ended, like the parades they had, and if there were any big community events they would all be held there," Rios-Ventura said. "That stopped once the building was deemed to be unfit to hold people inside. . . I think that once that park is back and renovated, it will become the unofficial town square once again. I think it will help the community see that things are moving forward, things are changing, and the city's working hard to better the community for everybody."

Rios-Ventura said that while there is not yet an exact timeline, the city expects to break ground in late July or early August. ○

—Malea Martin

# Patterns of damage

After learning of a 2020 settlement involving Santa Ynez Valley Union High School District Superintendent Scott Cory, a concerned parent started digging for answers

BY MALEA MARTIN

As both a parent and guardian of Santa Ynez Valley Union High School (SYVUHS) graduates, Los Olivos resident Michelle de Werd always took a keen interest in the behind-the-scenes of the high school her daughter and niece attended.

"I was always really active at the school, and I started attending school board meetings," de Werd told the *Sun*.

Even after her daughter graduated from the high school in 2012, de Werd said, "The more I learned about school boards and how they operated with their budgets, I just kept going."

She also serves as chair for the Measure K Citizens' Oversight Committee, so she's a familiar face among Santa Ynez Valley Union High School District leaders and employees. That's why, de Werd said, Laura Cypert reached out to her last year.

De Werd said she received a call in late July 2019, the day Cypert turned her resignation letter in to the district after working as the assistant to the district superintendent since 2009. Cypert, according to de Werd, had wanted to reach out to her for a while but was afraid she would lose her job as a result.

According to de Werd, Cypert said that she was resigning because her job was taking a mental and physical toll on her greater than she could endure any longer. In the claim for damage documents that de Werd obtained from the district through a Public Records Act request, Cypert claimed damage "as a result of [district Superintendent] Scott Cory's ongoing and never ending harassment to me due to my sex and gender," among other claims.

The *Sun* reached out to Cypert for comment, who responded with an emailed statement.

"My attorney said I should not speak with [a] reporter, because anything I say could be construed as a violation of the non-disparagement clause in the release that I signed," Cypert stated.

De Werd shared with the *Sun* some of the documents she received through multiple Public Records Act requests with the district, including Cypert's claim for damage; similar documents for former district employees Nicole Evenson and Cynthia Luke; and the "release of all claims" contract that Cypert signed with the district.

All told, de Werd learned that the superintendent was accused of gender discrimination in the workplace, and the district settled three different claims totaling more than \$250,000 in the last four years.

## Settled allegations

Cypert received a settlement amounting to \$57,500 in March 2020, according to the release she signed with the district. Years earlier, Evenson and Luke received about \$91,000 and \$105,000, respectively, in settlements reached with the



**UNCOVERING THE PAST:** Santa Ynez Valley School District Superintendent Scott Cory (left) answers questions at a public meeting about traffic safety back in 2015. Michelle de Werd, a parent of a former Santa Ynez Valley Union High School student, says the district kept claims made by multiple former employees against Cory, as well as a private investigation, "hidden" from the public eye.

school district in January and March of 2016, according to district documents. Both women settled after also making claims involving Cory.

"I public-record requested those two settlements because I wanted to find out who was on the board at the time, and why that wasn't in the public domain," de Werd said. "I got the stiff-arm from the school, and I thought, there's more to this than. So I kept on pushing the school . . . The more digging I did, the more I uncovered."

Luke's claim cites a failure by the district to pay overtime, discrimination on the basis of a medical condition, and unlawful retaliation in violation of public policy. Evenson's claim, which was a combined claim she filed with her husband, cites damages for discrimination on the basis of a medical condition, retaliatory discharge in violation of public policy, abuse of process, and intentional infliction of emotional distress.

"I think part of what started it was that he was not making correct decisions with the district money, and we were trying to tell him that," Luke, who was an accounting specialist, told the *Sun*. "At the time, Nicole and I were the financial experts there at the district. He was constantly going to other male figures on campus to find out if there was another way to do it, or if we were correct."

Some of Cory's financial decisions included spending "thousands of dollars" on new furnishings for his office, which Luke said was already sufficiently set up when he started the position in 2013.

Luke said Cory also gave money to a student club, even though club funding wasn't "supposed to come from the district."

"It's supposed to be either donations to the clubs or the students doing fundraising," Luke said. "The auto club wanted to take the kids to the auto show in Vegas. For that, he approved taking \$5,000 of district money. I don't know if there was an agreement that the club would pay it back."

Luke said that as the accounting specialist, she had to follow certain protocols: She needed documentation like purchase orders and receipts before she could pay a bill.

"We weren't getting those from the teachers," Luke said.

As the person who handled the credit card bills, Luke said she was reprimanded by Cory for not being able to pay the bills on time, even though it was teachers and administrators who weren't getting the necessary information to Luke on time, or at all.

It was within this context of financial strife that Luke said Cory began to treat her and Evenson differently.

"I was plain old harassed," Luke said.

Cory insisted that Evenson write Luke up for

the lack of appropriateness of her work attire, according to Luke, who said her attire was a little hippy-ish—she enjoyed Birkenstocks and dresses with faded tie-dye prints—but "fine to wear in a business office." When Evenson refused to do so, Luke said Cory wrote Evenson up for not following his orders.

Luke said she often worked more than 12-hour days, without additional overtime compensation. The stressful work environment led to anxiety and depression that she is still dealing with today, years after leaving her position with the district.

These are among the damages that Luke alleged in her lawsuit, which she settled in 2016.

## Private investigation

De Werd believes that the absence of such settlements from board minutes or agendas indicates a lack of transparency from the board of education.

Luke said that, to her knowledge, the settlement was worked out between Cory and the litigators before the board approved it. According to Luke, retroactive board approval of expenditures was something she had witnessed before.

In an emailed statement to the *Sun*, Cory responded to the allegations over the "hidden" nature of past settlements, stating, "while I cannot speak to any of these cases specifically, often settlement negotiations occur in closed session whereby direction is given to legal counsel so they are not recorded in open session minutes."

De Werd also believes that the district's hiring of a private investigator to look into Cypert's claims—as well as the claims made by another district employee who resigned shortly after Cypert—wasn't as transparent as it should have been under the Brown Act. The Brown Act is a California law that guarantees the public's right to attend and participate in meetings of local legislative bodies.

The *Sun* reached out to all five of the district's board of education members for comment. Only trustees John Baeke and Jan Clevenger responded before press time.

Baeke wrote that, months ago, "the board decided by majority vote that media relations would be handled by the superintendent. Thus, I am prevented from speaking with you."

Clevenger wrote that "any negotiations held in closed session remain confidential and direction is given to legal counsel so they are not recorded in open session minutes."

While the Brown Act does allow for closed and confidential board sessions, it also requires that the "meeting and items discussed must still be properly agendized," according to "Navigating the Gray Haze of the Brown Act," a document created by Fagen Friedman & Fulfrost LLP. "In

many circumstances, actions taken in closed session must be 'reported out' to the public after the closed session, announcing the vote or abstention of every member present."

According to de Werd, "In the board minutes, there's no record of this investigation: any discussions at the board, at the public meetings." The *Sun* looked through board minutes for meetings from July to December of 2019, and didn't find any references to a private investigation.

While the district denied de Werd's request to access the private investigation report, a former district employee shared it with her. De Werd said that the employee requested to remain anonymous. The December 2019 investigation report, which de Werd shared with the *Sun*, details actions taken by Cory toward employees and girls' sports teams.

"There is sufficient evidence to show Superintendent Cory had the SYVUHS girls' volleyball team posters removed from the school approximately three years ago because he thought players' shorts were too short," the report said. "There is sufficient evidence to show Superintendent Cory made comments to district employees ... that he thinks females look more professional in skirts or dresses than pants."

Regarding the investigative findings, Cory told the *Sun*, "Unfortunately, the documentation is incomplete and the context inaccurate." When the *Sun* asked for clarification on what was incomplete, Cory said, "It is incomplete in that the investigation found no violation of law or policy."

Much of the investigative report that de Werd shared with the *Sun* is redacted, but one finding that isn't redacted does appear to absolve Cory of discriminatory behavior, to an extent.

"There is sufficient evidence to show employees reasonably perceived that Superintendent Cory spoke differently to female employees than male employees," it reads. "There is not sufficient evidence to show [the] superintendent engaged in severe, persistent, pervasive, or discriminatory behavior based on a protected class against you or other female employees."

De Werd said that she hopes to see new faces on the board in the future who might bring a fresh perspective on the issues within the district.

"I encourage parents of high school students, or prospective high school students, or even recent grads, to run for the board. There are two seats that will be available in a few months, in November 2020," de Werd said. "I would just encourage someone that is a little more involved with the school, in terms of having children there, to actually see what is happening. That is my goal." ○

Reach Staff Writer Malea Martin at [mmartin@santamariasun.com](mailto:mmartin@santamariasun.com).



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**BY ZAC EZZONE**

For people living with addiction, being isolated during the COVID-19 pandemic is especially difficult. But that's the reality many have faced over the last two months.

Since the virus began to spread throughout the U.S., and once Gov. Gavin Newsom issued his statewide stay-at-home order in March, the agencies that provide substance abuse treatment programs in Santa Barbara County shifted to meeting and speaking with clients virtually.

Luis Gonzalez, the Lompoc site supervisor for Coast Valley Substance Abuse Treatment Center, said this switch has led to at least one positive outcome—clients seem to open up more over the phone compared to in-person sessions. But this transition has also presented challenges, such as connecting with clients who have limited access to the internet or engaging clients who are just beginning their treatment, he said.

"During this we've seen more people dropping out of programs," Gonzalez said. "They need the structure of face-to-face and stability. Now that is all taken away from them."

During the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors meeting on May 12, Alice Gleghorn, the director of the county's Department of Behavioral Wellness, told the board that the number of people calling the department's resource and referral line to be connected with substance abuse treatment programs decreased from 541 in March to 264 in April. Meanwhile, the number of people calling the line for mental health assistance remained about the same.

When somebody calls this referral line, the department then connects them with services through a treatment provider, such as Coast Valley Substance Treatment Center or the Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, among others in the county.

Gleghorn told the board that the department believes part of this drop in people seeking substance abuse treatment is due to the temporary suspension of in-person services. She said some people may not have a private space for telehealth services. Additionally, she said that providers have told her department that there are some clients with more complex situations where it's difficult to maintain engagement virtually.

"We're going to need to figure out how we can better serve that population because telehealth is not going to be as successful," Gleghorn said.

Chuck Madson, treatment system manager at the Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, said after the stay-at-home order went into effect, the agency connected with its more than 200 clients to see what they needed to be able to participate in treatment virtually. This includes helping people learn how to use Zoom or connecting people with services offering free Wi-Fi.

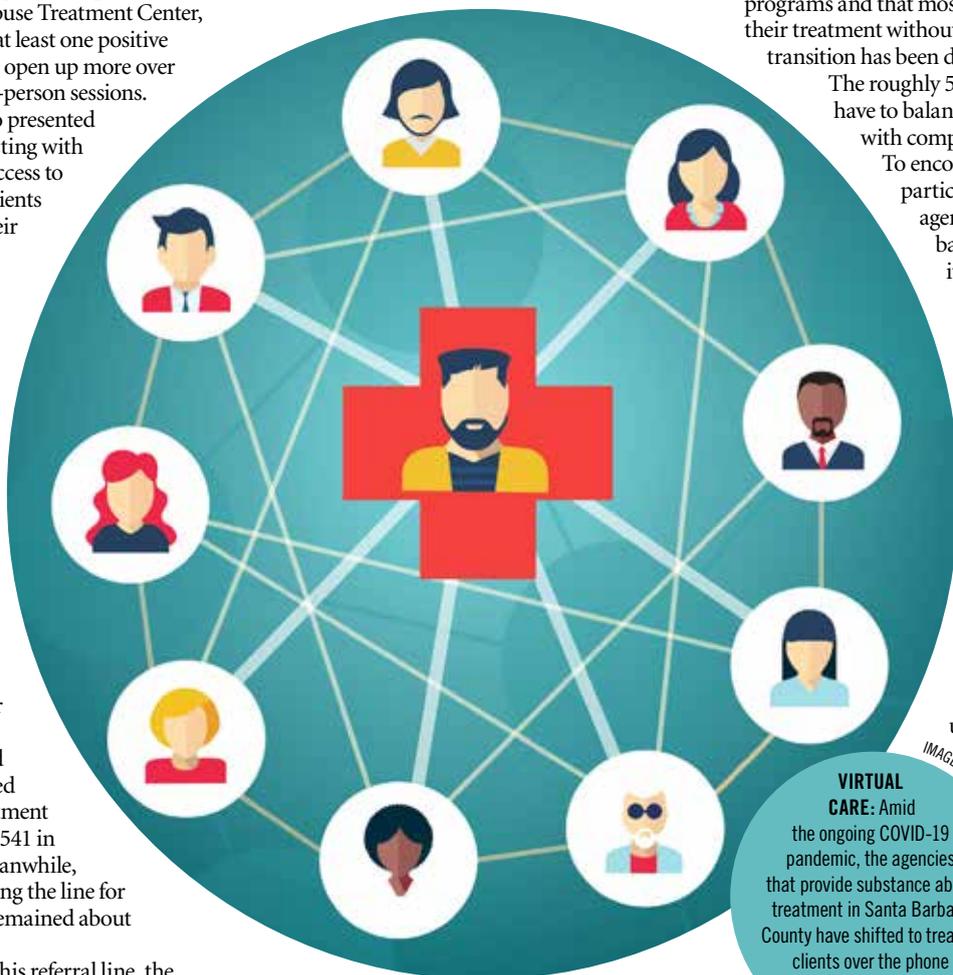
Many of the people working at the Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, including Madson, are in recovery themselves and knew right away that this transition to virtual treatment would be difficult for clients. While there are contributing factors for this, the isolation that clients are forced

# Seeking treatment

## Substance abuse treatment providers adapt to virtual care

into is the hardest part, Madson said.

"When we use, we in some ways separate ourselves from the people we care about and the community because we're active in our addiction," Madson said. "Living in this situation, I could see it brings back those feelings of isolation for those entering the 12-step program."



"I think the biggest thing that's changed, and the most difficult, for our clients is the fact that they don't get to walk through a door and experience the first day of asking for help," Madson said.

"That's something that those in recovery are always thankful for—walking into a place that's welcoming for the first time. They're not getting that today."

Despite referrals being down, Madson said the agency hasn't experienced an abnormal increase in the number of people dropping out of treatment programs and that most people are continuing their treatment without a problem. However, the transition has been difficult for certain clients.

The roughly 50 youths the agency serves have to balance their virtual treatment with completing schoolwork online. To encourage them to continue participating, Madson said the agency started an incentive-based program where it provides its younger clients with gift cards or composition books for journaling.

Students completing their schoolwork at home also presents a challenge to their parents who may need their family's only computer in the house to participate in a video call for their own treatment. Gonzalez said in these situations, the center is working with those clients to set up individual and group sessions that work with their schedule.

The necessity for virtual meetings presents a greater challenge for clients experiencing homelessness, such as those who are living in the Santa

**VIRTUAL CARE:** Amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the agencies that provide substance abuse treatment in Santa Barbara County have shifted to treating clients over the phone and through video meetings.

IMAGE BY ALEX ZUNIGA

Ynez riverbed outside of Lompoc. Gonzalez said with so many public spaces closed where these clients normally visit to charge their phones, some clients can't engage in treatment simply because their cellphone battery runs out.

With these barriers and structural changes in treatment, Gonzalez said he's heard from some clients that they've gone back to using, while others expressed an increased desire to use, but haven't done so.

"Some of the more secure clients say, 'If I wasn't so strong in treatment, this would be a time to use,'" Gonzalez said.

Despite these challenges, Madson and Gonzalez said their agencies were able to make swift transitions to virtual treatment programs while continuing to connect with clients on a daily basis to ensure they have all the resources they need to continue with their recovery.

Whether the clients need help accessing food, child care, housing, or whatever it may be, Madson said the agency continues to serve those needs.

"Everything, overnight, went to a virtual world, and we wanted to make sure we were accommodating that from day one," Madson said. ○

Reach Staff Writer Zac Ezzone at [zezzone@santamariasun.com](mailto:zezzone@santamariasun.com).

**'I think the biggest thing that's changed, and the most difficult, for our clients is the fact that they don't get to walk through a door and experience the first day of asking for help.'**

—Chuck Madson, Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse

A significant part of treatment, Madson said, is connecting with other people who are going through the same situation. Not being able to celebrate recovery milestones or birthdays in person as a group changes the experience. That's why he is expecting to see an increase of people seeking treatment after the stay-at-home order is lifted and people can again meet in person.

PHOTO COURTESY OF WHITE BUFFALO LAND TRUST



**EDUCATION AND RESEARCH:** White Buffalo Land Trust plans to develop a 1,000-acre regenerative agricultural center called Jalama Canyon Ranch a few miles south of Lompoc.

# Building a model

Local nonprofit aims to create large-scale regenerative ag center for education, research

BY ZAC EZZONE

By the end of next year, a 1,000-acre ranch more than 5 miles south of Lompoc is slated to be the site of an agriculture program used to teach consumers and producers about a regenerative system of farming.

The organization behind the project, White Buffalo Land Trust, is a local nonprofit focused on the broad adoption of regenerative agriculture, Project Director Ana Smith said. To further this goal, White Buffalo focuses on land stewardship projects, such as the 12-acre farm it runs in Summerland, as well as education and research.

Earlier this year, the nonprofit announced its plans to develop a 1,000-acre regenerative agriculture project in Jalama Canyon Ranch. Smith said this project will serve as a model for how this type of farming can work efficiently on a larger scale.

“[Regenerative agriculture] is better for business and the planet, and can be done in a financially viable way,” Smith said.

According to Terra Genesis International, which is a design consulting firm that specializes in regenerative agriculture, this system is based on a set of principles that increases biodiversity, enriches soils, improves watersheds, and enhances ecosystems. It’s also used to capture carbon in the soil as a way to fight climate change.

Plans at Jalama Canyon Ranch include eliminating herbicide use and planting perennial ground cover at the ranch’s vineyards to improve soil health and water infiltration rates while reducing erosion; adding trees to existing pasture and grasslands on the ranch, which will help increase the carbon in the soil; and building a center with worker and guest housing, as well as spaces for meetings and research.

Smith said the nonprofit views regenerative agriculture as a potential way to address some of the major environmental challenges the county and the rest of the world are facing, such as climate change and declining biodiversity.

“Change does begin on the ground, and this solution is positioned for regional and global impact with shared data models and having the research to back these outcomes and techniques

used on the landscape,” Smith said.

One of the most significant barriers preventing the widespread adoption of regenerative agriculture is that there are no local large-scale examples of how it can work, Smith said. The nonprofit envisions the ranch as a center for education, training, and scientific research that can act as that example.

“[Producers] need to see these local examples of regenerative agriculture on scale so they can see how it works,” Smith said.

The nonprofit is in the process of buying the property, and it’s raising funds to complete the purchase. During this first phase of funding, the nonprofit aims to raise \$6 million by December 2020 to purchase the land, preserve it in perpetuity, and establish a maintenance fund. So far, Smith said the nonprofit is halfway to this goal.

Next year, the nonprofit will kick off a second phase of funding. During that effort, the nonprofit hopes to raise \$4 million by December 2021 to build the necessary infrastructure on the ranch and to implement the education, training, and science programs the organization has planned. Smith said the nonprofit plans to host its first training course at the end of 2021 and then roll out a more robust training program afterward.

## Highlights

- The Foodbank of Santa Barbara County recently launched a bilingual text message program. County residents can text “food” or “comida” to (877) 366-3801, enter their ZIP code, and then receive a message with the three food distribution locations nearest to them.

- The Santa Maria Valley Chamber of Commerce started a marketing campaign for businesses that are open or reopening during the COVID-19 pandemic. Business owners can fill out a “safe and open” pledge where they agree to review state and local guidelines and do everything they can to abide by those guidelines. After signing the pledge, the chamber will send promotional material to the business to highlight their status. Visit [santamaria.com](http://santamaria.com) for details. ○

Staff Writer Zac Ezzone wrote this week’s Spotlight. Send tips to [spotlight@santamariasun.com](mailto:spotlight@santamariasun.com).

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- 78% We're losing a key piece of our community.
- 11% I'm excited to potentially have a dispensary in town.
- 11% I'm still hopeful it can remain open or relocate.
- 0% That's capitalism!

9 Votes

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# Saving the salamander

## The elusive California tiger salamander costs a pretty penny to protect

BY RON FINK

The California tiger salamander is an elusive creature that has been causing local ranchers, vintners, farmers, and developers a collective migraine for decades.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service describes them this way: "The species is restricted to grasslands and low foothills with pools or ponds that are necessary for breeding. A California tiger salamander spends most of its life on land. Actually, 'in the land'—it lives underground, using burrows made by squirrels and other burrowing mammals. Catching a California tiger salamander requires a permit, but you may be able to see larvae swimming around."

The "pond" they are talking about is a vernal pool, which is defined as a seasonal body of standing water; basically a large mud puddle that forms during the rainy season and is totally dry during periods of drought and in the late summer.

The Central California distinct population segment of the California tiger salamander was listed as threatened on Aug. 8, 2004. This began a series of events that would cause someone to wonder about the "science" used to establish the listing. Large portions of Northern Santa Barbara County were included in the areas of concern.

There never were any historical species counts, and there was no physical evidence that the California tiger salamander ever existed within the proposed area. Biologists stated: "Data on numbers of individual California tiger salamanders are lacking, since they spend much

of their lives underground, and because only a portion of the total number of animals migrate to pools to breed each year."

Biologists admit that the salamander doesn't appear to be a hardy breed: "Tiger salamanders breed only once or twice during their lifetime, and their lifetime reproductive success is fairly low. While individuals may survive for more than 10 years, most individuals do not reach sexual maturity until they are 2 to 5 years old, and mortality of individuals exceeds 50 percent during the first summer."

And supporting documentation seems to uphold the notion that isolated colonies may become extinct even if protections are in place: "Because many of the areas of suitable habitat may be small and support small numbers of salamanders, local extinction may commonly occur."

They also admit that the entire basis for the listing is based on guesswork, not science as required by the Endangered Species Act: "Little is known about the behavior of California tiger salamanders while they are underground because they are difficult to observe. The availability of suitable habitat and documentation of its loss may be an appropriate method for assessing the status of the species."

In other words, just the loss of a vernal pond or squirrel hole is enough to establish that the species is dying out.

Thus the declaration that "the best scientific and commercial information available" was used to make this determination seems flawed.

So, fast forward to 2020; after decades of conflict between local rancher and successful farmer Bob Campbell and the environmentalist activists of Santa Barbara County, an accord seems to have been reached.

For any of you who have traveled on Highway 246 between Lompoc and Buellton, you couldn't fail to notice some ponds after seasonal rains near the intersection of 246 and Campbell Road—these are located on the Campbell ranch property.

For years, local environmental groups have been harassing the Campbells and every other rancher, vintner, farmer, and developer in the

**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](mailto: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](http://santamariasun.com).

North County. These same environmentalists are funded by the idle rich, many of whom are living on large estates that are arguably more damaging to the natural environment than the Campbell ranch could ever be.

Recently it was reported that "in early April, the Land Trust for Santa Barbara County purchased a 118-acre conservation easement near Lompoc from the Bob Campbell family, protecting critical habitat for federally endangered California tiger salamanders."

The reported consideration for the easement was \$2 million.

The report goes on: "The easement is a legal agreement between the Campbells and the Land Trust to permanently conserve a portion of the Campbell Home Ranch with habitat vital to California tiger salamanders. The Campbells' ownership of their land remains unchanged, and they are free to continue the historic cattle operations they have undertaken for five generations."

So after 35 years, the environmentalists got their way—sort of. The Campbell Ranches can continue their ranch operations, and it only cost \$2 million to protect a critter that no one has ever seen on the property! ○

Ron Fink writes to the Sun from Lompoc. Send your thoughts, comments, and opinionated letters to [letters@santamariasun.com](mailto:letters@santamariasun.com).

## LETTERS

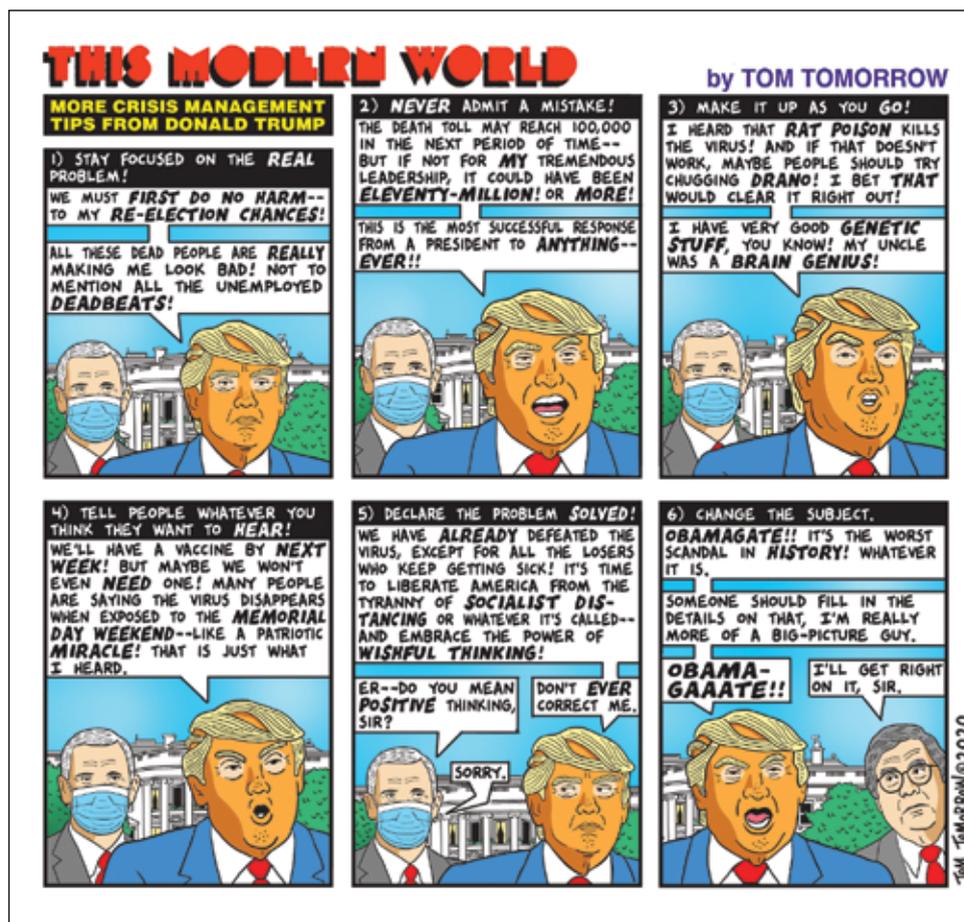
### Physicians stand with public health officials

The Central Coast Medical Association stands firmly in support of our public health servants and their recommendations throughout the coronavirus pandemic. Based solely on science, these policies are in place to protect the health and safety of our communities as we hasten a return to "normal life." As health professionals, they are driven by the science of protecting human life through good, sound public health measures. It is that simple.

Specifically, we would like to call out our local public health heroes, Dr. Penny Borenstein (San Luis Obispo County) and Dr. Henning Ansorg (Santa Barbara County), for their tireless leadership during this time. Over the past several weeks, we have all witnessed the critical role that our public health officials play in our daily life. They are doctors, nurses, scientists, and other health professionals who often labor quietly in the background monitoring, directing, and advising us when times are good. And during these rare times that we find ourselves in, we have discovered how invaluable they are.

As we enter into this next phase of returning to normal life in a SAFE way, let us remember that patience and care are virtues we all must emulate. The doctors of the CCMA know all community members of the Central Coast wish to see a healthy recovery. We know that there will be many opinions about how and when we reopen, but we ask for a unified respect for our public health team. They are literally on the

LETTERS continued page 11



LETTERS from page 10

front lines of this horrific pandemic on a daily basis, putting their own health and welfare in jeopardy to ensure the well-being and safety of our community members.

The impact of the past two months cannot be overstated. We understand that many in our communities are in panic mode—not knowing when the pandemic will be over. However, as doctors, we understand that we will all win this battle together, unified by our mutual desire to emerge healthy and protecting our most vulnerable. A healthy discourse is always warranted. However, it is time to put aside the polarizing diatribes that we have seen emerging and to focus on developing sound, science-driven public policy. We adamantly support our leaders as they make the difficult decisions.

We must strive to bring together our communities and support those working hardest to protect us. We believe the public health policies recommended by our leaders are our best options for halting the spread of COVID-19 along the Central Coast. We encourage everyone to stay vigilant in the fight against this pandemic.

Kevin Casey, MD  
Thomas Hale, MD  
Central Coast Medical Association

## Cannabis is a promising industry for the county

I'm writing in response to the article your paper recently published about the so-called "Coalition for Responsible Cannabis" filing a lawsuit against the county of Santa Barbara claiming the county has not provided adequate oversight of the local cannabis farms and businesses that are prospering in our area ("Battle in the valley," April 30). My family and I moved from Los Angeles in 2009. We moved here because the recession had hit us hard. I was a new mom, my company had downsized, and my husband's position had been eliminated at the company he worked for at the time.

When I lived and worked in Los Angeles, I held important positions in the finance industry (Lehman Brothers and U.S. Trust Bank, N.A.). Unfortunately, moving to North County meant that I would have to commute a long distance to find a job that paid me somewhat close to what my last position in Los Angeles paid. This was difficult for me because my commute and job got in the way of my availability as a parent.

I have been employed by the cannabis industry since 2018. I now do not have to commute a long distance to get paid what someone with my skills and experience should get paid. This industry has provided me with benefits, a good salary, and the ability to provide for my family when my self-employed husband has been in between job assignments. We can live comfortably, and I am able to be there for my daughter when she needs me.

With everything that is going on in the world at the moment, I have not been concerned about my company being downsized or my position eliminated. The cannabis industry has helped the economy in our county and will continue to do so as long as there are good people who are willing to set their negative perceptions aside and get educated in our industry and farming practices.

We are all hard-working individuals, trying to provide for our families in a new and exciting industry. We have continued to abide by all the laws and requirements that the county has asked of us. We are farmers who share the same commitments that other farmers share. I can only hope that people like Mr. Pence and his coalition can realize that we are stronger

together, and we can make our communities a better place to live in.

Veronica Benton  
Lompoc

## County's cannabis ordinance gave us hope

This letter is in response to your paper's article about the lawsuit filed against the county of Santa Barbara attacking its cannabis regulations ("Battle in the valley," April 30). We have been farming organic vegetables in Goleta for the last 10 years. As much as we have loved this line of work, it has been very challenging economically to survive and continue to operate. Our entire farm team was filled with hope and excitement for a new crop and opportunity when cannabis was legalized in 2016. We were, and still are, proud of our county supervisors and planning staff for creating such a progressive and forward-thinking land-use ordinance for cannabis farming. For the first time we felt there was an opportunity to finally obtain economic stability and have some confidence our farming operation in the Goleta foothills would stay viable for the long run.

To now see the opposition file a CEQA lawsuit against Santa Barbara County over its approval of a cannabis farm permit, using environmental laws to prohibit such an environmentally friendly crop, just doesn't make any sense and saddens our entrepreneurial souls. We encourage the county to fight and prevail against this lawsuit so that this new opportunity we have been investing into does not disappear.

Jack Motter  
Ellwood Canyon Farms, Goleta

## CalGEM rules offer critical buffers in Cat Canyon

CalGEM is embarked on an effort to write new rules. These will impact the health and well-being of all who live, work, play, and attend school in Cat Canyon.

The creation of a 2,500-foot buffer zone separating oil drilling and infrastructure from homes and schools is crucial. In Cat Canyon one school's water well is dangerously near oil wells that inject toxic wastewater underground. A nearby landowner found that his new groundwater well has been contaminated by oil field fluids from nearby operations.

And oil field activities also produce deadly H2S [hydrogen sulfide] gas and VOCs [volatile organic compounds].

Further, old or poorly maintained equipment has often ignited wildfires in Cat Canyon. These can easily spread to schools, towns, and ranches.

More than 800,000 Californians live or attend school within 2,500 feet of oil operations. Studies clearly show that health impacts from proximity to oil development include cancer, asthma, pneumonia, skin-related hospitalizations, and depression. What should a reasonable buffer be?

Studies support the assumption that 2,500 feet is the necessary distance to help alleviate the health impacts of air and water contamination. Though this buffer does not guarantee the absence of ill effects, it does mean that the concentrations of contaminants will be less harmful.

This is a reasonable and supportable buffer that must be adopted if CalGEM is to fulfill its clearly stated new mandate to prioritize the protection of public health, safety, and the environment. And one more new rule that shouldn't need any further explanation: no drilling through our drinking water sources.

Seth Steiner  
Los Alamos

# Totally RAD

I was too busy flying off the handle about the Lompoc prison situation last week to utter a twitter about another lousy local situation.

**The Old Town Market in Orcutt.** But before I gather my feathers and flutter onto that particular cannabis-soaked soapbox, I just need to say, *THANK GOD Santa Barbara County* managed to extricate itself out from under the staggering numbers associated with the COVID-19 outbreak at the Lompoc pen.



The county should definitely not be punished for the sins of the U.S. **Federal Bureau of "Bozos" (Prisons)** and how badly it's managed to screw up safety at its two detention facilities in Lompoc—which the county has no power over and is having a hard time getting transparent information out of. And **California** apparently agrees. The county gets to move forward with reopening plans without worrying about the cases between the **Federal Bureau of Putzes'** walls.

The number of "confirmed active cases," according to the oh so trustworthy **Federal Bureau of Asshats'** website, is currently sitting at 928 inmates and 16 staff members.

Back to everyone's favorite neighborhood grocery store run by a local family that one of the biggest cannabis growers/sellers around is kicking out of his company's newest asset. **Helios Dayspring's** retail cannabis operation, the **Natural Healing Center**, is hoping with crossed fingers that the county will allow it to set up shop in what's currently Orcutt's favorite family market.

Apparently after 10 months of super-secret haranguing over the building, its owners finally sold it to Dayspring, sending a text message to market operator **Mark Seller** notifying him of the news. A text message? Really? After 16 years of a landlord-tenant relationship. Wow!

And, gosh, would you believe it? The Natural Healing Center folks just don't understand why Orcutt's residents are in an uproar.

The shop won't be dingy, **Healing Center Chief Operating Officer Nick Andre** told the **Sun**. Criminals aren't going to hang out there. Guys, come on, it's going to be a professional operation. Plus, he said, this reaction is fueled by a negative preconceived notion of cannabis stores.

Yeah, Nick, I'm sure the uproar has nothing to do with the fact that a mom-and-pop business that's been serving Orcutt for decades is most likely going to close its doors because your company bought the building out from under them. Which might just show the county why it shouldn't approve a cannabis retail permit application for the spot.

There's this little box that needs to be ticked during the approval process that has to do with community fit, and the Natural Healing Center clearly doesn't understand anything about that.

Even this liberal freedom-taking rag understands that it's not about the weed, man.

Speaking of getting high, who comes up with the names for these guides to reopen? We've got **RISE** in Santa Barbara County—Reopening In Safe Environment (not grammatically correct, at all)—and **START** in SLO County—Steps to Adapt and Reopen Together. Do we need inspirational words to guide us through a reopening plan after being on lockdown for almost 10 weeks? ○

The canary thinks Reopening After Detention (RAD) is a fine name for a post-pandemic guide. Send comments to canary@santamariasun.com.



## Can I crash on your couch for awhile?

Ask us about our Foster Program

FOSTER • SPONSOR • VOLUNTEER • DONATE

Anyone can help!

Mimi has been through a lot after a car hit her in Nipomo, and we decided to rescue this sweet dog two years ago. First she had two oral surgeries to fix shattered teeth, then orthopedic surgery to fix her broken leg and remove mammary tumors, which turned out to be cancer. After two years of detailed and expensive tests every 3 months to watch for the return of the cancer, we are now extremely happy that she is most likely cancer free. Next up was hip surgery last October with a very long and hard rehabilitation in Santa Barbara twice a week, still ongoing. What's next? Unfortunately, two days ago we were given the news that Mimi has an exposed pulp molar that needs to be addressed by a canine dental specialist immediately. At this time we are asking for donations to once again help Mimi in her time of need. Mimi has been through a lot, but remains a sweet dog with many many years left to play and run. If you would like to make a tax-deductible donation to Mimi, please mail to P.O. Box 2952, Orcutt, CA 93457 or through Paypal on our website listed below.



**CCSPCA, Inc.**  
Central Coast Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

PO Box 2952, Orcutt, CA 93457

www.centralcoastspca.org

Email: centralcoastSPCA@yahoo.com

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This ad provided by:

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# HOT STUFF

MAY 21 – MAY 28  
2020



## BIRD IS THE WORD

The Wildling Museum of Art and Nature in Solvang is currently accepting submissions to its 11th biannual Nature Photography Competition. The theme of the contest is Critters of the Tri-County Region, as applicants are advised to turn in photos of wildlife found within the counties of Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, or Ventura. The deadline to submit is July 6. Visit [wildlingmuseum.org](http://wildlingmuseum.org) for more info.

—Caleb Wiseblood

FILE PHOTO COURTESY OF ELLIOT LOWNDES

## 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](http://wildlingmuseum.org/news/2020-retrospective). Wildling Museum of Art and Nature, 1511-B Mission Dr., Solvang.

**A MIGHTY OAK: PERMANENT EXHIBIT ONLINE** Depicts the habitat around a Valley oak—one of the largest and old trees found in our area. View the artwork online. ongoing Free. Wildling Museum of Art and Nature, 1511-B Mission Dr., Solvang, 805-688-1082, [wildlingmuseum.org](http://wildlingmuseum.org).

**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](http://wildlingmuseum.org).

**REMEMBERING BUD BOTTOMS: A LEGACY OF ART AND ACTIVISM** This online exhibit features sea life sculpture works by the Santa Barbara artist locally-renowned for his iconic Dolphin Family sculpture installed at the base of Stearns Wharf. Through Sept. 22 Free. Wildling Museum of Art and Nature, 1511-B Mission Dr., Solvang, 805-688-1082, [wildlingmuseum.org](http://wildlingmuseum.org).

**SB COUNTY AND BEYOND** Photographic landscapes by George Rose. View online. ongoing Free. Wildling Museum of Art and Nature, 1511-B Mission Dr., Solvang, 805-688-1082, [wildlingmuseum.org](http://wildlingmuseum.org).

### SOLVANG SCHOOL: INSPIRED BY NATURE

View the exhibit online. Features photography by 29 Solvang School Yearbook and Media students. The students, grades 7–8, were inspired by philosopher Henry David Thoreau's quote: "All good things are wild and free." ongoing Free. Wildling Museum of Art and Nature, 1511-B Mission Dr., Solvang, 805-688-1082, [wildlingmuseum.org](http://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](http://wildlingmuseum.org). Wildling Museum of Art and Nature, 1511-B Mission Dr., Solvang.

### SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS

#### ABK VIRTUAL STUDIO: LOVE LOOKING OUT

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 29**, 11 a.m. Wine and Design, 3420 Orcutt Road, suite 105, Orcutt.

**PCPA: ACTORS TALKBACK** Streams live on PCPA's Instagram every Thursday and spotlights a different thespian guest each week. Hosted by Erik Stein. Thursdays, 3:30 p.m. Free. [pcpa.org](http://pcpa.org). PCPA: The Pacific Conservatory Theatre, 800 S. College, Santa Maria, 805-922-8313.

**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](http://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](mailto: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](http://pcpa.org).

**VIRTUAL STUDIO: PRETTY STEER SKULL** 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 27**, 6 p.m. 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: STRONGER TOGETHER** 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 29**, 6 p.m. 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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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/](http://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, [slore.org/](http://slore.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/](http://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/](http://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](http://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](http://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 21**, 2 p.m. and **May 28**, 2 p.m. Free. [stbenslosos.org](http://stbenslosos.org). St. Benedict's Church, 2220 Snowy Egret Ln., Los Osos, 805-528-0654.

**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](http://newtimeslo.com). You may also email [calendar@newtimeslo.com](mailto: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](mailto:cwiseblood@newtimeslo.com).

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### UNITED WE READ

The Santa Maria Public Library Valley Reads Book Club holds its next over-the-phone meeting on May 26. Club members meet virtually to discuss books on the fourth Tuesday of every month. Individuals interested in joining the group should contact Library Technician Jose Gaytan at jgaytan@cityofsantamaria.org.

—C.W.

### WORLD WIDE WORKOUT

Misha Bechtolsheim (pictured), owner of Central Core in Pismo Beach, leads a free workout webinar, Brain-based Exercises for Mental and Physical Health, on May 23, from 10:30 to 11:15 a.m. The webinar will cover movements intended to create a mind-body connection and is open to all ages and abilities. Call (805) 295-9505 or visit centralcore.fitness for more info.

—C.W.

HOT STUFF from page 12

## CULTURE & LIFESTYLE

### LOMPOC/VANDENBERG

**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 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

**FREE WORKOUT WEBINAR: MENTAL HEALTH MONTH** Free online workout for Mental Health Month to explore the benefits of mind-body exercise. All ages and abilities. Learn new movements to trigger brain health. **May 23**, 10:30-11:15 a.m. Free. 805-295-9505. core.streamfit.io/webinar-registration. Central Core, 1160 Price Street, Pismo Beach.

**MEMORIAL DAY VETERANS EVENT** A collaboration with the Welcome Home Military Heroes Organization. Details are to be announced (check site for updates). **May 25** AGVillageConcerts.com. Historic Village of Arroyo Grande, Branch and Short St., Arroyo Grande.

### 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 class will support you 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 Botanical Garden members/\$15 for non-members. 805-540-1762. eventbrite.com. San Luis Obispo Botanical Garden, 3450 Dairy Creek Rd., San Luis Obispo.

**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.

**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-Thursdays, 9:30-10:30 a.m. through June 11 \$72. 415-516-5214. ae.slcsud.org. Online, 1500 Lizzie Street, San Luis Obispo.

**VIRTUAL WORKSHOP: FLOWER ARRANGING WITH DENISE BENDA** Create a beautiful flower arrangement with your mom virtually while enjoying a glass of Center of Effort Wine. Denise will conduct a live session from our beautiful Center of Effort property on the basics of flower arranging. **May 22**, 2-3:30 p.m. bigbigslo.com. Downtown SLO, Higuera Street, 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 Hospice Volunteer Training begins May 19. Classes will be held through Zoom,

CULTURE & LIFESTYLE continued page 14

# WANTED

## HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE

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secure links will be sent to each participant for each session. **May 21**, 10 a.m.-noon, **May 26**, 10 a.m.-noon, **May 27**, 10 a.m.-noon and **May 28**, 10 a.m.-noon Free. 805-547-7025 ext 2021. Wilshire Hospice, 277 South St., suite R, San Luis Obispo.

**NORTH SLO COUNTY**

**PASO ROBLES: MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH DRIVE 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.

**POP-UP DRIVE-IN THEATER** The businesses at Colony Square would like to invite you down to a popup drive-in event where we can provide you with pizza, donuts, popcorn, and/or brews directly to your car during the film. **May 21**, 8-9:30 p.m. my805tix.com. Colony Square, 6909 El Camino Real, Atascadero.

**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 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

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**WINE ONLINE**

Cass Winery in Paso Robles hosts Ted Ed, a virtual wine tasting with Ted Plemons, on May 22 and May 29, from 4 to 5 p.m. both days. The tasting package, which costs \$275, includes four bottles of wine, which are available for delivery. Participants are encouraged to purchase their packs one week before their session. Visit my805tix.com for admission and more info.

—C.W.

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be streaming live from the patio and will be taking requests. **May 24** Schooners, 171 North Ocean Ave, Cayucos, 805-995-3883, schoonerscayucos.com.

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## Arts Briefs

### Ian M. Hassett Foundation announces 2020 Memorial Art Award winners

The Ian M. Hassett Foundation has announced the winners of this year's Ian Hassett Memorial Art Award: Grace Schlereth (pictured), an Ernest Righetti High School student, and Joley Smith, an Orcutt Academy student. The award is offered annually, each May, by the foundation to local high school seniors.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE IAN M. HASSETT FOUNDATION



Artists in the competition were judged based on their abilities to project a distinct style in their works. Judges of the contest also took each artist's goals and life aspirations into consideration. According to a statement from the foundation, Schlereth was chosen for her "excellent technical skills and attention to detail," while Smith was chosen for her "strong voice" as well as "a maturity to her paintings." Each artist received \$1,000 from the foundation.

To find out more about the Ian M. Hassett Foundation—a local nonprofit dedicated to providing emerging Central Coast artists with scholarships, grants, awards, and other opportunities—visit [ianmhassett.com](http://ianmhassett.com). Individuals looking to support the foundation can make tax-deductible donations online.

### Gunpowder Press seeks Santa Barbara County poets for new book

Gunpowder Press invites poets from Santa Barbara County and adjacent counties to submit one to three poems inspired by photographs in the Santa Barbara Public Library's Edson Smith Collection. The winning poems will be included in an upcoming anthology. Selected poets for publication will receive a free copy of the book.

The Edson Smith Collection features nearly 1,500 photographs, dating from the 1870s to the 1940s, collected by Santa Barbara native and longtime resident Edson A. Smith (1877-1947). These photographs capture historic buildings, adobes, and other cultural landmarks throughout the county.

Participants can access the photos online at [luna.blackgold.org](http://luna.blackgold.org). Poetry submissions should be sent to [shorelinevoices@gmail.com](mailto:shorelinevoices@gmail.com) by June 30.

### Santa Maria Public Library customizes van into new bookmobile

PHOTO COURTESY OF GLORIA SOTO

The Santa Maria Public Library is currently customizing a Freightliner Sprinter van into its new bookmobile. The van is expected to be ready to offer library services throughout the community before the end of June. Santa Maria Councilwoman Gloria Soto is currently accepting suggestions for areas for the bookmobile to travel to when it's finished; contact her at [gsoto@cityofsantamaria.org](mailto:gsoto@cityofsantamaria.org).

For more updates on the Santa Maria Public Library's offerings during its temporary closure, call (805) 925-0994 or visit [facebook.com/santamariapubliclibrary](http://facebook.com/santamariapubliclibrary). The library is located at 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria. ○

Arts Briefs is compiled by Arts Editor Caleb Wiseblood. Send information to [cwiseblood@santamariasun.com](mailto:cwiseblood@santamariasun.com).



SCREENSHOT COURTESY OF ERIK STEIN

**THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT:** *Actors Talkback* streams live on PCPA's Instagram every Thursday, starting at 3:30 p.m. The show spotlights a different thespian guest each week. Host Erik Stein's (top) guests so far include PCPA alumna Dana Costello (bottom).

## Behind the scenes

*PCPA carries on with virtual content as the COVID-19 crisis proves to be its fiercest showstopper*

BY CALEB WISEBLOOD

Despite the cancellation of its last two spring productions (the remaining performances of *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar* and the formerly upcoming *The Sound of Music*), leaders of the Pacific Conservatory Theatre (PCPA) in mid-March remained hopeful about its summer lineup.

Less than two months later, the company's artistic director, Mark Booher, would officially announce the inevitable.

"It's a word to which we've become too accustomed, but the only word I can conjure to describe this decision is 'heartbreaking,'" Booher said in a press release, after declaring the cancellation of PCPA's summer season. "Still, the theater is always founded on creative adaptability, and certain basic optimism about the force and resilience of the human spirit.

"When the time is right," he added, "PCPA will be shining its light again, as a gathering place for our community."

The cancellation decision forces PCPA to turn away not only its audience, but approximately 100 artists formerly scheduled to work on *Little Shop of Horrors*, *Something Rotten*, and other summer productions. On average, PCPA shows bring close to 30,000 attendees to the Solvang Festival Theater every year, according to the release, resulting in nearly \$1 million in local economic activity—and that's excluding box office revenue.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MICHAEL COLLINS PHOTOGRAPHY



**PAST LIVES:** Aside from being PCPA's casting director and recruitment coordinator, Erik Stein has also acted in several of the company's productions, including last winter's *The Little Mermaid*, in which he portrayed King Triton.

### Standing ovation

Check out *Tech Talk* (every Tuesday at 3:30 p.m.) and *Actors Talkback* (every Thursday at 3:30 p.m.) on PCPA's Instagram. For more updates on PCPA, visit [pcpa.org](http://pcpa.org).

"Although we're saddened by the thought of a summer without the magic of PCPA for the first time in 46 years, we know that this is best for the safety of everyone," Chris Nielsen, board chair for the Solvang Theaterfest, said in the release.

But in the midst of PCPA's "physical" closure, the company's casting director, Erik Stein, feels almost more productive than ever, he explained.

"The faculty, staff, students, and leadership of PCPA have continued to work very hard from home," Stein told the *Sun*. "In fact, it feels like I've actually logged more hours over the last two months than I typically would."

Like his fellow instructors at PCPA, Stein currently teaches both his Audition and Business of Being an Actor courses through Zoom. He also works as PCPA's recruitment coordinator and continues to

recruit new performers by leading virtual workshops for college and high school students.

As if that isn't enough, Stein is also in the middle of co-writing an original musical, with writing partner Brad Carroll, and preparing to direct an online production of Moliere's *Tartuffe* (the cast will include several of PCPA's second-year acting students).

"I believe that restraint breeds creativity," Stein said.

## VIRTUAL STAGE

"Actors are trained to find creative ways to get around obstacles. Theater always seems to find its way. Our creative ambitions continue to be high as we work to find ways around this very unique obstacle."

Despite a seemingly full load, Stein was ecstatic when PCPA's social media department approached him to host two new Instagram live feed shows, *Tech Talk* and *Actors Talkback*.

"I love James Lipton on *Inside the Actor's Studio*, so I jumped at the opportunity. I am honored to do it," Stein said.

During the first talk show, *Tech Talk*, Stein shares the screen with one of PCPA's technicians or designers each week (the show streams as a live feed every Tuesday afternoon, starting at 3:30). Guests so far have included scenic designer Jason Bolen, technical director Henry Matthiessen, and master electrician Cody Soper.

"The designers and the technicians are really the makers of the magic. I always feel so lucky to stand in the midst of what they create," Stein said. "I want to give our audiences an opportunity to get to know the people they see on stage and the people who are behind the scenes making the magic happen."

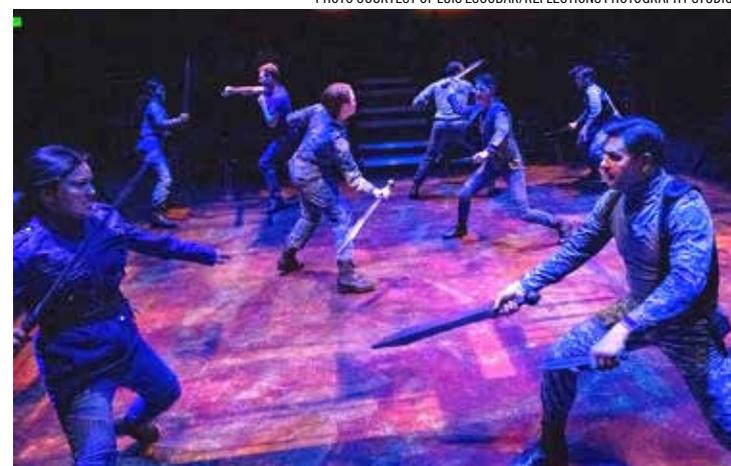
*Actors Talkback* streams live every Thursday, also starting at 3:30 p.m., and spotlights a different thespian guest each week. Stein has brought on Emily Trask, Kitty Balay, George Walker, Bree Murphy, Britney Simpson, and Dana Costello so far.

For Stein, providing new virtual content for PCPA is part of his stance as an actor to just keep creating, even under uncertain circumstances, he explained.

"It is a very interesting time to be an actor. We are trained to be comfortable with the unknown," Stein said. "You really can't be a professional actor if you are not able to embrace the unknown. There are a lot of unknowns right now—maybe more than we have dealt with in a long time—but we are trained to handle it and keep creating in whatever ways we can." ○

Arts Editor Caleb Wiseblood is embracing the unknown. Send story tips to [cwiseblood@santamariasun.com](mailto:cwiseblood@santamariasun.com).

PHOTO COURTESY OF LUIS ESCOBAR/REFLECTIONS PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIO



**IDES OF MARCH:** Performances of PCPA's *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar*, directed by Mark Booher, were held for only one weekend before the show was abruptly canceled in mid-March due to COVID-19 concerns.

# Not far from the tree

Lompoc father-and-son duo, Gary and Caleb Criscione, collaborate on new music while stuck at home together

BY CALEB WISEBLOOD

Imagine (pun intended) if John Lennon and Paul McCartney were advised to shelter in place with each other prior to The Beatles' breakup—how many new songs would they

IMAGE COURTESY OF GARY CRISCIONE



**SILVER LINING:** Gary and Caleb's new pandemic-inspired song, "The Story," is currently available to listen to for free on SoundCloud, under the duo's unofficial title, SCRW-19.

have collaborated on?

Living under the same roof during the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, local musicians Gary Criscione (late 40s) and his son, Caleb Criscione (late teens), found a creative way to spend their downtime at home together.

"And now the town is all empty/ No one in sight/ Everyday you must remember/ You are the light," Gary sings during "The Story," a new pandemic-inspired single co-written and produced by the duo.

Caleb provided guitar and synth programming during the song, while Gary took care of vocals and bass. The new track is currently available to listen to for free on SoundCloud, under the duo's unofficial title, SCRW-19.

"Isolation is tough on adults and even harder for kids," Gary told the *Sun*. "Since Caleb was not able to play with his band, and we were self-isolated, he asked me if we could collaborate on a song to describe the current state we are in."

Back in March, both Gary and Caleb were

### Storytime

"The Story" is currently available to listen to for free on SoundCloud, at [soundcloud.com/scrw19](https://soundcloud.com/scrw19).

ARTS continued page 17

PHOTO COURTESY OF GARY CRISCIONE



**DYNAMIC DUO:** Living under the same roof during the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, local musicians Gary Criscione (right) and his son, Caleb Criscione (left), found a creative way to spend their downtime at home—collaborating on a new song together.

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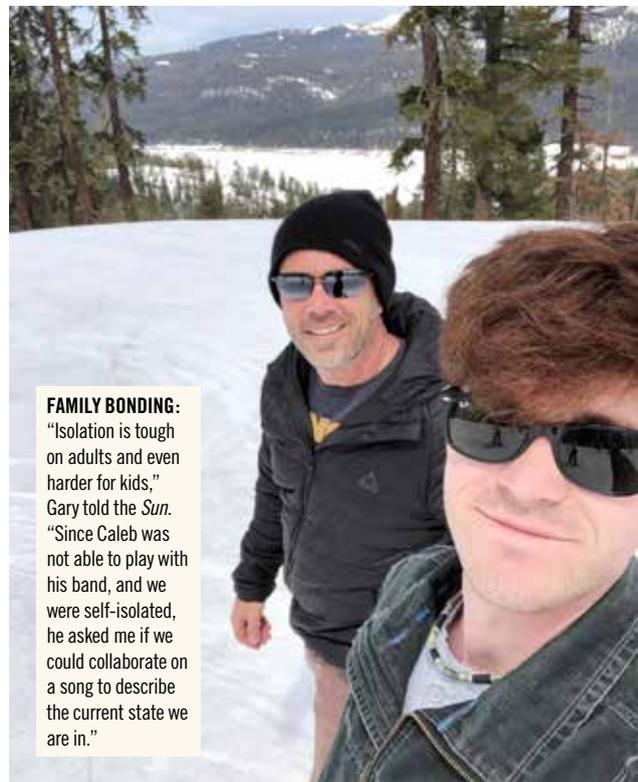
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PHOTOS COURTESY OF GARY CRISCIONE



**FAMILY BONDING:** "Isolation is tough on adults and even harder for kids," Gary told the Sun. "Since Caleb was not able to play with his band, and we were self-isolated, he asked me if we could collaborate on a song to describe the current state we are in."

Gary said, discussing life a few weeks into quarantine. "My niece was able to watch me from Australia, so that was cool."

For Caleb, apart from gig cancellations, life outside of musicianship didn't change much, he explained.

"Surprisingly, [quarantine] hasn't personally affected me much at all. I'm still pretty introverted," Caleb told the Sun. "I have more time to walk my dog, but then again, I think everybody does."

"I don't think the aspect of staying home is the thing that's biting at most artists," he added. "It's the uncertainty of the future."

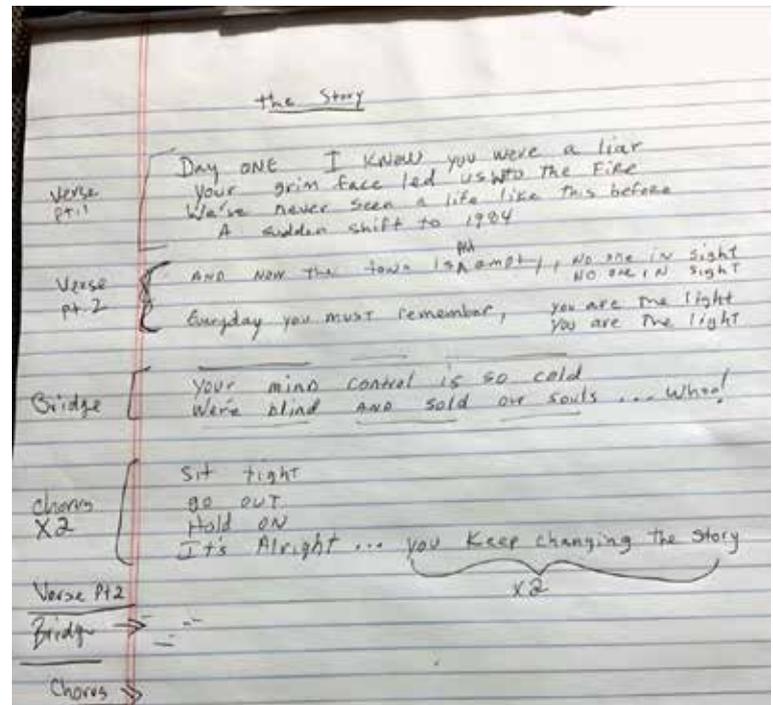
Overall, Gary's day-to-day routine, including his work schedule, was also quite unaltered. But that hasn't stopped him from worrying about the pandemic's effects on society, which inspired most of the lyrics found in "The Story."

"I worked from home mostly prior to this, so the adjustment wasn't as hard for me," Gary said. "I do worry about the lack of socialization with all of us though. One minute, kids were supposed to be going back to school in August this year, and the next day we hear that it will all be online."

Although Gary was hesitant about writing new music for a while after quarantine began, he was eager to work together with his son on a song, he said.

"I didn't really want to do anything musically for the first couple of weeks. It just was on the bottom of my priority list," Gary said. "When Caleb approached me on the project, it helped me take my mind off things."

The duo's collaboration on "The Story" began with a simple bass riff and a few lyrics, Gary said, which were added upon, and the song escalated quickly from there. Countering the gloom and doom of lyrics like, "We've never seen a life like this before/ A sudden shift to 1984," the song's beat is surprisingly head-bopping.



**MIGHTIER THAN THE SWORD:** The duo's collaboration on "The Story" began with a simple bass riff and a few lyrics, Gary said, which were added upon, and the song escalated quickly from there.

"I wanted the song to be upbeat and danceable with a retro '80s sound," Gary said. "Caleb came up with the guitar, keyboards, and drums and produced it. I was blown away by how fast we put this together." ○

Arts Editor Caleb Wiseblood loves hearing from local musicians. Contact him at [cwiseblood@santamariasun.com](mailto:cwiseblood@santamariasun.com).

**ARTS** from page 16  
scheduled to perform with their respective bands in Lompoc the first weekend after COVID-19 mitigation closures began in California. Both shows—Caleb, with his band, Whiplash Girl, at The Beach; Gary, with his band, Cellar Roots, at Hangar 7—were inevitably canceled.  
"Like most artists, I started doing livestream performances,"

# the Habit

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- It's great! I can't wait to eat inside a restaurant.
- People need to get back to work.
- It's going to lead to more infections and potentially deaths.
- It's fine as long as the county does a better job of monitoring and enforcing the updated public health order.

**Enter your choice online at: [NewTimesSLO.com](http://NewTimesSLO.com)**



PHOTO COURTESY OF AMAZON STUDIOS

# Meta-metaphysics

**C**reators Raphael Bob-Waksberg and Kate Purdy helm this animated fantasy-drama about Alma Winograd-Diaz (Rosa Salazar), a troubled young woman who, after a near-fatal car accident, discovers she has a new relationship with time and space. Soon her dead father, Jacob Winograd (Bob Odenkirk), begins appearing to her and telling her she's a shaman whose special abilities can find out his murderer. Is she insane? It's animated using the rotoscoping technique. (Eight 23 min. episodes)

**Glen:** Alma doesn't play well with others. She and her younger sister, Becca (Angelique Cabral), love each other, but they're very different. Becca is about to marry Reed (Kevin Bigley), the frat-boy-esque scion of the wealthy Hollingsworth clan, and Alma knows she'll never love her boyfriend, Sam (Siddharth Dhananjay), enough to want to settle down. Alma's mother, Camila (Constance Marie), definitely doesn't understand her daughter, and we learn that mental illness ran in Alma's deceased father Jacob's family. Aside from getting tequila-drunk, Alma doesn't have much ambition, and the only thing she's good at is her job in a preschool, but after a car accident leaves her questioning reality, even that job becomes too much for her. This first season is basically Alma navigating her existential crisis as she tries to discover who she is and why she's here. It's very funny and engaging! Another season has been greenlit, and I'll definitely watch.

**Anna:** Stylistically I am a big fan of the rotoscoping technique—it is such a smart way of muddying the waters between fantasy and reality and taking the audience on a journey. Not only are the characters and storyline of *Undone* fascinating, but it's just such a treat visually. Alma is both frustrating and magnetic—her quick wit and frankly hilarious antics contrast with the dull repetition she feels her life has slumped to and her bleak outlook in general. We learn pretty quickly that Alma's childhood was molded by several big events, including her father's death—times she can't help but travel back to in her mind and certainly still feel unresolved. Her mother and sister love her, though many times they can't stand her. She's a loose cannon near the shores of their glassy lake; who knows when she'll blow it all up again. I'm all in on this series! Bring on season two!

**Glen:** The rotoscoping technique allows for an easy transition between reality and fantasy. Sometimes I thought, "What's the point?" Then something dramatic would happen like Alma's car accident, a reversion into her past, or a trip into outer space, and I would realize the animation was essential to the story. This is a tale of relationships, personal growth, and metaphysics. Alma's father's research was based on what he believed was the malleable nature of time and space. When he returns to teach Alma to master, for instance, telekinesis, it's not through actually moving something with her mind but by using her newly discovered control over space and time. And her powers aren't even



**MENTALLY ILL MAGIC REALISM:** After a near-fatal car accident, Alma Winograd-Diaz (Rosa Salazar) awakes from a coma to discover she can see her dead father, Jacob Winograd (Bob Odenkirk), who's come to help her control her new power over time and space, in *Undone*.

### UNDONE

What's it rated? **TV-MA**  
What's it rated? **2019**  
Where's it showing?  
**Amazon Prime**

new; she just never manifested them until her father showed her they were there. It's pretty heady stuff, and the end of season one calls into question everything Alma thinks is true. Season two is teed up nicely. I can't find a release date for it, but it's definitely happening!

**Anna:** Alma's relationship with her father, both before and after his death, is complicated. She's the older sibling, so she has more memory and connection to him than sister Becca. She's no stranger to abandonment issues and seems to have almost a sense of pride over her unattached life. The walls she's built up in self-protection can't help but crumble as her reality falls further and further away. It's so easy to think of both

our lifetimes and time in general as a linear story; *Undone* has a lot of fun messing with that narrative and throwing us for loop after loop. Watching Alma's story unfold in a series of flashbacks and fast-forwards means that even at the end of season one we are still learning about our main character. We binged this, which is a great way to watch, but I wouldn't mind going back in time myself and slowing down my watch: There is a lot to enjoy here. ○

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

PHOTO COURTESY OF NETFLIX AND TITMOUSE



**HEAD TRIP:** Clancy (voiced by Duncan Trussell), a podcaster with one listener, uses his malfunctioning multiverse simulator to visit dying worlds and interview their inhabitants, in *The Midnight Gospel*, a batshit-crazy animated series on Netflix.

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

## TV Reviews

PHOTO COURTESY OF DANGER GOLDBERG PRODUCTIONS



**HORRORMONES:** Seventh grade besties Nick Birch (voiced by Nick Kroll) and Andrew Glouberman (voiced by John Mulaney) work through their feelings of insecurity and their near-constant need to masturbate in Netflix's animated series *Big Mouth*.

### BIG MOUTH

What's it rated? **TV-MA**  
When? **2017-present**  
Where's it showing? **Netflix**

In *Big Mouth*, some seventh-grade friends struggle through puberty and its subsequent hormonal complications as they navigate adolescence. The leads are besties Nick Birch (voiced by Nick Kroll) and Andrew Glouberman (voiced by John Mulaney), who work through their feelings of insecurity and their near-constant need to masturbate, driven by their shoulder-angel-style hormone monsters.

Throughout the series, they get advice from everyone from Duke Ellington, the Statue of Liberty (with a French accent, of course), and a pillow capable of getting pregnant. It's a deep dive into the puerile nature of middle school, and with episode titles like "Ejaculation," "Everybody Bleeds," "Am I Gay?" "Girls are Horny Too," and "Requiem for a Wet Dream," you can imagine what to expect.

It's surprisingly insightful and will remind viewers of their own coming-of-age travails, but it's also filled with gross-out body humor, so if that stuff offends you, steer clear! (30 min. episodes)

—Glen Starkey

### THE MIDNIGHT GOSPEL

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

File *The Midnight Gospel* in the frying-on-shrooms, late-night-dorm-room-discussion category. The surrealist animated series revolves around Clancy (voiced by Duncan Trussell), an outer-space podcaster with one listener, who uses his malfunctioning multiverse simulator to visit dying worlds and interview their inhabitants.

In episode one, for example, Clancy visits Earth 4-169, a world in the midst of a zombie apocalypse, where he meets and interviews the president. They casually debate the pros and cons of psychedelic drugs and whether they can help interpersonal growth as they fight off zombies.

In episode two, Clancy visits "Clown World," which is filled with weird creatures generated by a pop-up ad that infected his computer. He interviews a deer-dog creature about death as they're both sent to the slaughterhouse by the clowns, eventually turning them into sentient meat-mush creatures. It's really weird, somewhat sophomoric, but surprisingly philosophical. (Eight 20- to 36-min. episodes) ○

—Glen

## Is your business open or preparing to open? Take the Safe and Open Pledge!



The Santa Maria Valley Chamber has developed the Safe and Open campaign to help Santa Maria Valley businesses communicate widely to the community a return to economic activity in accordance with public health and safety best-practices. In accordance with the State of California's reopening guidelines, the business community of Santa Maria stands ready to move towards a thriving economic environment once again, while protecting against the renewed spread of Coronavirus.

Is your business open or getting ready to open? Sign the Safe and Open pledge and the Chamber will help promote the ways you are safely reopening to the public. Sign the pledge at [santamaria.com/safeandopen](http://santamaria.com/safeandopen)

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**CUPCAKE QUEEN:** Sweet Baking Co. in Lompoc started focusing on its cupcake game during the pandemic, and every weekend they have several flavors for customers to choose from. Oreo (center) and confetti (sprinkles) are always on hand, and the rest rotate weekly, including red velvet, carrot cake, cinnamon maple, chocolate sprinkle, and some mystery flavors.



**COLOR AND PANACHE:** Although Sweet Baking Co. makes custom cakes to order, there are some lines that owner Missy Morales will not cross. She won't decorate anything with cartoons. Her style is all about art—like a beautiful watercolor painted in frosting.



**PERFECTION:** Before opening her bakery in 2018, Missy Morales took the time to perfect her recipes. It took her three months to get the macarons she whips up just right.

"I really didn't want to start out with having to pay back a loan," she said. "The shop's changed so much since then. And it's been really good. The community's really supported us."

Two years later, Sweet Baking Co. is dealing with the ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic. Like so many other independently owned businesses, Morales had to make some rather weighty decisions quickly. And the pragmatism that she showed by waiting to open the shop is evident in the route Sweet Baking Co. is currently traversing.

As things started to unfold, Morales lost her assistant baker. They mutually decided it would be best for her to quarantine at home. With a small team before the pandemic, Sweet Baking Co. essentially became a one-woman show, with Morales prepping, baking, decorating, selling, cleaning, administrating, and fielding calls from customers new and old.

Plus, she now had three children home from school. Morales has a first-grader, eighth-grader, and a senior in high school. She said they are pretty self-sufficient and are old enough to figure things out, but the fact is, they still need a parent around. Her husband works with the Air National Guard and Cal Fire, so he's home every other weekend.

"I took a week off from the shop. I had to figure out my kids' school, all the Zooms and everything and get them organized, and then I needed to figure out what I was going to do at the shop," Morales said.

She decided to shorten the hours and days of the week that Sweet Baking Co. was open—now Thursday through Sunday from noon to 4 p.m.—and make a smaller menu of items people could pick out from behind the glass. While customers can still find cheesecake slices, cookies, and vegan cookie dough regularly, Morales has turned her focus to cupcakes. What was more of a sweets shop has kind of become a cupcake shop. She said she still does custom cake orders, too, but that people should be patient. With one person on the cake assembly line, she's hoping customers will understand that they need to allow her the time to turn around those made to order cakes. It's not something she can do overnight.

The store's counter is now pushed almost all the way to the door, so customers can't really step more than a foot inside the shop. That way, Morales can ensure people aren't crammed into the store, rather they're social distancing outside before they step up to order.

The crazy thing is that Morales feels like she's busier than she's ever been. On Mother's Day, she said Sweet Baking Co. sold out of cupcakes in an hour.



**VEGAN DELIGHT:** In addition to selling vegan doughnuts from time-to-time, Sweet Baking Co. always has Morales' famous edible cookie dough in the display case. Yes, that's vegan, too.

"It's just kind of out of control with the amount of cupcakes that we're selling right now," Morales said. "It's been really good. I always wanted a cupcake shop, and it just wasn't happening before."

The cupcakes that customers will always be able to find include Oreo and confetti. The rest of the flavors rotate, and there's always a mystery creation that Morales dreams up. That way, people who come for a dose of treats get a nice surprise on the menu. Plus, Morales said she's contemplating bringing her vegan doughnuts back into the regular rotation because of all the requests she's received for them.

Although the transition has been difficult, and she's bringing work home with her now—something she's done her best not to do in the past—Morales said the support she's received from her family and friends has been invaluable. Many of them volunteer their time to help out on the weekends, Morales said.

"Without that I don't think I could have done it. Because I just couldn't have done it all by myself," she said. ○

*Editor Camillia Lanham thinks she could eat a cupcake in one satisfying, uncomfortable bite. Send tips to [clanham@santamariasun.com](mailto:clanham@santamariasun.com).*

## It's cupcake time

*Sweet Baking Co. in Lompoc had to make some changes because of the pandemic and found sweet success*

BY CAMILLIA LANHAM

From day one, Missy Morales knew she was sure about one thing.

No cartoon character cakes.

"I can do it. I won't do it. I didn't want to be stuck making a Mickey Mouse cake every weekend. It would have driven me crazy," she said.

Instead, Morales had a whimsical, colorful look she wanted to craft and make her own.

"I use a lot of bright colors. I don't do any fondant. It's all more kind of artsy. You would just look at it, and know it's me," Morales said. "I don't do anything that looks like it's going to come from the grocery store bakery. ... I don't do sheet cakes."

That's because the cakes that she crafts at her shop in Lompoc, Sweet Baking Co., are made to order, fresh, and hand-

decorated. She doesn't have cakes stored in the freezer waiting for that next order to come in.

Instead her round, layered cakes are lush and beautiful, made with that Morales panache. Classy and stylish, with a certain flair. Frosting painted on the sides of a cake with golden luster brushed in. Drips falling down the sides of an almost naked sponge. Purples, pinks, whites, and blues marbled together.

It's exactly what Morales wanted from the second she started pushing toward her dream, about four years ago. She wanted to build a recognizable brand, a loyal customer base, and creations that express who she is.

Pre-baking life, Morales was selling insurance.

Prior to that she was a bank teller. She would work those office-job hours, from 9 to 5, and then go home and bake. She would dream about baking while she was at work, Morales said. And then, one day, she just couldn't take it anymore. Luckily, she said, her husband has a steady job in the military, so Morales was able to quit her job even though it was a risky move.

"I needed to have a change in order for something to change, and it did. So things worked out," she said.

However, before Morales even thought about opening a shop, she needed to figure out the recipes in her own kitchen.

"You can't master everything. I just want to do one thing and get really good at it. Cakes,

macarons, sugar cookies, cupcakes," she said. "And I wanted to perfect those. ... I worked three months to perfect my macaron recipes. ... If it's mine, it's mine. I'm just comfortable that way."

Once she felt comfortable with her following and building her specific brand, she opened the storefront. But even after tracking down a

space, it took almost a year to get the shop perfected and up and running. Morales said it was basically a shell that needed to get filled in with all the parts and pieces that make a bakery.

They built a floor, installed plumbing for sinks, and she funded it all with the custom orders that she was doing on the side. Once Sweet Baking Co. flung those doors wide open to let the public in, Morales said it's been nonstop.

### Treat yourself

Keep up with the escapades of Sweet Baking Co. in Lompoc via Instagram and Facebook. That's where you'll find the latest hours, updates, and changes happening due to the ever-evolving COVID-19 pandemic. For now, the shop is open Thursday through Sunday from noon to 4 p.m. at 322 N. H St., suite C, in Lompoc. And, of course, you can always visit the shop virtually at [sweetbakingcompany.com](http://sweetbakingcompany.com).

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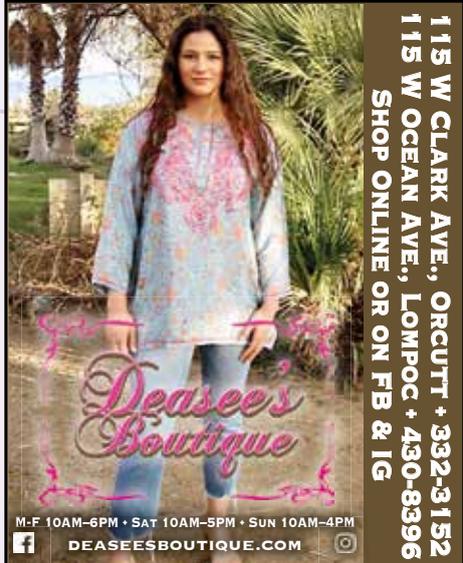
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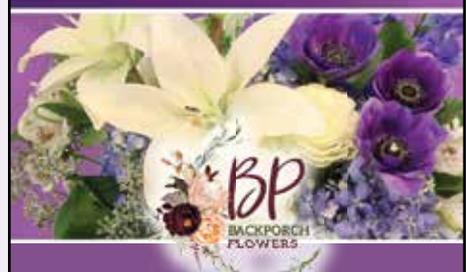
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