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# Sun

AT THE MOVIES

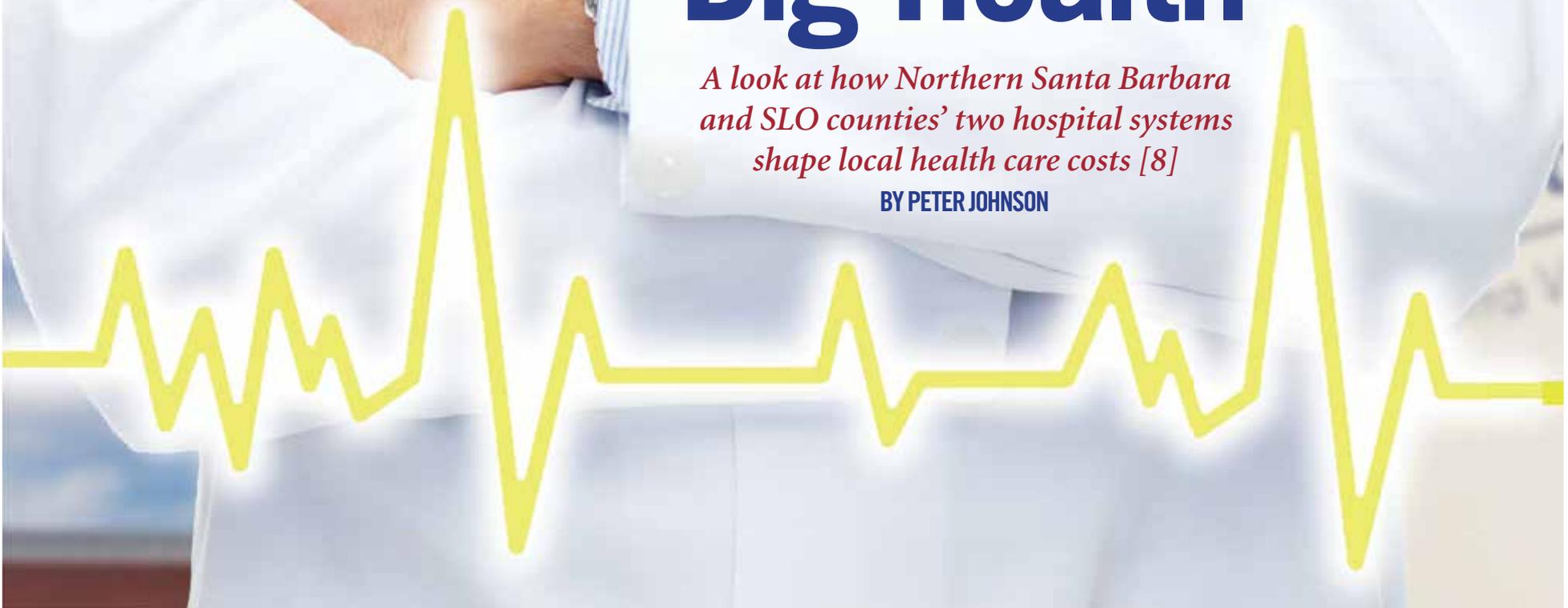
King of Staten Island:  
Poignant [18]



## Big Health

*A look at how Northern Santa Barbara and SLO counties' two hospital systems shape local health care costs [8]*

BY PETER JOHNSON



**NEWS** County files first COVID-19 non-compliance case [4]

**ARTS** InterPlay with PCPA [15]

**EATS** Gina's Piece of Cake stays connected [19]

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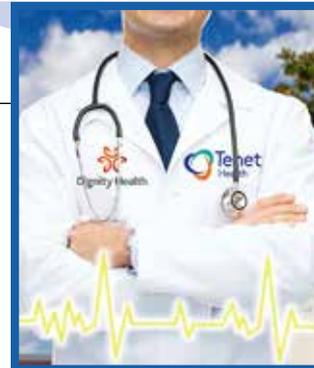


# Contents

SEPTEMBER 10 - SEPTEMBER 17, 2020 VOL. 21 NO. 28

**C** OVID-19 isn't the only ongoing issue in local hospitals. Two companies own all of the hospitals between Santa Maria and SLO County, and consolidation has some watchdogs and advocates concerned about the cost of medical care on the Central Coast. *New Times* Assistant Editor Peter Johnson gets inside the numbers this week in part one of a two-part series, which was created through his data fellowship with the USC Annenberg Center for Health Journalism [8].

This week, you can also learn about the Santa Barbara County District Attorney's Office and a COVID-19 compliance case [4]; PCPA's Zoomtastic contemporary play readings [15]; and how Gina's Piece of Cake is weathering the pandemic [19].



**CONSOLIDATED:** Tenet Healthcare and Dignity Health own all five hospitals in SLO County and Santa Maria. Stakeholders and researchers are increasingly concerned about the effects of health care consolidation on the Central Coast.

Camillia Lanham  
editor

Cover design by Alex Zuniga

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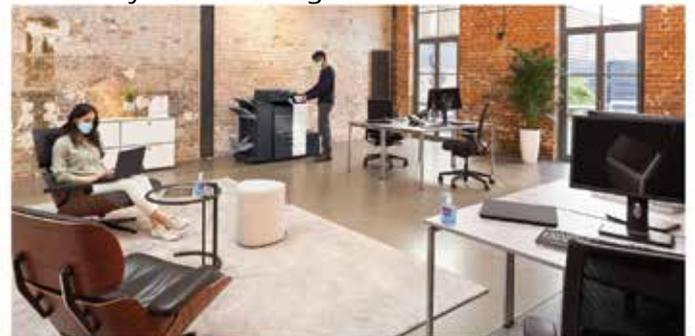
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## Political Watch

• **Gov. Gavin Newsom** signed an executive order on Sept. 3 to extend consumer protections against price gouging until March 4, 2021. The protections prohibit sellers from increasing prices on food, consumer goods, medical or emergency supplies, and other items by more than 10 percent, according to Newsom's office. The 2021 end date for the order is exactly one year after the governor proclaimed a state of emergency due to COVID-19 on March 4, 2020. The new order extends the price-gouging prohibitions laid out in the initial March proclamation.

• **State Sen. Hannah-Beth Jackson's** (D-Santa Barbara) legislation to expand job protection for family leave, SB 1383, passed the state Assembly on Aug. 31 and will next go to the governor, who is expected to sign it into law. The bill ensures that "more Californians can take time off to care for themselves and their loved ones when sick or bond with a newborn without getting fired," according to Jackson's office. The bill will provide job protection for those who work for employers with five or more employees, providing 12 weeks of job-protected leave to care for a personal illness, to care for a seriously ill family member, or to spend time with a newborn. The bill falls under the California Family Rights Act, which is the "foundation for California's entirely employee-funded eight-week paid family leave wage replacement program," the release stated. However, the 15-year-old program's protection has been "inadequate," as it has prevented millions of workers from accessing the benefits due to employer size, according to the assemblywoman's office. Current law only requires employers with 20 or more employees to give paid leave for newborn bonding, and businesses of 50 or more to care for a family member with a serious illness or one's own illness. "Access to family leave is especially critical amid COVID-19 when workers need to take time off to care for themselves or their loved ones," Jackson said in a statement. "Yet without job protection, many workers fear losing their job for taking the paid family leave benefits they pay for. We should be encouraging people to stay home if they are sick, not forcing them to choose between their health and their job."

• **Gov. Gavin Newsom** announced the launch of the Housing is Key campaign on Sept. 2, which aims to connect renters and landlords who are experiencing financial difficulties from COVID-19 with information and resources. This announcement follows the governor's signing of AB 3088, a statewide tenant-protection measure, on Aug. 31. The bill protects tenants who declare "an inability to pay all or part of the rent due to a COVID-related reason" from eviction, and property owners from foreclosure due to the economic impacts of the pandemic. Under the new law, tenants can't be evicted before Feb. 1, 2021, as a result of rent owed, according to Newsom's office. The Business, Consumer Services, and Housing (BCSH) Agency will run Housing is Key, and the campaign kicks off with a new website, [housingiskey.com](http://housingiskey.com). A BCSH app for mobile access to resources is also forthcoming. "Struggling tenants and landlords now have new protections and relief under the law—and it's critical that all Californians learn their rights," Newsom said in the release. "It's important that we reach renters across the state who might be one paycheck away from losing their homes and landlords who are short on their mortgages because of owed rent." ○



**PINNED DOWN:** Bowling enthusiasts throughout the Central Coast came together on Sept. 5 to rally behind Rancho Bowl and advocate to reopen California's bowling industry.

## Bowlers rally in support of reopening Rancho Bowl

On Sept. 5 about 60 people lined the sidewalk in front of Rancho Bowl and Lounge in Santa Maria to show their support for the business and rally to reopen the family-friendly entertainment center.

Back Alley Pro owners Richard and Norma Cunningham were in the crowd. The professional bowlers shop is inside Rancho Bowl. The retired couple is active in the local bowling community, and Richard is a member of the Central Coast Bowlers.

He told the *Sun* that his days were spent at the shop and playing games with his peers and fellow Central Coast Bowlers members. That all changed when Rancho Bowl had to close in March, and when it closed again in July after reopening for nearly two weeks.

Under Gov. Gavin Newsom's Blueprint for a Safer Economy, family entertainment centers that include bowling alleys can reopen when a county is in the third moderate tier (orange color-coded) of COVID-19 risk level. When a county reaches this level, bowling alleys can open with modifications and a 25 percent maximum capacity.

Santa Barbara County is currently in the first widespread tier (purple color-coded) that directs many nonessential indoor business operations to remain closed for the time being.

Rancho Bowl took a hit when it had to close a second time, because it has invested funds toward sanitization equipment and employee training to keep staff and customers safe, General Manager Wade Stever said.

"We barely got our feet in the water and then we had to shut down again. So we're a little concerned with how much longer we can hang on," Stever said.

Stever is worried about the company that's been a staple in the Santa Maria community for 61 years and the 50 employees who would like to get back to work.

In an effort to raise awareness about the state of the business and the service that it provides for the community, Stever organized a local rally as part of a statewide movement calling for bowling

centers to reopen.

The movement, he said, was started by professional bowler Rick Hamlin, who not only organized rallies in Sacramento, but gave attendees bowling pins to mail to the state governor—Stever did the same.

"It's a 3 1/2 pound pin, and bowling centers across the state are doing this so that the governor knows bowling exists and we're here waiting. It's just strange to me that some businesses, which don't seem to be any safer than our business, get to open because we were really strict about the guidelines, and we're taking this very seriously," he said.

Stever, Richard, and Norma all agree that Rancho Bowl offered the community a place to be social, to enjoy friends, and to create family memories.

It was also a place for Richard, a Vietnam Army veteran who suffers from mild post-traumatic stress disorder, to stay busy. Spending time at the bowling alley kept him active, Norma said, and helped him cope with his symptoms.

"Thankfully we've found other ways to keep busy, but not having the bowling alley open is affecting the youth, seniors, and veterans groups that use it daily for social and physical activity," she said.

Norma is the secretary for nine bowling leagues including senior leagues. Two summers ago, she said, one member turned 101 years old.

"Bowling is something you can do from the time you can walk until you can't walk anymore," she said.

Richard and Norma said they're hoping the community at-large does what it can to get to the point when every business and recreational opportunity—indoors and out—can reopen. Norma said it's a "new normal" that people are going to have to accept and adapt to in order to be around others and do what they love.

"Keep the faith and do what the man tells you to do. If you have to wear a mask, wear a mask. You're supposed to wash your hands, wash your hands. If you're suppose to take five showers a day, do what it takes. Don't fight it," Richard said.

—Karen Garcia

## County moves to expand farmstays project

Brett Ferini grew up working on his family's farm, Rancho Laguna Farms, in Santa Maria. There, he learned how to turn barren land into fruitful soil that could host the berries, broccoli, kale, lettuce, and cauliflower that Rancho Laguna Farms produces and sells. He learned about where food comes from and all the work that goes into making it, and he wants to share that knowledge with others.

A program, known as the farmstay project, that would allow farmers and ranchers to offer overnight visits on unincorporated agricultural county land could help Ferini achieve that goal while also providing added income. At a meeting on Sept. 1, the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors gave staff the green light to move forward with the project as quickly as possible.

"It's new avenues like farmstay that can really help the small growers who are trying to grow their business stay relevant in such a competitive environment," Ferini said at the Sept. 1 meeting.

Farmstays were first enabled statewide through the California Homestay Bill of 1999, according to Dan Klemann, deputy director of Santa Barbara County Planning and Development. Klemann said the 1999 bill laid out various regulations for farmers and ranchers hoping to offer overnight visits in a bed-and-breakfast-like setting, but exempted them from the most stringent health and safety requirements that are mandated in commercial restaurants and hotels.

The intent, Klemann said, is to make it easier for farmers to bring in visitors who might be interested in touring a farm, tasting the food or drinks produced there, learning about agriculture, and spending more time in the area.

Farmstays have been allowed in the Gaviota area since the county adopted its Gaviota Coast Plan in 2016, according to a county staff report. Through that portion of the plan, farmers in Gaviota are able to have farmstays as long as they host no more than 15 guests a night, use no more

NEWS continued on page 6

# MISSION

The mission of the North County Rape Crisis and Child Protection Center is to reduce the incidence of and vulnerability to sexual assault, child abuse, and human trafficking by providing education and prevention skills to community children and adults; and to alleviate the trauma experienced by survivors of these crimes by providing direct services.



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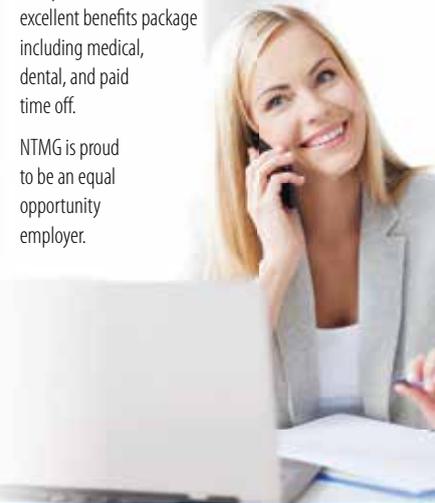
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NEWS from page 4

than six bedrooms, offer food services only to registered guests, do not have to build any new structures for farmstay use, own 40 acres or more, and are primarily interested in teaching guests about the products grown on the property.

Klemann said county staff initially worked on the Gaviota farmstay ordinance with the intent of expanding the program to the rest of Santa Barbara County, and the Board of Supervisors agreed to consider such an expansion just after the Gaviota Coast Plan was adopted in 2016.

A broader plan for the allowance of farmstays throughout the county was folded into the county's Agricultural Tiered Permitting Project, which includes a variety of proposed amendments to existing zoning regulations that would further encourage agricultural tourism. But the Agricultural Tiered Permitting Project was delayed due to funding and staff constraints and other priorities. Now, Klemann said, county staff are pulling the farmstay project out of the Agricultural Tiered Permitting Projects in hopes that farmers and ranchers in the Santa Ynez Valley and Santa Maria can at least take advantage of farmstays while other projects sit on the backburner.

A number of North County farmers and ranchers, many who are a part of an independent coalition called the Farmstay Advisory Committee, spoke in favor of farmstays and other, broader efforts to cultivate agricultural tourism in Santa Barbara County. John Parke, a Santa Barbara County planning commissioner and North County resident, said agriculture is the backbone of Santa Barbara County.

"We want it to thrive at every level," Parke said. "We want to share it. And agricultural tourism is one of the best ways of achieving those goals."

The Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to move forward with the countywide farmstay project as currently proposed. This coming fall and winter, county staff plan to begin drafting an ordinance and initiating community outreach efforts.

—Kasey Bubnash

## Santa Maria allows U-Haul to add 600 mini-storage units to its property

Santa Maria's miniature storage options are about to increase.

The City Council voted on Sept. 1 to deny an appeal brought before them by Stephen Wagner, a concerned community member who opposed the city Planning Commission's June 17 decision to approve permits for the U-Haul Mini Storage and Office project.

The Planning Commission's decision in favor of the project narrowly passed after multiple hearings. The first hearing on May 6 ended with commissioners continuing the item with direction for staff to return with findings to deny the project. The item was continued again on May 20, this time with the commission asking for findings to both approve and deny the project.

On June 17, the commission approved conditional use and planned development permits for the U-Haul project at the former Kmart at 2875 Santa Maria Way. The company plans to remodel the existing building to accommodate more than 600 mini-storage units and a self-storage space. The vote was split 3-2.

About two weeks later, Wagner filed his appeal of the project. As a resident in a nearby neighborhood, Wagner's main concerns included U-Haul moving trucks being visible from Santa Maria Way, the project not having enough landscaping to block sight of the operations, incorrect use of commercially zoned land, and a lack of communication to nearby residents like himself.

But the city didn't agree with Wagner's concerns. Community Development Director

Chuen Ng recommended that the council adopt a resolution to deny Wagner's appeal and affirm the planning commission's decision to allow U-Haul to build out its mini-storage remodel.

"There were some concerns that the mini storage use is not a typical, commercial use, and it may be more akin to warehousing or light industrial use," Ng said during the Sept. 1 meeting. "But as a result of the discussions and deliberation, staff believes that the mini storage use is not any more impactful than other commercial uses in terms of noise or traffic, and that there are other C-2 zoned sites that have accommodated a mini-storage use in the past."

A U-Haul representative also emphasized that the company does have a small retail component that would continue to generate tax revenue for the city.

But Wagner—and the 240 neighbors who he said signed his petition—also took issue with the site being an "eyesore" for those passing by on Santa Maria Way.

"I think we're seeing an inadequate level of landscaping added to the site," he said.

Tom Martinez, the architect for the U-Haul project, said that the site's landscaping meets city standards.

"We've added additional planters at both ends for a total of 15.8 percent of the site in landscaping," Martinez said. "The number of trees, location of the trees, was all determined by the city's parks and rec department."

Wagner then asked that, if the City Council moved to deny his appeal, that they at least consider requiring U-Haul to park its moving trucks on the other side of the lot, which borders Highway 135, rather than on the Santa Maria Way side.

Councilmember Gloria Soto asked Ng whether this would be possible. Ng explained that there are certain parts of the parking lot that are approved for truck storage, and that the company's trucks are currently parked on both sides of the lot, though more are toward the Santa Maria Way side.

Councilmember Mike Cordero questioned whether the council had the right to tell businesses how to use their parking lots.

After expressing that she believes U-Haul's changes to the property are an overall improvement, Councilmember Etta Waterfield motioned to deny the appeal and affirm the Planning Commission's decision to allow U-Haul to move forward with its mini-storage project. The council approved the motion 4-0, with Mayor Alice Patino absent from the meeting.

—Malea Martin

## Buellton gym faces closure for health order noncompliance

While local enforcement agencies have, for the most part, found success with voluntary compliance when enforcing COVID-19 health orders, the Santa Barbara County District Attorney's Office announced on Sept. 2 that a gym in Buellton is being taken to court for refusing to halt indoor operations during the pandemic.

According to a press release, an Aug. 31 hearing resulted in a temporary restraining order being issued against All Sport Fitness Center to cease all indoor operations.

"All Sport was allowed numerous opportunities to comply with public health orders but failed to do so, despite warnings from the city of Buellton's code inspector and the District Attorney's Office," the release stated.

The temporary order will remain in effect until Sept. 11, when the court will decide whether it's valid, Senior Deputy District Attorney Brian Cota told the *Sun*. If the court rules in favor of the order, it will become permanent and All Sport will have to remain closed until the health order on indoor gyms is lifted.

Dave Henrey, founder and president of the fitness

center, told the *Sun* that "the last thing I want to do is endanger anybody." He believes that his gym is not posing a health risk to the community.

"Physical exercise actually increases your immune system, which would help you fight disease," Henrey said. "We have 25 foot ceilings. We had maybe 12 people in there, in a 12,000-square-foot building. Everybody has plenty of space."

He added that he moved the fitness equipment to be at least 6 feet apart, required face masks, and only allowed existing members to use the facility.

But Cota said that, no matter how clean and careful a facility is, the rule remains that indoor gyms cannot operate under current health orders.

"He could have everyone separated by 6 feet, he could have masks on them, he could have only five people in there," Cota said. "It's still a violation of the health order."

Henrey said he invited the public health inspector to come see his facility multiple times. "They told me that they don't have time to come visit," he said.

Cota said that the public health inspector only goes to see a facility if there is ambiguity over the health order violations in question. In this case, he said, there was no ambiguity.

"Indoor operations aren't allowed, so he wasn't going to convince them that it wasn't an indoor operation," Cota said. "They don't have the ability to disagree with an order from the governor or from the local agencies. ... Indoor is just prohibited, period, so there's no ambiguity that could be resolved."

Henrey said he believes a neighboring business owner complained about his business being in operation, and that without the complaint he wouldn't be forced to close. He said he feels it's unfair that only businesses who are complained about get enforced, and that the county is "just making an example" of him.

Cota could not provide additional information about how authorities were made aware of

IMAGE COURTESY OF FACEBOOK



**FORCED TO COMPLY:** Santa Barbara County announced that a Buellton-based gym is being taken to court for refusing to comply with public health orders.

All Sport Fitness Center's noncompliance. However, he said that enforcement agencies both investigate complaints they receive and also "do their own work" to find businesses that may be out of compliance with health orders.

Henrey said that if the temporary order becomes permanent on Sept. 11, the future of his business is in limbo.

"If I shut down beyond this next date of Sept. 11, then we're done," he said. "I will never apologize for trying to protect my family and trying to do what's best for my family. Everybody should."

—Malea Martin

## Correction

In the Sept. 3 article "Staying afloat," Lompoc Hospital District Foundation President Alice Milligan's last name was misspelled. The *Sun* regrets this error. ○

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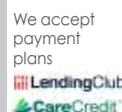
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# Consolidated

Experts say hospital consolidation is driving up medical costs. Is it locally?

**Editor's note:** This article is Part 1 of a two-part series produced as a data fellowship with the USC Annenberg Center for Health Journalism.

BY PETER JOHNSON

Jamie Maraviglia has spent long days and nights in the hospital, but her time at home with medical bills is sometimes even more intense.

The Arroyo Grande resident is routinely in and out of the hospital with her 2-year-old daughter, Ara, who suffers from Hirschsprung disease, a chronic intestinal illness.

Ara started out her life in the neonatal intensive care unit at Sierra Vista Regional Medical Center in San Luis Obispo. She has had four surgeries since, and is “gearing up for more,” her mom said.

“I have stacks and stacks and binders of medical billing,” Maraviglia told the *Sun*. “I would spend, at one point, 10 hours a week on the phone with insurance, with hospitals, with billing companies. A lot of it is just arguing.”

Even with her employer-sponsored health insurance, Maraviglia said she's astonished by the amounts on her bills—the charges, the out-of-pocket costs, the confusing network limitations, and her ever-rising insurance premiums.

Maraviglia believes that getting health care on the Central Coast is even more expensive than in other places. She's concluded that there's a core underlying reason why.

“We live in a health care desert. There's no other way to say it,” she said. “We are basically beholden to two major health care companies.”

Dignity Health and Tenet Healthcare—a national nonprofit and national for-profit hospital system, respectively—own all five hospitals in SLO County and Santa Maria as well as a network of local outpatient services, clinics, and physicians.

According to a *Sun* investigation of the cost of local health care, the two systems made three times more revenue on third-party payers—like Maraviglia on an employer-sponsored plan—than they did on Medicare patients in 2018 on a per-inpatient day basis, according to data from the California Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development.

Between 2005 and 2018, local hospitals' net revenue on commercial payers grew 354 percent, to \$222.1 million, while their net losses on Medicare payers plummeted 641 percent, to negative \$133.8 million.

Locals and health care experts told the *Sun* that the larger, highly integrated systems are using their market leverage to receive higher reimbursements from private insurance providers, which they say raises the overall cost of health care and causes anticompetitive impacts.

“It dramatically raises the cost of doing medical care,” said David Palchak, an Arroyo Grande-based oncologist with his own independent practice. “I

can't get anything above Medicare rates [from commercial insurance]. ... Two to three times Medicare is unreasonable.”

In 2017, the five hospitals set their prices between five- and nine-times above what Medicare determined their costs to be—bigger markups than most hospitals in the state, according to Medicare data. Dignity and Tenet officials declined to answer specific questions about their prices and revenue trends, but they touted the benefits of integrated care systems.

“Our primary goal is to provide seamless care and service between our hospitals and our clinics, imaging centers, and urgent care facilities, for the patients we treat every day,” Tenet Health Central Coast CEO Mark Lisa said in a statement. “[Tenet] provides safe, first-class health care to anyone who walks through our doors. ... As the largest private, non-utility employer in SLO County, we are proud to provide services to the communities we are part of.”

## Consolidation concern

In recent years, health care researchers, advocates, regulators, and lawmakers have all discussed hospital consolidation with increasing concern and urgency.

Earlier this year, state Sen. Bill Monning (D-Carmel) introduced Senate Bill 977, which would've expanded the state attorney general's oversight of private health care transactions. In 2019, California Attorney General Xavier Becerra sued Sutter Health over its allegedly anticompetitive charging practices, which ended this year in a \$575 million settlement for Sutter to pay.

According to a 2018 study at UC Berkeley, more than 80 percent of California counties, including Santa Barbara and SLO, had hospital markets that were “highly concentrated”—or close to becoming monopolies.

This consolidation is a result of years and years of both horizontal (such as a hospital acquiring another hospital) and vertical (such as a hospital acquiring a physician group) integration, experts say. Many researchers conclude that the consolidation wave has driven up health care costs.

“The data is incredibly clear on this,” said Jaime King, a professor at UC Hastings College of Law who specializes in health care markets and policy. “Hospital mergers result in significant price increases almost immediately. Both entities' prices go up as a result. Neighboring hospitals' prices go up, too, as a shadow effect. It's having an even bigger effect in the overarching market.”

In Northern Santa Barbara County and SLO County, Tenet's and Dignity's shares of the in-patient hospital market began in 2005, when Dignity (then Catholic Healthcare West) acquired a struggling French Hospital Medical Center and Arroyo Grande Community Hospital from previous ownership. It already owned Marian Regional Medical

Center in Santa Maria. Tenet had owned Sierra Vista Regional Medical Center in SLO and Twin Cities Community Hospital in Templeton for years prior.

In the 15 years since, the two systems expanded. Tenet bought a multi-state hospital chain, Vanguard Health Systems, in 2013 and then partnered with outpatient giant United Surgical Partners International. In 2019, Dignity merged with Catholic Health Initiatives, a Colorado-based hospital chain, to form CommonSpirit Health, which is now the second largest nonprofit hospital owner in the U.S.

As the systems grew outward, an increasing number of Central Coast physician groups, primary care centers, urgent cares, and other outpatient services joined Dignity's and Tenet's umbrellas.

“That's where a lot of the growth is now focused,” King said.

Hospital prices in Northern Santa Barbara County and SLO County also rose substantially over those years. Rates vary by facility, but in 2017, all five hospitals' chargemaster prices, when divided in aggregate over their Medicare determined costs (called a charge-to-cost ratio), exceeded the state median.

Chargemaster rates (the raw prices for all services, goods, and procedures) are rarely what patients and insurers end up paying for care. But they're often the starting point for negotiations with insurers and for other billing calculations.

“They are relevant,” King said,

“because oftentimes insurance companies negotiate a percentage off of the chargemaster. And they'll say, ‘We negotiated 50 percent off the chargemaster.’ But what is the chargemaster? If the chargemaster is 500 percent of Medicare, that's still 250 percent above Medicare.”

On average, California hospitals' chargemasters were about five times their total costs as calculated by Medicare. Locally, those charge-to-cost ratios ranged from 8.6 at Twin Cities Community Hospital, to 5.2 at Marian Regional Medical Center, to 2.2 at Lompoc Valley Medical Center, the region's only public hospital.

The markups, King said, underscore how hospitals can charge with near impunity given their power and leverage in the market.

“What a lot of what this tells us is our basic economic models for price and demand—what Economics 101 would tell us—just does not apply to the health care markets in this country. We're just not seeing that happen,” King said. “It's seems as though prices can go up and up and up, and we don't see the demand fall.”

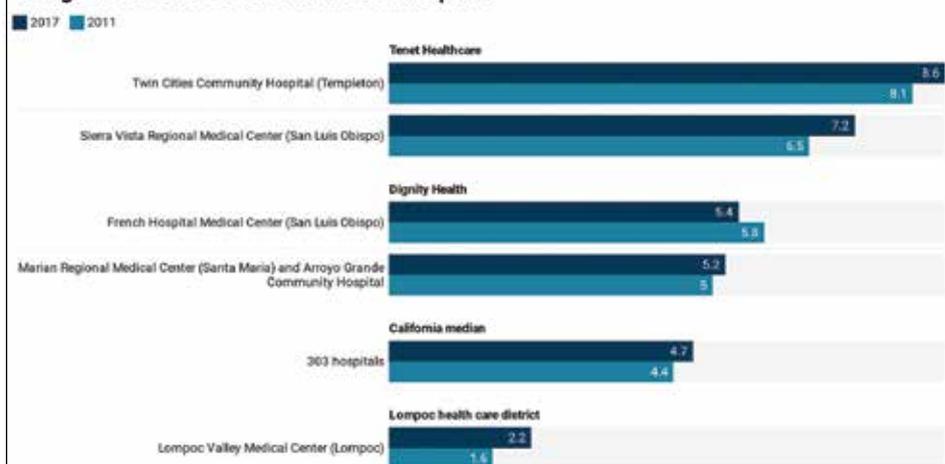
You can reach Peter Johnson, assistant editor of the *Sun's* sister paper, *New Times*, at [pjohnson@newtimeslo.com](mailto:pjohnson@newtimeslo.com).



**HOSPITALIZED:** Arroyo Grande resident Jamie Maraviglia says that the hospital bills for her daughter, Ara (pictured), who suffers from a chronic illness, are putting significant financial strain on her family.

DATA FROM CENTERS FOR MEDICARE AND MEDICAID SERVICES

### Charge-to-cost ratios at Central Coast hospitals



**MARKUPS:** A charge-to-cost ratio “is a way to measure the markup of chargemaster rates over Medicare-allowable costs,” according to a 2015 Johns Hopkins University study. “It's a hospital's total gross charges divided by its total Medicare-allowable cost.” While raw chargemaster rates are not often billed to patients, they are often the starting points for contract negotiations with insurance providers, industry experts say.

FILE PHOTO BY ZAC EZZONE



**INTEGRATED:** Dignity Health owns Marian Regional Medical Center in Santa Maria, Arroyo Grande Community Hospital, French Hospital Medical Center in SLO, and a variety of local clinics, services, and physicians. Its new parent company, CommonSpirit, is one of the largest nonprofit hospital systems in the U.S.

PHOTO COURTESY OF WINKFACE PHOTOGRAPHY

# Protecting pets

*CARE4Paws is hosting a pet food drive and donation-matching campaign this month to help pet owners and animals in need*



**SAFE AND HEALTHY:** CARE4Paws' September pet food and donation drive aims to help the organization continue to serve local pets and their owners with free pet food, spaying and neutering services, veterinary care, and more.

BY MALEA MARTIN

It's well documented that owning a pet can help reduce anxiety and depression. Studies conducted by the Human Animal Bond Research Institute found that pets can alleviate worry, provide comfort, and even reduce blood pressure in their owners.

But when owning a pet becomes a financial burden, some of those positive effects can be threatened—and during the pandemic, financial woes are becoming all too common.

“Right now, the tricky thing is that people need their pets more than ever, but at the same time they're having a hard time providing for their pets,” said Isabelle Gullo, co-founder and executive director of CARE4Paws, which provides community, awareness, responsibility, and education (CARE) for owners and their pets in Santa Barbara County.

“We want to provide services that these pet owners otherwise might not be able to afford, to make sure that these pets can stay in their homes and continue providing that emotional support to their owners,” Gullo continued.

This became the inspiration for the organization's September Pet Food and Matching Donation Drive. Donors will have their contribution matched until the organization reaches \$10,000 in donations, Gullo said, thanks to private donors who contributed to the matching fund.

“The idea with the donation drive is, because we're providing an unparalleled number of services, we want to make sure that we can continue providing support to the community at this high level through COVID and beyond,” Gullo said.

Since the pandemic started, the organization has provided about 4 tons of pet food and cat litter to pets in need every week. In 2019, 2 tons of food were distributed—for the entire year. Spays and neuters have also gone up, with the organization this year already exceeding the number of procedures performed in all of 2019.

“It's something that we never could have anticipated,” Gullo said.

The money raised from the drive will also help support the organization's various other programs, including low-cost or free veterinary care, vaccine clinics, education, community outreach, intervention, and CARE4Paws' mobile clinic.

The mobile clinic runs four to five days a week, Gullo said, and works its way from Santa Barbara to Lompoc, and then through the Santa Maria Valley. Lompoc and Santa Maria receive 65 percent of the

mobile clinic's services.

CARE4Paws' also continues to run its Safe Haven program to help pet owners experiencing domestic violence.

“We provide support for domestic violence survivors where we put their pets into foster care or boarding so that the owners can leave an abusive situation without fearing for the well-being of their pet,” Gullo said. “On average, a woman will stay two years longer in an abusive situation because of a pet.”

More people staying at home than usual, due to the pandemic, can lead to increases in domestic violence, District Attorney Joyce Dudley told the *Sun* in April. Gullo said the Safe Haven program is partnered with the District Attorney's Office, as well as Domestic Violence Solutions.

“We want to make sure that we provide a safe space for the pets so that the owner can transition into a safe space for themselves,” Gullo said.

Just a few days into the fundraiser, Gullo said they had already received \$2,000 in donations. But even after the \$10,000 is reached, CARE4Paws is always accepting donations and community support.

For those who want to give pet food rather than a monetary donation, drop-off locations are at CARE4Paws partner stores including Lemos Feed & Pet Supply, Montecito Pet Shop, La Cumbre Feed, and PetSmart on Milpas Street in Santa Barbara. Details for the drive can be found at [care4paws.org/drive](http://care4paws.org/drive).

## Highlight

• Santa Maria Joint Union High School District announced Sept. 2 that a Santa Maria High School teacher is spearheading a sidewalk book drive and giveaway to promote reading and literacy. English teacher Annie Turner was inspired to start the effort after learning that her students didn't know “where to get books or have access to books in their homes,” a district press release stated. The book drive will be held on Wednesdays and Thursdays from 1:45 to 2:45 p.m. in front the high school's bus pickup zone, with an emphasis on books for fifth grade through collegiate reading levels. “This sidewalk special is my attempt to promote literacy and reading in the children and community,” Turner said in the release. “It is for all SMHS students and anyone who walks by. ... The more kids read, the better equipped they'll be.” ☉

Staff Writer Malea Martin wrote this week's Spotlight. Send tips to [spotlight@santamariasun.com](mailto:spotlight@santamariasun.com).

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### Online Poll

#### How has the first week of school been for you families?

- 50% I guess alright, but we can't wait till in-person begins again.
- 20% So far so good; we feel supported by the district.
- 20% Horrible. We have no idea how we're going to get through this
- 10% A bit rocky at first, but we're starting to get the hang of it.

10 Votes

Vote online at [www.santamariasun.com](http://www.santamariasun.com).



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## Change agent

### Lompoc's 4th District challenger would bring needed new leadership

BY RON FINK

As the Nov. 3 election nears, Lompoc residents have some serious choices to make. One of them is who will serve to represent the 4th District of the city on the southwest side of town. This district is one of the older areas of the city, and the commercial areas have suffered as the central business district moved a mile and a half north more than 30 years ago.

I recently interviewed Jeremy Ball, who is running for that seat. He has carefully analyzed key issues in the 4th District. His observations are that it's "the look and feel of our town. For years, we've been forced to accept the degradation of our parks. Other areas of our city look abandoned. We have to acknowledge that blight from any source weighs heavily on Lompoc's ability to attract new businesses and new families."

This is especially true with Ryon Park, host to community- and regional-level festivals. This park has needed some serious attention for a couple of decades. Several smaller pocket parks throughout the residential neighborhoods and Centennial Park in the old town area of this district are prime examples of parks needing tender love and care.

Many commercial and private residential properties are also in decline.

Ball concluded that several factors lead to this condition.

"Well, for starters, the council majority, including my challenger, decided to eliminate our code

enforcement. How is this a good idea; how is this leadership? Did Lompoc look too nice? If we want to talk about vision, what does this say to the next generation about our local commitment to their futures when Lompoc looks forgotten?" Ball asked.

Soon after the election, in early spring the council will begin discussing budget priorities for the next two fiscal years. During the past two budget cycles, the focus of the council majority has been to eliminate many key positions; those poorly executed budget-cutting sessions were led by Ball's competitor in this election.

"My priority for the budget is to stabilize public safety (fire/police) while keeping focus on our long-term goals that are clearly laid out in the 2030 General Plan," Ball said. "I feel strongly that we need to stabilize our overall public safety sector and strengthen our ability to retain and attract qualified workers across several of our departments. We've cut back so much that it's difficult for our city to function, let alone thrive."

Over the last few years, the level of violence in some sectors of the city has escalated with some

## 'We have to acknowledge that blight from any source weighs heavily on Lompoc's ability to attract new businesses and new families.'

—Jeremy Ball, Lompoc City Council candidate

areas subjected to weekly shooting incidents and innocent people are being killed.

"I'm old enough to remember when we focused on a more balanced approach. It wasn't that long ago that we would go an entire year without a murder," Ball said. "We figured out how to fund a more comprehensive approach, and we generally kept the peace."

The recent pandemic has caused a major disruption to the business sector. I asked what can the city government do to help business recover from COVID-19 losses?

"One thing that could help is to make sure that our

county, state, and federal leaders hear from Lompoc's leaders ... and I mean constantly! As resources become available, we need to know," he told me.

"If we don't have a seat at the table (in good standing), we will surely miss out. Our council should be painting a clear picture of our current challenges and working with other leaders to make sure Lompoc doesn't get left behind. It saddens me that leadership has eliminated the economic development department as well as the public information officer. These are critical mistakes in times like these."

Ball is facing an opponent who is not above bullying his fellow council members into agreeing with his point of view to the exclusion of all other ideas, especially from the female members of the council. We have also witnessed his badgering of city staff during council meetings. A change of attitude on the council dais is needed, and Ball could be the change agent.

"My opponent's leadership style is nothing short of abrasive and divisive. He is a deeply polarizing figure in the community, and his treatment of city staff, including those who work

to protect and serve, is deplorable," he said.

"I want to be inclusive of all viewpoints and find ways to work together even when we disagree.

Yes, I want city staff to be held accountable, but I also want them to feel motivated and supported

by their leaders so they can confidently and efficiently do their jobs," Ball added.

"Lompoc has always had a self-esteem problem, and yet we have an extremely talented and diverse community. I want to bring more attention to the positive changes that are happening and work to solve what needs to change with thoughtful, compassionate leadership."

Two men are vying for the 4th District seat, and one of them may alter the political landscape if elected. Jeremy Ball is a bright young man whose political philosophy and vision is to better our economic situation and make public policy to improve Lompoc. ○

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

## LETTERS

### Keep the dunes vehicle-free

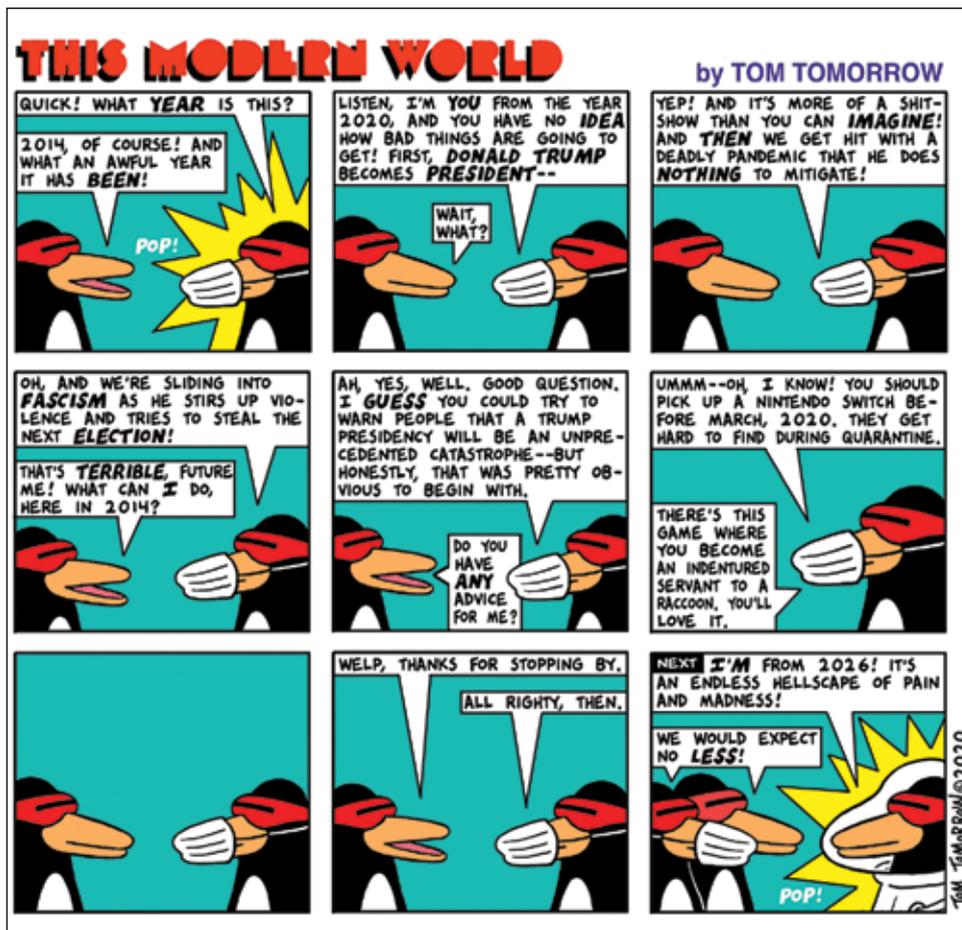
For decades, the Oceano Beach and dunes have been used for vehicular recreation and ATVs. These last five months, since the shelter-at-home order, a vehicle-free Oceano Beach has been a blessing for our community and the entire South SLO County.

State Parks is completing a Public Works Plan (PWP) for the Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area, which will impact the life of our community long into the future and is scheduled to be submitted to the California Coastal Commission (CCC) this coming October.

The PWP cannot be implemented without the commission's approval. The commission has found that the present management of the Oceano Dunes is out of compliance with the Coastal Act, the Local Coastal Plan, and its operational permit. It is fair and reasonable that it stays vehicle-free until a sound and satisfactory plan for their management is decided.

Reopening Oceano Beach and dunes to the pre-COVID-19 vehicular traffic would be folly under our present health emergency. The COVID

LETTERS continued page 11



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# Arbitrary activism

Apparently, Santa Barbara County is taking a page out of the LA playbook. In April, LA prosecutors filed charges against several retailers that refused to follow COVID-19 closure orders.

A paddleboarder even got arrested for violating beach closure orders, according to the LA Times. How many law enforcement officials does it take to arrest a paddleboarder? More than four! Lifeguards in boats tried to get the guy to come to shore, and the dude refused. And they had to call in the LA County Sheriff's Office for help!

How do they know who's violating orders? A bunch of complainers.

Here, in not-LA, we have the case of the Buellton gym. The Santa Barbara County District Attorney's Office got a judge to file a restraining order against All Sports Fitness Center to cease indoor operations until Sept. 11—possibly longer. Wow. What about everyone else who is doing things in violation of the order?

Are we going to start filing charges against non-mask wearers? No, because the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors decided not to in August. Not wearing a mask in public is more offensive than a private business doing private business type things with willing participants in an enclosed space, so WTF?

So it seems wrong that this gym, which is struggling like so many other businesses and just trying to stay afloat, would get in deep water because someone got pissed off and complained to the proper authorities about it. Do you think the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office is running around the county looking for businesses that are out of compliance with shutdown orders?

No! Who has that kind of time? It was



definitely a nosy neighbor activist. They should be banned!

People can wait around inside car dealerships for hours but can't go to the gym to work out? Salons are reopened for indoor operations. Bowling alleys aren't.

I guess the salons had better advocacy than the bowlers did. But I think the governor's mail is about to get a little heavier, with a bunch of bowling activists—Yes, California now has bowling activists!—mailing him 3 1/2 pound bowling pins.

There was a little rally to reopen the bowling industry on Sept. 5 outside of Rancho Bowl in Santa Maria.

And they're sending Gov. Gavin Newsom their pins! Maybe that's what it takes to reopen. A little political pressure.

But that didn't work in the case of the anti-U-Haul mini-storage petition, so who knows! Rules are arbitrary. Made at the whims of the politicians under pressure.

Petitioners in the neighborhoods near the old Kmart on Santa Maria Way are very concerned about having U-Haul trucks in the eyesore of an empty parking lot that has basically sat vacant since Kmart was actually in business.

The leader of the anti-U-Haul movement, Stephen Wagner, also felt that the company advertising prices on moving trucks in their parking lot violates "the spirit of the city's sign ordinance." Seems like Wagner is grasping at straws.

He asked the Santa Maria City Council to require U-Haul to park its trucks on the Highway 135 side of the lot! What?

Councilmember Mike Cordero wondered if the council had the authority to tell businesses what to do in their parking lots. Come on man, it's totally arbitrary! ☹️

*The canary is wondering what activists will think of next. Send comments to canary@santamariasun.com.*

that Phillips 66 will be closing the Santa Maria Refinery and the 300 pipeline, the market access point for much of Santa Barbara County's produced crude. The Phillips announcement of its conversion of its Rodeo Refinery to biofuel production and the closures of its Santa Maria Refinery and the 300 pipeline hit our local industry like an asteroid strike just as it was beginning a slow recovery from its most recent hit.

While local industry officials currently ponder alternatives and local families look hopefully toward the future, they are faced with the reality that their industry—foundational to the economic standing of present-day California and, certainly, Santa Barbara County—has been subject to unrelenting attacks by local environmental and activist groups, and their Grand Inquisitor, the Environmental Defense Center, for decades. While the local oil industry and their employees have provided great support for the local economy, tax base, and community, the opposition has contributed nothing, preferring to reserve their actions to eliminating jobs that support local families and working to prevent the creation of new ones.

While the Environmental Defense Center, as indicated in its latest press release, celebrates the devastation of our local industry, families, and neighbors, and now hopes to exacerbate the industry's misfortunes by crushing Exxon's proposed trucking plan and killing Plains All American's pipeline restoration proposal, the single voice of sanity in the local media, the only voice that calls the EDC to task for its actions, is the Canary ("Bye, bye energy," Aug. 20). Our thanks to the Canary for standing as a shining example of objectivity and insight, and to the Sun for printing it.

Roy Reed  
Santa Maria

## LETTERS from page 10

threat from thousands of motorized tourists driving on our beach and dunes is not tolerable or safe for Oceano. We need to protect our hospital's capacities from the number of injured that come in when the vehicles drive on our beach and dunes.

We respectfully request that the area remains vehicle-free until the PWP is released, approved, and certified by the California Coastal Commission.

Lucia Casalnuovo  
president  
Oceano Beach Community Association

## The oil industry is being devastated

The mantle of victimhood is never a comfortable one, particularly for the proud employees and families supported by Santa Barbara County's once-vibrant oil industry. Being oil people, they are all too familiar with the cyclical nature of their industry, most often the result of market fluctuations and the influences of foreign supply, but they have most recently fallen victim to a chain of unforeseen events that have resulted in economic peril and disruption for more than 500 of our friends and neighbors and their families.

This series of blows began in May 2015 when the rupture of the Plains All American pipeline idled Exxon's Santa Ynez Unit, eliminating the jobs of several hundred employees and contractors, and continued with 2020's COVID-19 induced market decline, which decimated much of the local oil industry as the oil price collapse led to shut-ins and layoffs.

And now, finally, just as their industry has begun a slow recovery, they're hit with the news

**Empty Bowls Fundraiser for 5CHC**  
SATURDAYS: SEPT. 12, 19, & 26  
5Cities Homeless Coalition

**Tiny Porch Summer Concert Series: The Coffin Brothers**  
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 12  
King Gillette Ranch

**POP-UP DRIVE IN THEATER**  
COLONY SQUARE SEPTEMBER 10, 2020  
MOVIE STARTS @ 8:15  
Theater: Dr. Doolittle  
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10  
Wild Fields Brewery

**A Woman on Broadway: A Virtual Concert**  
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 13  
Cass Winery, Paso Robles

**Point San Luis Lighthouse Virtual Tour**  
WEDNESDAYS, SEPT. 16, 23, 30  
Point San Luis Lighthouse

**POP-UP DRIVE IN THEATER**  
COLONY SQUARE SEPTEMBER 10, 2020  
MOVIE STARTS @ 8:15  
Theater: Space Chimps  
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17  
Wild Fields Brewery

**Empty Bowls Fundraiser for 5CHC**  
SATURDAYS: SEPT. 19, & 26  
5Cities Homeless Coalition

**Wednesdays Around the World: Italy**  
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23  
Cass Winery, Paso Robles

**"Socially Distanced" High Tea on the Blue Deck**  
FRI, SAT, SUN, SEPT. 25, 26, 27  
Los Osos/SLO Master Chorale

**Bang Muay Thai Seminar w/Sensei Duane Ludwig**  
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26  
Sleeping Tiger Fitness

**Hot Buttered Rum with The Dales and Abby and the Myth**  
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26  
Tiny Porch Concerts

**Cass Wine Seminar: The Evolution of Rosé**  
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 27  
Cass Winery, Paso Robles

**Tent City After Dark**  
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 2  
Tent City Sunken Gardens, Atascadero

**2020 Estate Beef Dinner Series: Plate Ribs**  
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 2  
Cass Winery, Paso Robles

**Kiwanis of SMV Foundation Poker Rally**  
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11  
Allan Hancock College

**Fashions for a Purpose Annual Fashion Show and Silent Auction**  
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17  
Online · Fashions for a Purpose

**Patriot Cruise of San Luis Bay**  
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 25  
Point San Luis Lighthouse

**MY805TIX BOX OFFICE IS OPEN** Get your tickets online or at **Boo Boo Records**, the official **Box Office** for My805Tix events! Boo Boo's is located at 978 Monterey Street in SLO. Call 805-541-0657.

Interested in selling tickets with My805Tix? Contact us for a demo today! [info@My805Tix.com](mailto:info@My805Tix.com)

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# HOT STUFF

SEPT. 10 – SEPT. 17  
2020



## GRAND TOUR

The Land Conservancy and History Center of San Luis Obispo County are co-hosting a virtual tour of the Octagon Barn in SLO on the fourth Thursday of each month. The next entry in this Zoom series is Thursday, Sept. 24, from 4 to 4:30 p.m. Admission to the tour is \$5. Call (805) 544-9096 or visit [historycenterslo.org](http://historycenterslo.org) to find out more.

—Caleb Wiseblood

PHOTO COURTESY OF HISTORY CENTER OF SLO COUNTY

## ARTS

### SANTA YNEZ VALLEY

**THE ART OF FACE MASKS: VIRTUAL EXHIBIT** This group show reunites several artists from the museum's 2019 exhibit, *The Art of Dress*, including Georganne Alex, Carole Coduti, Gwen Samuels, and others. ongoing Free. [artoffacemasks.com](http://artoffacemasks.com). Elverhoj Museum of History and Art, 1624 Elverhoy Way, Solvang, 805-686-1211.

**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).

**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).

### SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS

**CALL FOR ARTISTS (GRADES 4-12): NEW CHILDREN'S BOOK** This art contest will give students an opportunity create illustrations for a bilingual children's book that will depict local landmarks. Students are to create their illustration on a paper template entry form. All illustrations shall be created using colored pencils only. Through Sept. 25 Abel Maldonado Community Youth Center, 600 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria.

**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).

**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, Santa Maria, [pcpa.org](http://pcpa.org).

**WINE AND DESIGN VIRTUAL CLASSES** Check Wine and Design's Orcutt website for the complete list of virtual classes online, for various ages. Also offering kids camps for summer. 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

**MIXED MEDIA WORKSHOP FOR AGES 5-6, & 7-12** Each week students will have the opportunity to use two mediums while exploring the Elements of Art. Maximum 5 students. Masks are required. Pre-registration required. Mondays, 3:15-4:15 p.m. \$20. 805-668-2125. lila. community. LiA Creative Community, 1147 East Grand Ave. suite 101, Arroyo Grande.

**MIXED MEDIA WORKSHOP FOR ADULTS** Each week we will combine two or more mediums in several pieces. We will work with watercolor, acrylic, ink, pastels, charcoal, as well as various printmaking techniques in the course of a month. Maximum of 5 guests. Pre-registration and masks required. Mondays, Wednesdays, 1:30-3 p.m. \$25. 805-668-2125. lila. community. LiA Creative Community, 1147 East Grand Ave. suite 101, Arroyo Grande.

**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).**

### SUMMER DATE NIGHTS WITH THE CLARK CENTER: ONLINE

A weekly online performance series. Look for it on the Clark Center's YouTube Channel and Facebook page. Donations will be split between artists/organizations and the Clark Center. Saturdays, 6-7 p.m. through Sept. 26 Donations accepted. 805-489-9444. [clarkcenter.org/summer-date-nights-2020/](http://clarkcenter.org/summer-date-nights-2020/). Clark Center for the Performing Arts, 487 Fair Oaks Ave., Arroyo Grande.

### SAN LUIS OBISPO

**BRUSHSTROKES 2020** Brushstrokes 2020 is a digital exhibition featuring 42 paintings by members of The Painters Group, an affiliated artist group of SLOMA, and members of Art Center Morro Bay. Artists explore a variety of subject matter, from portraits of loved ones and animals to serene landscapes. Through Sept. 27 Free. 805-543-8562. [sloma.org/exhibition/brushstrokes-2020/](http://sloma.org/exhibition/brushstrokes-2020/). San Luis Obispo Museum of Art, 1010 Broad St., San Luis Obispo.

**CALIFORNIA SCULPTURE SLAM 2020** California Sculpture SLAM showcases current works by established and up-and-coming California sculptors. The exhibition's goal is to provide a platform for a wide variety of concepts and materials. Exhibition slideshow online. Through Sept. 27 Free. 805-543-8562. [sloma.org/exhibition/slam-2020/](http://sloma.org/exhibition/slam-2020/). San Luis Obispo Museum of Art, 1010 Broad St., San Luis Obispo.

**DIGITAL EXHIBITION: TERMINALLY OPTIMISTIC-THE PRINTS OF RACHAEL WINN YON** This retrospective exhibition explores the prints of Rachael Winn Yon, who was joyous, adventurous, curious, and energetic. Her large personality is reflected in her prints, with playful imagery and imaginative scenes. You can view this digital exhibition at [sloma.org](http://sloma.org). Mondays-Sundays, through Sept. 27 Free. [sloma.org/exhibition/terminally-optimistic/](http://sloma.org/exhibition/terminally-optimistic/). San Luis Obispo Museum of Art, 1010 Broad St., San Luis Obispo, 543-8562.

**RAYTOONS ONLINE CLASSES: CARTOONING, VIDEO GAME DESIGN, AND CREATIVE WRITING** Raytoons will be having online classes this fall in Cartooning,

Video Game Creation, Comic Book Making, 2D Animation, Claymation, Creative Writing, and more. Available through the Outschoo Online School. Mondays-Thursday, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. through Sept. 21 \$10. 805-546-3132. [outschool.com](http://outschool.com). Zoom, Online, Inquire for Zoom ID.

**SLO CAMERA CLUB** Online Zoom meetings and competitions. Everyone is welcome. Visit site for meeting links. Second Thursday of every month Free to guest. [slocameracub.org/home.shtml](http://slocameracub.org/home.shtml). SLO Guild Hall, 2880 Broad St., San Luis Obispo, 805-543-0639.

**SLOMA: WEEKLY ART PROJECTS** Kids can enjoy new activities from home (posted online every Monday). Mondays [sloma.org](http://sloma.org). San Luis Obispo Museum of Art, 1010 Broad St., San Luis Obispo, 543-8562.

**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.

### 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, [prya.org](http://prya.org).

**INTRODUCING ENCAUSTICS** Encaustic workshop that provides an intro to basic techniques. Taught by Vicky Hoffman. All supplies included. To register and prepay, contact [vicky@vickyhoffman.com](mailto:vicky@vickyhoffman.com) Sept. 19, 1-4 p.m. \$75. 310-993-1732. Marie A Ramey, 7460 Pinal Ave, Atascadero.

### NORTH COAST SLO COUNTY

**BOOK SIGNING: MICHAEL CORBIN RAY AND THERESE VANNIER** Their new book was inspired by the true story of a major U.S. Navy disaster off the coast of California nearly a century ago, in which seven ships and nearly two dozen sailors were lost in a single night. Sept. 12, 1-3 p.m. 805-772-2880. [coalescebookstore.com](http://coalescebookstore.com). Coalesce Bookstore, 845 Main St., Morro Bay.

**CAMBRIA CENTER FOR THE ARTS ONLINE: TAMING THE RESTLESS MIND** A virtual exhibit. These featured artists for September bring works of abstraction. Deborah Pepin works with pastels, oils, and cold wax to create what she calls her doodles. Marvin Sosna, now 93, will be exhibiting abstracts. Mondays-Sundays, Sept. 11, Sept. 12, Sept. 13, Sept. 18, Sept. 19 and Sept. 20. through Sept. 27 Free. [cambriacenterforthearts.org](http://cambriacenterforthearts.org). Cambria Center for the Arts, 1350 Main St., Cambria.

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**SUBMIT YOUR EVENTS**

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## BIG BLUE

As part of Valley Art Gallery's current group exhibition, the Santa Maria Airport is showcasing abstract works by local acrylic and multimedia artist Marilyn Dover Benson through the end of September. Among the featured pieces on display is Benson's *Aqua Flow* (pictured). Visit [valleygallery.org](http://valleygallery.org) for more info. The airport is located at 3217 Terminal Drive, Santa Maria.

—C.W.

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### FEATURED ARTIST: GREGORY SIRAGUSA

"Photography is an opportunity to marvel at all the beauty in the world. Birds, sunsets, mountains, oceans, each offers a journey into the sublime," the photographer said. Through Sept. 29, 11 a.m.-7 p.m. Free. 805-772-1068. [galleryatmarinasquare.com](http://galleryatmarinasquare.com). Gallery at Marina Square, 601 Embarcadero suite 10, Morro Bay.

### FEATURED ARTISTS: TERRY GARVIN AND KAREN PETERSON

An exhibit of fine art photography. Garvin says, "Art is important. It can relax, inspire, transform, elate, more. My hope is that you have art in your life," while Peterson's images showcase her love for the Central Coast. Through Sept. 29, 11 a.m.-7 p.m. Free. 805-772-1068. [galleryatmarinasquare.com](http://galleryatmarinasquare.com). Gallery at Marina Square, 601 Embarcadero suite 10, Morro Bay.

### MORRO BAY ART ASSOCIATION: PERSPECTIVES

MBAA presents this exhibit, which explores how perspective gives a three-dimensional feeling to a flat surface, using various artistic strategies in various mediums; textile, encaustic, mixed media, oil, watercolor, acrylic, and photography. **Sept. 17-Nov. 2**, 12-4 p.m. Free. 805-772-2504. [artcentermorrobay.org](http://artcentermorrobay.org). Art Center Morro Bay, 835 Main St., Morro Bay.

**OUT ON A WHIM** Whimsical and unique artwork from Larry Le Brane. **Sept. 17-Nov. 2** 805-772-2504. [artcentermorrobay.org](http://artcentermorrobay.org). Art Center Morro Bay, 835 Main St., Morro Bay.

**THE REBOOT: STORYTELLING REIMAGINED ON ZOOM** Now live on Zoom. A curated mix of invited storytellers and open mic for novice storytellers. Spoken word, improv, character sketches and interactive games. Third Friday of every month, 7-8 p.m. Free. 805-772-9225. [facebook.com/topdogcoffeebar/](https://facebook.com/topdogcoffeebar/). Top Dog Coffee Bar, 857 Main St., Morro Bay.

## CULTURE & LIFESTYLE

SANTA YNEZ VALLEY

### 84TH ANNUAL SOLVANG DANISH DAYS

**CELEBRATION** This traditional, weekend-long festival includes live entertainment, a beer and wine garden, food vendors, parades, and more. Check site for the festival's

tentative schedule. **Sept. 18-20** Varies. [solvangdanishdays.org](http://solvangdanishdays.org). Downtown Solvang, Mission Dr., Solvang.

### 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.

**HARVEST MISSION LIFE DAY** Guests can choose to participate in various craft activities, including tortilla making, carpentry, pottery, and blacksmithing. Check site for tentative details. **Sept. 14**, 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Free admission. [lapurisimamission.org](http://lapurisimamission.org). La Purisima Mission, 2295 Purisima Mission, Lompoc.

### SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS

**30 VOLUNTEERS NEEDED IN SANTA MARIA/ ORCUTT** Community Partners in Caring is seeking volunteers to help support dependent older adults and seniors. ongoing [partnersincaring.org](http://partnersincaring.org). Citywide, Santa Maria.

**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.

**HUMAN BEING SUPPORT AND INSPIRATION ONLINE GROUP** An online group to listen and get support from others from the comfort of your own home. Tuesdays, 6:30-8 p.m. \$40 monthly subscription. 805-598-1509. [divining.weebly.com](http://divining.weebly.com). Divine Inspiration, 947 E Orange St., Santa Maria.

**LEGO PACK PROGRAM** Take-home Lego program for kids aged 6 to 17. Once registered, kids can pick up the Lego Pack at the sidewalk service window. Mondays-Saturdays. through Sept. 22 Free. 805-925-0994. Santa Maria Public Library, 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria.

**SANTA MARIA PUBLIC LIBRARY: MOVIE TALK DISCUSSION GROUP** A video conference movie discussion group; meets on the second Thursday of each month. For more information email [starnaud@cityofsantamaria.org](mailto:starnaud@cityofsantamaria.org) or call 805-925-0994. Second Thursday of every month, 3:30-4:30 p.m. Free. [cityofsantamaria.org/city-government/departments/](http://cityofsantamaria.org/city-government/departments/)

library, Santa Maria Public Library, 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria, 805-925-0994.

**VIRTUAL STORY TIME LIVE FOR EARLY LEARNERS** Santa Maria Public Library presented a virtual story time using Zoom for children aged 1 to 6. **Sept. 12**, 9 a.m.-9:30 p.m. 805-925-0994. [engagedpatrons.org](http://engagedpatrons.org). Santa Maria Public Library, 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria.

**VIRTUAL WORKSHOPS OVER ZOOM** Visit site or call to learn about various virtual workshop offerings. ongoing Varies. Unwind Studio, 130 N. Broadway, suite B, Santa Maria, 805-748-2539, [unwindsantamaria.com](http://unwindsantamaria.com).

**YOGA FOR MANKIND: ZOOM CLASSES** Offering a variety of virtual yoga and pilates classes over the summer. Check site for class schedule. ongoing Starts at \$10. [yoga4mankind.org](http://yoga4mankind.org). Yoga for Mankind, 130 N Broadway, suite B, Orcutt.

### SOUTH COAST SLO COUNTY

**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.slucsd.org](http://ae.slucsd.org). Online, See website, San Luis Obispo.

**POINT SAN LUIS LIGHTHOUSE VIRTUAL TOUR** Zoom with a docent on a virtual tour of the Point San Luis Light Station. Travel back in time to 1890, delve into the history of the light station, and see all the places you'd see on an in-person tour, plus more. Wednesdays, 2-3 p.m. \$10. 805-540-5771. [pointsanluislighthouse.org/](http://pointsanluislighthouse.org/). Point San Luis Lighthouse, 1 Lighthouse Rd., Avila Beach.

**SUNSET PHOTO SHOOT** An evening for photographers and enthusiasts to come to the station and take sunset photos. A perfect place for photographers to come snap shots of beautiful San Luis Bay, the setting sun, and other picturesque views such as the breakwater and whalers island. **Sept. 11**, 5:45-9 p.m. \$40. [my805tix.com](http://my805tix.com). Point San Luis Lighthouse, 1 Lighthouse Rd., Avila Beach.

**SWIM LESSONS** Call or go online for full schedule and to pre-register. Mondays-Thursdays Member \$130; Non-member \$160. 805-481-6399. [5cityesswimschool.com](http://5cityesswimschool.com). 5 Cities Swim School, 425 Traffic Way, Arroyo Grande.

### SAN LUIS OBISPO

**COASTAL CLEANUP MONTH** Become part of the solution to ocean pollution during Coastal Cleanup Month. Want to keep our beaches and creeks clean and stop marine debris from entering the ocean? Clean up your neighborhood anytime during Coastal Cleanup Month and you'll make a difference for the coast. Saturdays. through Sept. 26 805-884-0459. [exploreecology.org/coastal-cleanup-day/](http://exploreecology.org/coastal-cleanup-day/). County-Wide, Artists Throughout SLO County, San Luis Obispo.

**COMPLIMENTARY OUTDOOR YOGA CLASSES** Hotel San Luis Obispo, Piazza Hospitality's first property on California's scenic Central Coast, is now offering complimentary outdoor yoga classes on

its rooftop terrace. Thursdays, Saturdays, Sundays, 8 a.m.-noon \$10-\$15 donation suggested. 805-235-0700. [hotel-slo.com](http://hotel-slo.com). Hotel San Luis Obispo, 877 Palm Street, San Luis Obispo.

**LITERACY FOR LIFE TUTOR TRAINING** Literacy For Life has a San Luis Obispo countywide need for tutors. Work one-on-one with non-literate adults learning to read, write, and speak English. If you are interested in attending the training but need help with using Zoom, please email [assistant@literacyforlifelo.org](mailto:assistant@literacyforlifelo.org). Both sessions are required. Saturdays, 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m. through Sept. 19 805-541-4219. [literacyforlifelo.org/become-a-tutor.php](http://literacyforlifelo.org/become-a-tutor.php). Zoom, Online, Inquire for Zoom ID.

**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](http://eventbrite.com). San Luis Obispo Botanical Garden, 3450 Dairy Creek Rd., San Luis Obispo.

**MINDFULNESS IN THE DALLIDET GARDENS** Mindfulness is a type of meditation without dogma that is simple and suitable for anyone. Engage your senses-sound, sight, touch-by sitting, walking and exploring in silent contemplation. Tuesdays, 9-10:30 a.m. through Sept. 29 \$15. 805-543-0638. [historycenterslo.org/mindful.html](http://historycenterslo.org/mindful.html). Dallidet Adobe and Gardens, 1185 Pacific St., San Luis Obispo.

**PHYSICAL ACTIVITY CLASSES FOR SENIORS** Have you heard the phrase, "Sitting is the new smoking"? Cuesta College's Emeritus exercise program, taught by Doris Lance, is offering a 45-minute class of stretching,

CULTURE & LIFESTYLE continued page 14

PHOTO COURTESY OF WINE, WOMEN, AND SHOES



### RISE TO THE OCCASION

*Wine, Women, and Shoes, an annual fundraiser to benefit RISE, goes virtual this year and will take place on Sunday, Sept. 13, at 1 p.m.. The live broadcast will include a fashion show, silent and live auctions, and more. Attendees have the option to purchase a "Watch Party" package (pictured), which includes wine and other goodies to enjoy while watching the show. Visit [winewomenandshoes.com](http://winewomenandshoes.com) to find out more.*

—C.W.

**Coastal Cleanup Month 2020**  
SANTA BARBARA COUNTY  
September 5, 12, 19, 26  
9am-12pm  
Protect the beach by cleaning up your neighborhood!  
@ExploreEcology  
[ExploreEcology.org/ccd](http://ExploreEcology.org/ccd)  
#protectyourhappyplace  
#coastalcleanup

**Summer Special:**  
**\$25 off any service**

**Smith**  
MECHANICAL - ELECTRICAL - PLUMBING  
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**(805) 621-5000**  
se habla español  
805-868-0954  
1340 W. Betteravia Rd, Santa Maria  
[smith-electric.com](http://smith-electric.com)



# BUTTERFLIES

Alive!

NOW OPEN  
THROUGH SEPTEMBER

Walk through a beautiful garden while nearly 1,000 live butterflies flutter freely around you. The exhibit features a dazzling variety of butterflies, from local favorites to exotic tropical varieties. Learn about the life cycle and behavior of these spectacular invertebrates while observing them up close.



Reservations required via [sbnature.org/tickets](https://sbnature.org/tickets).

SANTA BARBARA  
MUSEUM  
of  
NATURAL  
HISTORY

2559 Puesta del Sol  
Santa Barbara, CA 93105  
805-682-4711

PRESENTED BY: Schipper Construction,  
Santa Barbara Independent, Voice Magazine, El Latino,  
Noozhawk, Santa Maria Sun, and Ventura County Reporter.



## BIRD IS THE WORD

The Morro Coast Audubon Society presents *Birds of a Feather Flock Together*, a virtual community program, on Monday, Sept. 21, from 7 to 8 p.m. This meeting, hosted by guest speaker Jessica Griffiths, is part of MCAS's monthly Zoom series. Admission is free. Call (805) 772-1991 or visit [morrocoastaudubon.org](https://morrocoastaudubon.org) for the Zoom link and more info.

—C.W.

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balance, and cardiovascular fitness three days a week available to seniors. Tuesdays-Thursdays, 9-9:45 a.m. through Dec. 18 Free. 805-546-3942. [cuesta.edu](https://cuesta.edu). Zoom, Online, Inquire for Zoom ID.

### SLO NOONTIME TOASTMASTERS CLUB MEETINGS

Want to improve speaking and leadership skills in a supportive and positive environment? During COVID, we are meeting virtually. Contact us to get a meeting link for info. Tuesdays, 12-1 p.m. Free. [sloontime.toastmastersclubs.org](https://sloontime.toastmastersclubs.org). Zoom, Online, Inquire for Zoom ID.

### TOWARD A MOMENT OF RECKONING: UNDERSTANDING THE HISTORY OF LOCAL AND NATIONAL RACIAL VIOLENCE

Structural racism and the racial tensions that accompany it affect our community just as they affect our nation. Join Dr. Leola Dublin Macmillan as she provides her own perspective as both a Black woman and as a scholar of race in America. **Sept. 11**, 5:30 p.m. Free. 805-543-0638. [historycenterslo.org/lecture](https://historycenterslo.org/lecture). History Center of San Luis Obispo County, 696 Monterey St., San Luis Obispo.

### VIRTUAL 28TH ANNUAL WIGGLE WAGGLE WALK FOR WOODS AND 5K

Woods Humane Society's annual Wiggle Waggle Walk is going virtual this year and anyone, anywhere can participate. Participants can walk, run, kayak, hike, bike or stroll. All proceeds benefit homeless dogs and cats at Woods. Through Oct. 31 \$25. 805-543-9316. [woodshumane.org/walk2020](https://woodshumane.org/walk2020). Woods Humane Society, 875 Oklahoma Ave., San Luis Obispo.

### VIRTUAL TOUR OF THE JACK HOUSE

Public virtual tours via Zoom of the famous Jack House of San Luis Obispo. Access to the house is extremely limited and this is your best opportunity to get the inside view. Thursdays, 2 p.m. \$5 suggested. 805-543-0638. [historycenterslo.org/jack-tour.html](https://historycenterslo.org/jack-tour.html). Zoom, Online, Inquire for Zoom ID.

### VOLUNTEER SOLAR INSTALLER TRAINING WEBINAR WITH SUNWORK

Learn the basics of installing rooftop solar energy systems by volunteering with SunWork. This 3-hour online event teaches the basics of rooftop solar, electricity, and safety. After completing the training, you are eligible to join us to install residential solar systems in our community. **Sept. 12**, 9 a.m.-noon Free. 805-229-1250. [eventbrite.com](https://eventbrite.com). Zoom, Online, Inquire for Zoom ID.

**WINE, WOMEN, AND SHOES WITH RISE** Join us for an afternoon of fine wines from across the Central Coast — an online boutique shopping experience, raffles, auctions, and more. Get ready for an afternoon of fun and philanthropy, this year from the comfort of your home. **Sept. 13** Free. [winewomenandshoes.com/rise](https://winewomenandshoes.com/rise). Zoom, Online, Inquire for Zoom ID.

## NORTH SLO COUNTY

**11TH ANNUAL DANCING WITH OUR STARS** Dr. Steve Robinson is fundraising for the Charles Paddock Zoo by dancing on the 11th Annual Dancing with Our Stars presented by the Friends of the Atascadero Library. **Sept. 17-19**, 5:30-10 p.m. [charlespaddockzoo.org](https://charlespaddockzoo.org). Charles Paddock Zoo, 9100 Morro Rd., Atascadero.

**KRAZY DAZE SIDEWALK SALES** **Sept. 18**, 10 a.m. and **Sept. 19**, 10 a.m. No admission. 805-238-4103. [pasoroblesdowntown.org/](https://pasoroblesdowntown.org/). Downtown Paso Robles Shopping Core, 12th and Park Streets, Paso Robles.

**NAR-ANON: FRIDAY MEETINGS** A meeting for those who know or have known a feeling of desperation concerning the addiction of a loved one. Fridays, 12-1 p.m. Free. 805-221-5523. North County Connection, 8600 Atascadero Ave., Atascadero.

**POP-UP DRIVE-IN** The businesses at Colony Square would like to invite you down to a Pop-Up Drive-In Movie where we can provide you with donuts, popcorn or brews directly to your car during the film. Thursdays, 8:15 p.m. \$11-\$20. [my805tix.com](https://my805tix.com). Colony Square, 6909 El Camino Real, Atascadero.

## FOOD & DRINK

### SANTA YNEZ VALLEY

**KALYRA: PURCHASES AND PICK-UPS** Offering varietals from all over the world. Tuesdays-Sundays, 12-5 p.m. 805-693-8864. [kalyrawinery.com](https://kalyrawinery.com). Kalyra Winery, 343 N. Refugio Rd., Santa Ynez.

### STANDING SUN: PURCHASES AND DELIVERIES

Visit site for Cellar Club details and more info. Mondays-Thursdays, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. 805-691-9413. [standingsunwines.com](https://standingsunwines.com). Standing Sun Wines, 92 2nd St., Unit D, Buellton, 805-691-9413.

### LOMPOC/VANDENBERG

### FLYING GOAT CELLARS: APPOINTMENT AND PICK-UPS

This winery specializes in Pinot Noir and sparkling wine. Call or check site for pick-up and appointment info. Mondays, Thursdays-Sundays, 11 a.m.-4 p.m. 805-736-9032. [flyinggoatcellars.com](https://flyinggoatcellars.com). Flying Goat Cellars, 1520 Chestnut Court, Lompoc.

### SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS

**PRESQU'ILE WINERY: RESERVATIONS ONLY** Call or go online to make a reservation (reservations open to the public). ongoing Presqu'ile Winery, 5391 Presqu'ile Dr., Santa Maria, 805-937-8110, [presquilewine.com](https://presquilewine.com).

### SOUTH COAST SLO COUNTY

**NINTH ANNUAL EMPTY BOWLS** Patrons who purchase tickets online will have three separate dates and locations to pick up (and pick out) bowls handcrafted by local artisans. And in an effort to support local businesses, ticket-buyers will receive a coupon good for a bowl of soup from one of the participating restaurants. **Sept. 12** and **Sept. 19** 805-574-1638. 5CHC.org. Trilogy at Monarch Dunes, 1640 Trilogy Pkwy, Nipomo.

### NORTH SLO COUNTY

**BRUNCH IS BACK** Celebrate the second Sunday of the month with brunch. Enjoy a two-hour cruise on the waterfront. Features fresh coffee, pastries, and more. Second Sunday of every month, 11 a.m.-1 p.m. \$50. 805-772-2128. [chablisruises.com](https://chablisruises.com). Chablis Cruises, 1205 Embarcadero, Morro Bay.

## MUSIC

### SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS

**SANTA MARIA PHILHARMONIC: SOUNDCLOUD** Features recordings of the Mozart Sinfonia from the Philharmonic's last live concert and other recordings. ongoing Free. [smphilharmonic.org](https://smphilharmonic.org). Soundcloud, Online.

### SAN LUIS OBISPO

**CAL POLY ARTS VIRTUAL MUSICAL SERIES: A KILLER PARTY** A collaboration between more than 50 Broadway professionals all working together remotely. A 9-part musical. Wednesdays \$12.99 for complete series. [akillerpartymusical.com/cal-poly-arts](https://akillerpartymusical.com/cal-poly-arts). SLO, 805-756-7113.

### NORTH SLO COUNTY

**SATURDAY IN THE PARK: VIRTUAL CONCERT SERIES** Concerts will be available to stream for free through YouTube. Upcoming acts include Chad Land Band (Sept. 5), Rockin' Bs Band (Sept. 19), and Ghost/Monster (Oct. 3). Saturdays, 6-7:30 p.m. Free admission. [atascadero.org/youtube](https://atascadero.org/youtube). Atascadero Lake Park, 461-5000.

**A WOMAN ON BROADWAY** Hosted by CASS Winery and SloOpera, a fabulous concert in the vines featuring the talent of Skye Privat and Susan Davies. **Sept. 13**, 6 p.m. [my805tix.com](https://my805tix.com). Cass Winery And Vineyard, 7350 Linne Rd., Paso Robles, 805.239.1730. ○

## Arts Briefs

### Solvang holds 11th annual Scarecrow Fest and Contest

Businesses and organizations throughout Solvang are invited to participate in the 11th annual Scarecrow Fest and Contest, which is scheduled to begin Thursday, Oct. 1, and run through Saturday, Oct. 31. Businesses can participate in the event by creating their own unique scarecrow to display in front of their location, while maintaining COVID-19 protocols, according to a press release. Entry forms to join the contest are due by Thursday, Sept. 17 (entry fee is \$25).

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE LANDSBY



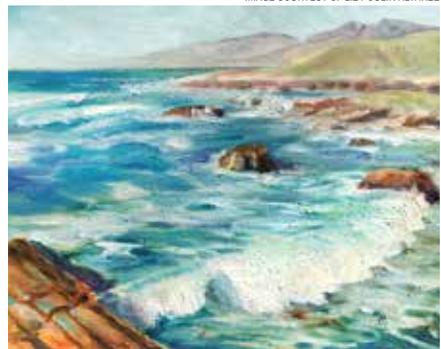
In lieu of in-person voting during the contest, the public will be able to vote for their favorite scarecrows online at [syvscarecrows.com](http://syvscarecrows.com). Winners will be awarded in six different categories: Best Scarecrow Photo Op; Best Use of Recycled Materials; Best Use of Business Theme; Most Danish; Spookiest; and Most Humorous. Viewers of the website will be able to access a map that specifies the location of each participating business.

A Best of Solvang Scarecrow will also be chosen, which will be entered into a Santa Ynez Valley-wide contest and compete against scarecrow winners chosen from Buellton and Los Olivos to determine the Valley's Best Scarecrow. Last year, the Santa Ynez Valley Marriott received the grand prize.

"This is the eighth year that the contest is going valley-wide and other Santa Ynez Valley towns have definitely embraced the 'Fest,'" Tracy Beard, executive director of the Solvang Chamber of Commerce, said in a press release. "The more that each town gets into this, the better the experience for both our locals and visitors—whose community involvement and visits, respectfully, benefit the local economy of the entire valley."

### Cypress Gallery's September exhibit showcases paintings by Liz Poulin Alvarez

IMAGE COURTESY OF LIZ POULIN ALVAREZ



The Lompoc Valley Art Association (LVAA) presents California Landmarks, a new exhibition highlighting landscapes by local artist and Lompoc High School art teacher Liz Poulin Alvarez, which premiered at Cypress Gallery on Wednesday, Sept. 2, and is scheduled to remain on display through Sunday, Sept. 27.

Alvarez, a member of the Santa Barbara Art Association and the California Art Club, used charcoal, watercolor, and oil and acrylic paint to create the paintings featured in the exhibit. Her art is available to view online as well at [elizabethpoulin.com](http://elizabethpoulin.com) and on her Instagram page (@alvarezarts17).

Call (805) 350-9669 or visit [lompocart.org](http://lompocart.org) for more info on California Landmarks and other updates from the LVAA and Cypress Gallery. The venue is located at 119 E. Cypress Ave., Lompoc. ○

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

PHOTO COURTESY OF LUIS ESCOBAR REFLECTIONS PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIO



**STAGE PRESENCE:** Emily Trask (left) will direct a livestreamed reading of *The Agitators*, as part of PCPA's InterPlay series. Yusef Seevers (right) will play Frederick Douglass during the reading. Trask and Seevers have performed together in *Shakespeare in Love*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, and other PCPA productions.

# Interstellar

Log in to Zoom and check out PCPA's virtual, contemporary play reading series, *InterPlay*

BY CALEB WISEBLOOD

Originating in 2002, *InterPlay*—the Pacific Conservatory Theatre's (PCPA) popular, seasonal play reading event—has traditionally been held at Santa Maria's Severson Theatre. Rather than postpone or cancel this year's iteration, the company decided to adapt and expand the weekend-long event into a series of virtual offerings.

Between Friday, Sept. 18, and Saturday, Oct. 24, PCPA will stream live readings of six different plays through Zoom. The first program in the series, a reading of *The Agitators* by Mat Smart, will premiere on Friday, Sept. 18, at 7 p.m. A second reading of the play will stream the following

afternoon, Saturday, Sept. 19, at 1:30 p.m.

"While we would much prefer that circumstances allowed us to gather in a theater together, sharing these plays over Zoom actually provides some lovely opportunities," PCPA Resident Artist and Literary Associate Emily Trask, director of *The Agitators*, told the *Sun*. "This format allows us to bring the immediacy and intimacy of a live theater experience to the comfort of your own home."

"It also allows us to have artists and audience members participating from all over the state and country who otherwise may not have been able to join us," Trask added. "How cool is it that you could be experiencing a live play reading at

the exact same time as someone in a different state?"

The plot of *The Agitators* follows the complex relationship



**FROM YOUR OWN HOME:** Polly Firestone-Walker (seen here with Peter S. Hadres in PCPA's production of *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*) will read as Susan B. Anthony in PCPA's upcoming livestreamed reading of *The Agitators*.

between historical icons Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass over the span of 50 years. PCPA regulars Yusef Seevers and Polly Firestone-Walker will read as Douglass and Anthony, respectively.

"I am so excited for these two indomitable actors to get to breathe life into these words and characters at such an incredibly apt time," Trask said, who previously acted alongside both performers during *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Shakespeare in Love*, and other PCPA productions.

Aside from directing *InterPlay*'s debut reading, Trask also helped curate the series' play selection.

"As PCPA's literary associate, I get to have a 'hands on' role with *InterPlay* and do one of my favorite things—read a whole bunch of plays," said Trask, who also gets to access her passion for play reading as the host of PCPA's Rediscovery Reading Club, another virtual program offered through Zoom.

Aside from *The Agitators*, other upcoming play readings in the series include *Things I Know To Be True*, by Andrew Bovell, *Mother Road*, by Octavio Solis, and *Alabama Story*, by Kenneth Jones. One more play will be read but has yet to be announced.

During the selection process, Trask sorted through several contemporary plays, all recently premiered, written within the last year or two or still in the early stages of workshoping, she explained.

"Some plays come from theater colleagues across the country who are workshoping a brand new script, some are suggestions from our PCPA students or alumni," Trask said. "Some come from existing relationships with cool, new playwrights whose work we're keeping an eye on."

"One of the perks of doing contemporary, recently written plays is that the playwrights are usually still alive," Trask added, as each episode of *InterPlay* will be followed by a special talkback with the actors, directors, and occasionally the playwrights themselves.

While narrowing down the list of plays, ultimately ending in a total of six, PCPA sought out plays that specifically represented "a diversity of voices and styles," Trask said. Organizers of the series also had to consider how well each play would work as a script reading rather than a full-blown production.

"From there we try to select plays that work well in a reading format—with no scenery, props, or costumes," Trask said. "Just the story, the actors, and the audience." ○

Arts Editor Caleb Wiseblood wants you to unmute your Zoom window. Send comments to [cwiseblood@santamariasun.com](mailto:cwiseblood@santamariasun.com).

### Showtime

Visit [pcpa.org/interplay](http://pcpa.org/interplay) to find out more about PCPA's *InterPlay* series. Admission to join each reading over Zoom is \$5. The series is scheduled to begin Friday, Sept. 18, and run through Saturday, Oct. 24.

IMAGE COURTESY OF PCPA



**ZOOM IN:** The first program in the *InterPlay* series, a reading of *The Agitators* by Mat Smart, will premiere on Friday, Sept. 18, at 7 p.m. A second reading of the play will stream the following afternoon, Saturday, Sept. 19, at 1:30 p.m.

IMAGE COURTESY OF CHERYL AMBRECHT



**SEA FOR YOURSELF:** Among Cheryl Ambrecht's new oil paintings on display in Simple Pleasures at Gallery Los Olivos is *A Day in the Harbor*.

IMAGE COURTESY OF CHERYL AMBRECHT



**LET THE SUNFLOWERS IN:** Cheryl Ambrecht became passionate about oil painting in 2002 and has created a fresh batch of landscapes, still life, and floral pieces for display in Simple Pleasures.

IMAGE COURTESY OF PATRICIA WATKINS



**FROM EAR TO EAR:** On Saturday, Sept. 12, and Sunday, Sept. 20, featured artist Patricia Watkins will be on-site at Gallery Los Olivos. Her handcrafted jewelry is on sale at the gallery.

IMAGE COURTESY OF PATRICIA WATKINS



**HIDDEN GEMS:** Patricia Watkins uses pearls, vintage beads, gemstones, crystals, and other materials to create her jewelry—earrings, necklaces, bracelets, and other items.

# Oh, simple thing

Gallery Los Olivos reopens its doors for the first time since March, debuts Simple Pleasures exhibit

BY CALEB WISEBLOOD

So far, 2020 has been quite challenging for all of us. Who would have ever guessed that a pandemic would hit and change our lives in so many ways," said Cheryl Ambrecht, one of two featured artists in Gallery Los Olivos' new duo show.

The popular venue's closure, which lasted nearly half a year, officially came to an end on Thursday, Sept. 3, when Gallery Los Olivos reopened its doors to the public (safety procedures are posted at the front for guests to read before entering).

The day also marked the debut of Simple Pleasures, an eclectic exhibition showcasing paintings by Ambrecht and handcrafted jewelry by Patricia Watkins.

For Ambrecht, creating new art during the course of the COVID-19 pandemic was "to make lemonade out of the lemons," she said. Over the past several months, the Santa Barbara-based artist has spent lots of time working in her studio as well as painting outdoors.

"Santa Barbara has such picturesque views and vistas, just about everywhere you go, from the mountains to the sea," said Ambrecht, who especially enjoys

painting ships, ocean waves, and other harbor subjects.

Aside from scenic locales within Santa Barbara, she enjoys plein-air painting in the rolling hills of the Santa Ynez Valley. A retired graphic designer, Ambrecht became passionate about oil painting in 2002 and has created a fresh batch of landscapes, still life, and floral pieces for display in Simple Pleasures, to be paired with Watkins' fine art jewelry.

"Simple Pleasures illustrates all our pleasures of real life," Ambrecht said, commenting on the exhibit's title before describing her recent art ventures as painting until her heart's content, with limited distractions.

For Watkins, the show's title refers to her final products on display rather than the artistic process, she explained.

"Our show, Simple Pleasures, describes my end products but not the process or technique. The process and technique can take a long time," Watkins said. "One of the simple pleasures for women is adorning a casual or dressy outfit with a piece of jewelry. That fact is almost as old as civilization itself."

Watkins uses pearls, vintage

## Simple plan

Find out more about Simple Pleasures, scheduled to run through Monday, Sept. 28, by calling (805) 688-7517 or visiting gallerylosolivos.com. Gallery Los Olivos is located at 2920 Grand Ave., Los Olivos. The gallery is currently open Thursday through Monday, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

beads, gemstones, crystals, and other materials to create her jewelry—earrings, necklaces, bracelets, and other items. Sterling silver, bronze, and brass are among the various metals she uses.

One aspect that attracted her to showcase her works at Gallery Los Olivos, which she called one of her favorite galleries in Santa Barbara County, is its inclusivity of various art forms, she said.

"Most of our artists are painters, but we also have two potters, one woodworker, one sculptor, and one assemblage artist," said Watkins, a longtime member of both Gallery Los Olivos and Offtrack Gallery in Encinitas.

A staple of the Santa Ynez arts community since 1992, Gallery Los Olivos has new hours since reopening: Thursday through Monday, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., during which guests can enjoy viewing Watkins' and Ambrecht's pieces in person (last month's virtual exhibition is still available for viewing online at gallerylosolivosonline.faso.com).

"One of my favorite pieces in the show right now is a woven necklace of purple and turquoise color," said

Watkins, who used yarn and beads she had collected while traveling in Europe. The necklace is also adorned with pearls and gemstones.

A former high school teacher, Watkins first forayed into jewelry design while working for the Zarah Company, before launching her own jewelry business online, through her website (watkinsarts.com). On Saturday, Sept. 12, and Sunday, Sept. 20, Watkins will be working in the gallery. Her jewelry on display is also

available for sale.

"If you purchase a piece, I hope you enjoy it as much as I did in making it," Watkins said. ○

Arts Editor Caleb Wiseblood is grabbing his mask and heading to the gallery. Contact him at [cwiseblood@santamariasun.com](mailto:cwiseblood@santamariasun.com).

PHOTO COURTESY OF GALLERY LOS OLIVOS



**GUESS WHO'S BACK?** A staple of the Santa Ynez arts community since 1992, Gallery Los Olivos officially reopened its doors to the public on Thursday, Sept. 3, after its closure of nearly half a year.



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orders.ordercoldstone.com/menu/acorn-plaza/

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(scheduled to open August 18)**

1846 N. Broadway St. A., Santa Maria  
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www.cottagehealth.org/urgent-care/

**DRK Real Estate, Inc.**

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(805) 714-3072  
www.drkrealestate.net

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evolveretirement.com

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Laurelwrapz.com

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Maria  
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smcounseling.com

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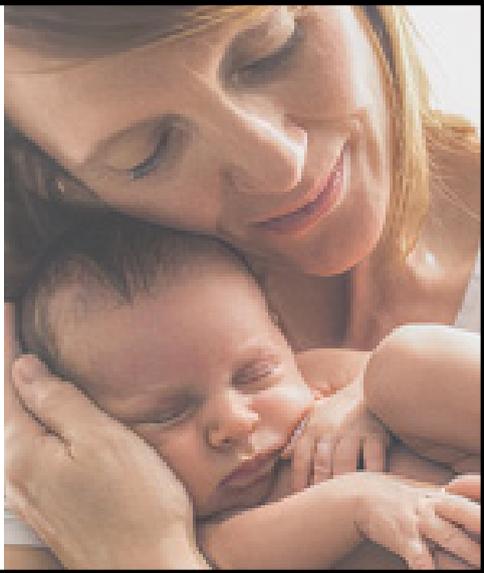


PHOTO COURTESY OF UNIVERSAL PICTURES

### Growing pains

**D**irector and co-writer Judd Apatow (*Knocked Up*, *The 40-Year-Old Virgin*, *Funny People*) delivers a poignant dramedy about directionless 24-year-old Scott Carlin (Pete Davidson, who also co-wrote the screenplay with David Sirus). Scott spends his days smoking weed and trying to find people who will let him practice tattooing on them. He blames his failure to launch on his ADHD, Crohn's disease, and his firefighter father's death. As his much more mature younger sister Claire (Maude Apatow) heads off for college and his mother Margie (Marisa Tomei) encourages him to get on with his life, Scott's forced to confront his failures. (136 min.)

**Glen:** Pete Davidson's real-life father, Scott Davidson, was a New York City firefighter who died during the 9/11 attack, so this semi-autobiographical story feels very personal. Davidson's character, Scott, can't take responsibility for his own failures. He can't commit to anything, even his secret girlfriend Kelsey (Bel Powley), who he refuses to acknowledge publicly and who he thinks is too good for him anyway. He dropped out of high school, his attention span is too short to be a competent tattoo artist, and his mom's an enabler. The story gets traction when Scott tries to tattoo 9-year-old Harold (Luke David Blumm), whose dad, Ray (Bill Burr), shows up at Scott's house to confront him but becomes smitten

with Scott's mom. Now Scott has to deal with his mom's new relationship, and he's been enlisted to walk Ray's kids to school as punishment for tattooing Harold. It also turns out that Ray, also a firefighter, knew Scott's father. The emotionally nuanced story is a terrific vehicle for Davidson, who exhibits depths I didn't think he had in him. It's a shame this film didn't have a chance to come out in theaters. It's terrific.

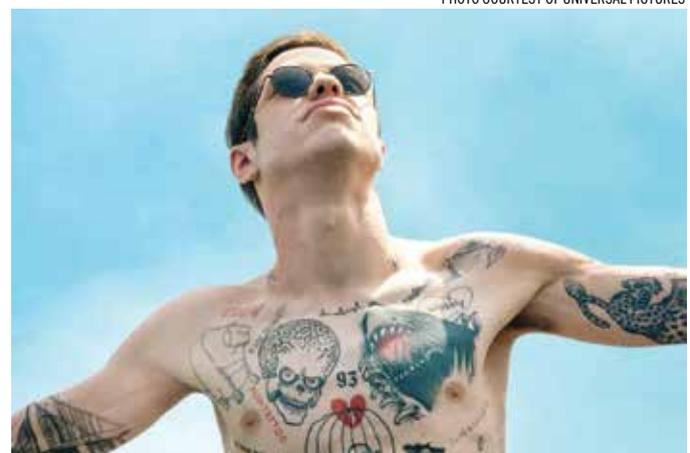
**Anna:** I love an Apatow flick—they always manage to be funny and emotionally resonant, and *The King of Staten Island* falls firmly in those two categories. Scott may be 24, but he's also perpetually a 12-year-old. He hangs with the same group he always has, is sleeping with a girl he has known since fourth grade, and outright refuses to do anything outside of his comfort zone. Just getting him to put on a sport coat for his sister's graduation party is a headache for his mom, Margie, played by the magnificent Marisa Tomei. Instead of supporting his mom moving forward in life, he desperately clings to her, undermining Ray every chance he gets. We know he's not a bad guy, but the bonds he forms with Ray's kids as he walks them to school make Scott almost endearing. He reluctantly takes a job as a busser at his uncle's restaurant where he has to literally fight for his tips, and slowly but surely we watch Scott grow up and Margie start looking out for herself instead of everyone else. I agree

that this should have been seen in theaters, but since we're all stuck at home, you might as well enjoy this Apatow gem any way you can.

**Glen:** Like Scott's life, the first half of the film

sort of meanders around, driving home the point that Scott's a mess, but by the second half, the film starts to get to its point, which is about a son reconciling his father's death, learning to take responsibility, and understanding that a family tragedy is surmountable with effort. When Scott starts to hang around Ray and the other firefighters, he begins to understand their motivations—and through them his father's—and sees his father in another light. He also discovers that Ray is a pretty good guy—good enough for his mother—and that his mother deserves a shot at happiness again. It's all surprisingly moving, and I was fully invested in Scott. You could argue the character and premise are pretty typical of an Apatow film, which are usually about man-boys learning to accept responsibility, but even though there's a familiar feel to the film, its personal connection to its star Davidson—whose real-life father was last seen running up the stairs of the Marriott World Trade Center—ups the emotional ante. I thoroughly enjoyed this one.

**Anna:** At first, Scott seems almost flippant over losing his father, but we soon realize that resentment and deep sadness sit just below the surface. When Ray takes him to a ball game in hopes of bonding, Scott can't help but interject



**KING OF NOWHERE:** Pete Davidson stars as Scott Carlin, a directionless 24-year-old trying to figure out his life, in the Judd Apatow-directed dramedy *The King of Staten Island*, now at Redbox.

when Ray's fire crew starts talking about his father the hero. Heroes don't leave their kids and wife behind to run into burning buildings, Scott says. This contention is one of the big shifts in character development that we see from Scott after he moves into the fire house and starts to see what the job is really all about. I thought this flick was warm and funny, light enough to enjoy but with enough heart to stay with you. Watching this perpetual teenager finally grow up was a joy, and Davidson along with his supporting cast put together a gem. ○

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

#### THE KING OF STATEN ISLAND

What's it rated? **R**  
 What's it worth, Anna? **Full price**  
 What's it worth, Glen? **Full price**  
 Where's it showing? **Redbox**

### TV & Film Reviews

#### THE VOW

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

HBO's new series *The Vow* is an in-depth look at NXIVM and its leader Keith Raniere's rise and fall as he indoctrinated, brainwashed, and recruited members of his self-described "multi-level marketing company." Behind the guise of betterment and self-improvement, Raniere's reign of terror left families torn apart and women branded and imprisoned into sexual slavery.

To be in the club is to be exclusive, but soon the simple idea of finding your joy is overshadowed by the power-hungry, conniving Raniere and those he has recruited as his closest followers. The series combines footage of Raniere in various talks and interviews, woven with talking heads of former members and experts who bring closely held and private truths about the inner-workings of the group and what extracting yourself from it really meant. Losing your family, your friends, and the collateral that Raniere demanded—your house, your savings, your life.

This is bound to be a fascinating series from beginning to



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE OTHERS AND HBO

**REIGN OF TERROR:** *The Vow* is an inside look at recently convicted Keith Raniere's (pictured) business-turned-cult that left members destitute, branded, and forced into sexual slavery. This HBO series chronicles retellings by Raniere's victims as well as outlining the rise and fall of this cult that hid behind self-growth.

end. Episodes are released one at a time on Sunday nights through HBO and HBOMax. (nine 55- to 60-min. episodes)  
 —Anna

#### LYING AND STEALING

What's it rated? **R** When? **2019**  
 Where's it showing? **HBO and Amazon Prime**

Though a box office bomb, this slick crime caper has a lot going for it. Directed and co-written by Matt Aselton (*Gigantic*), it follows Ivan (Theo James), an art thief trying to pay off his dead father's gambling debts to Dimitri (Fred Melamed), a ruthless Greek gangster. Dimitri points Ivan in the direction of select pieces of art, Ivan steals them and gets a small cut for himself. His goal is to pay off his father's debts and collect enough of a nest egg to get out of the heist game.

At a posh party he's crashed to steal a piece of art, Ivan meets Elyse (Emily Ratajkowski), a casually immoral kindred spirit. She's an actress who's been blackballed from Hollywood and is trying to buy her way back in through various con jobs. There's also Ivan's brother, Ray (Ebon Moss-Bachrach), a degenerate gambler and drug addict. Moss-Bachrach is fantastic, as is Melamed. Both steal every scene they're in.

Despite its low budget and largely unknown cast—Ratajkowski is probably best remembered as one of the topless dancers in Robin Thicke's rapey "Blurred Lines" video—the film generates some escapist fun. (100 min.) ○  
 —Glen



PHOTO COURTESY OF 50 DEGREES ENTERTAINMENT

**KINDRED SPIRITS:** Elyse (Emily Ratajkowski) meets Ivan (Theo James) at a party, where he's there to steal artwork and she's working a con, and they develop an uneasy pact, in the crime drama *Lying and Stealing*, available on HBO and Amazon Prime.

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



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## Sweet and social

*Gina's Piece of Cake took to social media for a helping hand to make it through the pandemic*

BY CAMILLIA LANHAM

One day, Gina's Piece of Cake was open, baking, and cranking out the cakes. And the next day, it wasn't. "When the pandemic first started, obviously, the mall just closed our doors," owner Gina Martin said.

The saving grace? Because the shop is just inside the Santa Maria Town Center's entrance, Martin said they had a side door that they could use to access the bakery from outside the mall.

"Without that, I don't know that we would still be open," she said.

It took a little while to figure out how to make things work, but with the help of social media, a Paycheck Protection Program loan, and a little outside-of-the-box thinking, Gina's made it through two rounds of COVID-19 mall closures and was back to full operating hours as of Sept. 3, when the Town Center reopened again.

Initially, in March, after a brief closure, Martin said they opened for minimal hours twice a week, offering specials and selling them out the side door. As other food establishments began selling to-go orders, Martin said they decided that Gina's could do something like that, too.

Cake decorator Ali Wilson, who now manages the bakery's social media feeds and decorates cakes, put the word out on Gina's Facebook and Instagram pages.

Martin said she never really paid attention to how many people followed the business on those platforms because the bakery didn't need it. After being open for 16 years and in the mall for nine, Gina's stayed pretty steady with a good reputation in the community. However, as the pandemic picked up steam, people canceled their orders for big events such as weddings, and with the mall closed, customers couldn't peruse the glass case for their sweet tooth fix.

Gina's was forced to figure out how to reach customers in a new way and keep them updated on constant changes. Martin said it made her realize how important it is to stay connected with the community.

"Social media is really the only thing that kept us alive," Martin said. "All of those people who click 'like' or make a comment or share our post, they're



**DAILY SIX-PACK:** Because the Santa Maria Town Center Mall was closed during much of the pandemic, Gina's Piece of Cake started advertising a handful of specials on social media for curbside pickup each day, such as half a dozen gourmet cupcakes.

really responsible for helping us be successful during this time. ... I've never really been a huge marketing person on social media, but gosh, it really works."

Gina's offered up a COVID-19 survival box, "a sampler box on steroids," Martin said—cookies, brownies, mini cakes, cream items, and a loaf of bread.

"There was a huge bread shortage for whatever reason. It was the weirdest thing," Martin said. "We were desperate; we just needed to pay some bills."

And then there were the toilet paper cakes, which Martin said was Gina's way of trying to make a heavy situation a little bit lighter. Everything was so dark, heavy, and scary, Martin said, so they were trying to be humorous and still stay afloat. They were a hit just like the survival kits.

The bakery came up with daily specials—a six-pack of gourmet cupcakes or French macarons, mini cheesecakes, linguça rolls with jalapeño and cheddar cheese, mini cream puffs and chocolate eclairs, croissants of all flavors. They'd advertise those specials on social media, people would order, drive up to the side door, and either hop out to grab their orders or get it delivered to their cars.

"When we're a normal operation, we

### Back to normal

With the Santa Maria Town Center Mall open again, Gina's Piece of Cake is back to its pre-pandemic schedule. The bakery is open from Tuesday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 7 p.m., Saturday from 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. at 307 Town Center East in Santa Maria. Find Gina's on Facebook and Instagram @Ginaspieceofcake.

bake a lot," she said, starting with cakes first thing in the morning, then breads and pastries, then cookies, brownies, and muffins. "So throughout the day everything gets made every day. So when we got shut down, we would just have designated items we would bake, otherwise we would be wasting it all. ... Two or three items on special, and that's all we would make."

It's been rough, Martin said, but thankfully, Gina's also received a Paycheck Protection Program loan that paid the staff. It gave the bakery the momentum needed to keep moving forward, she said.

"If you don't have the revenue coming in and you don't have the money to pay your employees, you just kind of have to shut down and wait until the storm passes. So we got really lucky," Martin said.

Eventually, Gina's had enough business to open up four days a week. Then they started offering individually wrapped baked goods from a pink pop-up tent outside that side door on Fridays and Saturdays—advertised via social media, of course. Now, since the mall is open again, Martin said the bakery is back to six days a week. That beautiful glass case is once again full of treats, and sales are pretty good so far, she said.

On the same day that the mall reopened, Gina's also participated as a pop-up at Birchwood in Nipomo—something Martin said she's never really done before. Located off Tefft Street, the Birchwood Beer Garden opened on Sept. 3 with food trucks, beer, and a bright pink pop-up tent full of baked goods.

It was great, Martin said, and Gina's



**MAKE IT LIGHT:** Incorporating a little bit of humor into baking, Gina's Piece of Cake started making toilet paper cakes at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.



**COVID SURVIVAL KIT:** Cookies, cupcakes, brownies, cream items, and a loaf of bread from Gina's Piece of Cake could help get you through the COVID-19 pandemic—or at least satisfy that emergency sweet tooth.

Piece of Cake is heading back out to do it again on Sept. 10.

"We sold out," she said. "The kids can go, and the parents can go, and it's just a really cool place. It was just chill, it was fun."

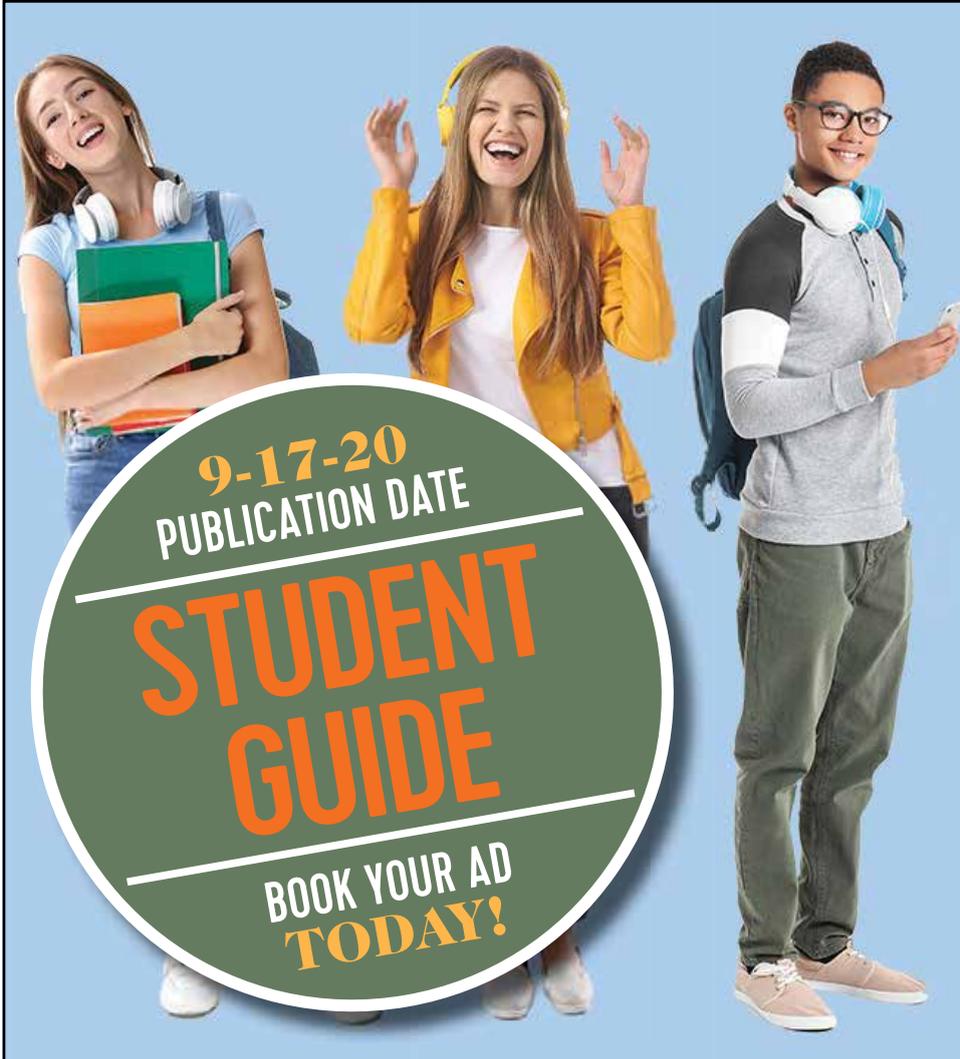
With the success of that, Martin said, Gina's could start doing more of the outside stuff. The bakery is looking into expanding and possibly purchasing a trailer they can take to events.

"Now, we're really kind of thinking outside of the box and kind of making it come to fruition," she said. "We've had so much positive feedback from our customers, and we've gained tons of new followers." ○

Editor Camillia Lanham is salivating from scrolling through Gina's Piece of Cake's Facebook feed. Send your food pics to [clanham@santamariasun.com](mailto:clanham@santamariasun.com).



**SAUSAGE ROLL:** Gina's Piece of Cake offered a number of daily specials during the pandemic, including the linguça roll—French bread filled with Silva linguça, cheddar cheese, and jalapeño—and a drink.



9-17-20  
PUBLICATION DATE

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- After no voluntary compliance and multiple warnings, it's fair.
- The county should consider whether the business poses an actual health risk.
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