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Mulan: Disappointing [18]



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SNACKS 1-	

Outdoor cheers

Beer

Birchwood in Nipomo opens a beer garden for socially distanced community eating and drinking [19]

BY CAMILLIA LANHAM

NEWS Health care costs and hospitals, part two [6]

ARTS NatureTrack takes its film fest virtual [15]

ARTS California landscapes in Lompoc [16]

Join us for a virtual injury prevention class

ThinkFirst to Prevent Falls



ThinkFirst's mission is to prevent brain, spinal cord and other traumatic injuries through education, research and advocacy.

This class will be taught collaboratively by Trauma and Therapy Services from Cottage Health. Instructors will include RNs, Physical Therapists and Occupational Therapists.

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Upon registering you will receive a confirmation email with more details.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Raise awareness of the prevalence of falls and their serious consequences
2. Increase knowledge on reducing your risk for falls



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Food and drink options are different than they used to be. And in some areas of the Central Coast, it isn't easy to go out to eat. Birchwood Beer Garden in Nipomo just gave locals a reason to cheers to socially distanced community gathering complete with beer, an outdoor patio, and food trucks. I can tell you all about it [19].

This week, you can also read about a new Santa Barbara County health order covering homeless shelters and H-2A housing [4]; part two of a series on hospital consolidations driving up the cost of care on the Central Coast [6]; and what The NatureTrack Foundation is doing for its annual film fest [15].

Camillia Lanham
editor



EAT, DRINK, BE MERRY: Birchwood Beer Garden serves up beverages and brings in food trucks for a little outdoor pleasure.

Cover photo by Camillia Lanham > Cover design by Alex Zuniga

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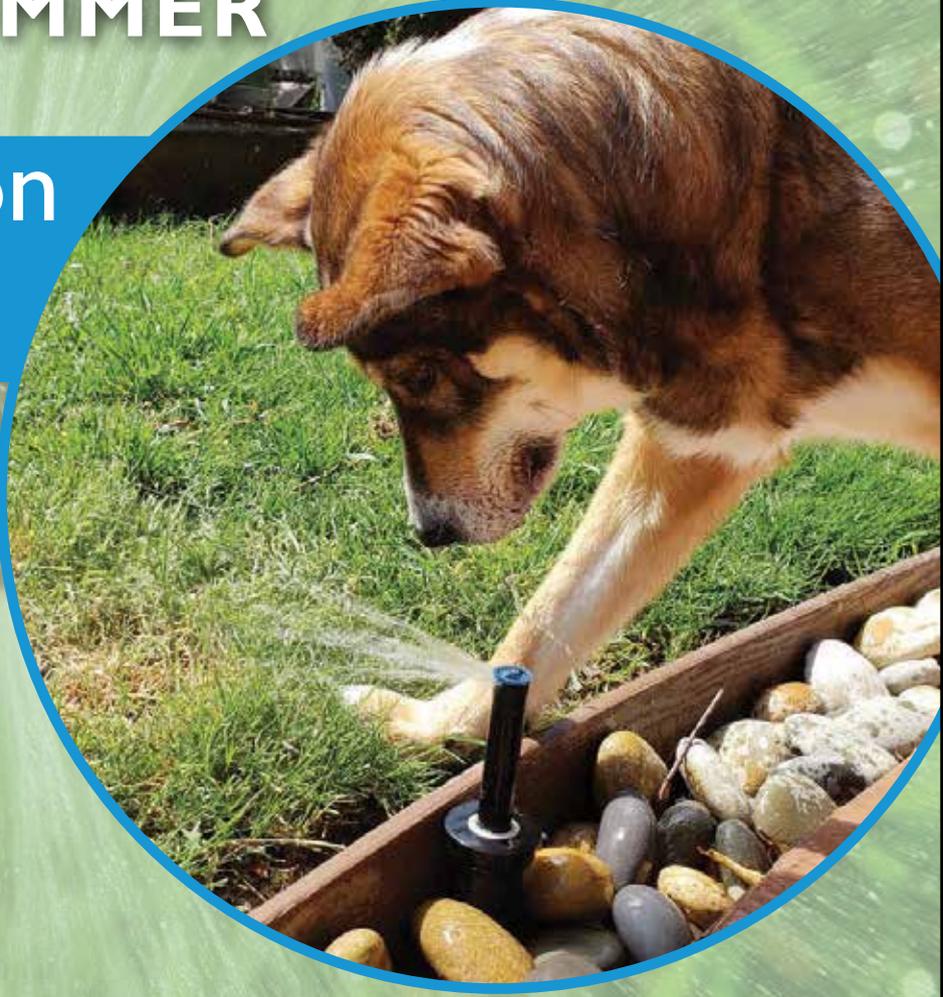
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Political Watch

• On Sept. 9, **Gov. Gavin Newsom** signed Assembly Bill 1867 into law. The legislation extends paid sick day protections to California's workforce. "Building on historic early action to expand paid sick days to employees in the food sector at the beginning of this crisis, this legislation means that every California employee that has been exposed to or tests positive for COVID-19 will have access to paid sick days for the rest of the 2020 calendar year," a press release stated. The budget trailer bill includes employers with more than 500 employees, as well as public and private employers of first responders and health care workers who don't cover their employees under federal law, meaning the bill closes the gap between paid sick day state and federal laws. The bill also allows the state's labor commissioner to cite workplaces for a lack of paid sick days, which the governor's office called "a critical enforcement tool." Newsom said in the release that the bill "gives our extraordinary employees a little more peace of mind as they take time to care for themselves and protect those around them from COVID-19." Other actions the governor has taken before and during the pandemic to protect workers include paid sick days for food sector employees, workers' compensation for employees who contract COVID-19, child care services, additional unemployment benefits, and resources to help employees quarantine outside their home, according to the release.

• **U.S. Rep. Salud Carbajal** (D-Santa Barbara) wrote in a Sept. 12 post that he and **U.S. Rep. Don Bacon** (R-Nebraska) spearheaded a bipartisan letter to **U.S. Secretary of Defense Mark Esper** to repeal a Department of Defense policy "that has made it more difficult for lawful permanent residents serving in the U.S. military to become naturalized citizens through an expedited process," Carbajal wrote in the Facebook post. The letter stated that on Aug. 25, the U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C., ruled that a Department of Defense policy requiring non-citizen U.S. military serving personnel to meet new minimum service requirements before being considered for expedited citizenship is unlawful. The letter urges the department to repeal this provision and "return to previous guidance ... which made lawful permanent resident (LPR) service members eligible to receive a certificate of honorable service for the purposes of expedited naturalization." Carbajal added in his Facebook post, "My military service helped me become a citizen, and the legal permanent resident service members today should be afforded the same opportunity. Lawful permanent residents in our armed forces have put their lives on the line to protect our country."

• **Gov. Gavin Newsom** announced on Sept. 11 that he signed Assembly Bill 2147, a bill that "eliminates barriers that prevent former inmate fire crews from pursuing a career as a firefighter once they served their time." The bill was authored by **Assemblymember Eloise Gomez Reyes** (D-San Bernardino), and it allows nonviolent, formerly incarcerated individuals who have fought fires as members of the state prison system's fire camps to have their records expunged. According to a press release, the bill will "[pave] the way for individuals leaving fire camps to seek meaningful employment and further training." Newsom said the legislation "rights a historic wrong and recognizes the sacrifice of thousands of incarcerated people who have helped battle wildfires in our state," according to the press release. "Rehabilitation without strategies to ensure the formerly incarcerated have a career is a pathway to recidivism," Reyes said in the release. "We must get serious about providing pathways for those that show the determination to turn their lives around."

New health order will regulate homeless shelters, H-2A housing

After experiencing multiple serious COVID-19 outbreaks and community groups' continued advocacy for increased Public Health Department involvement, Santa Barbara County H-2A housing and homeless shelters are now regulated through a new health order.

Issued on Sept. 11, the order applies to all individuals entering or residing in homeless shelters and H-2A housing. It requires that residents be screened daily for COVID-19 symptoms; that anyone with symptoms immediately self-isolate and notify the manager, operator, or owner of the facility; and that the manager, operator, or owner immediately contact the Santa Barbara County Public Health Department when there is one confirmed case of COVID-19 within a shelter or housing.

In accordance with California Department of Public Health guidelines, an outbreak is declared at homeless shelters or H-2A housing if there is one confirmed case, plus two or more individuals who are displaying certain COVID-19 symptoms, Deputy Director for Community Health Paige Batson told the *Sun* in late August.

But the new order requires that local public health officials be notified as soon as there is just one confirmed case at these facilities. This is similar to existing guidelines for skilled nursing facilities, County Public Health Director Dr. Van Do-Reynoso told the *Sun*.

The order also "strongly recommends" that homeless shelters and H-2A housing facilities "utilize stable groups to reduce potential transmission of COVID-19," the order stated.

Hazel Davalos—community organizing director at the Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy (CAUSE), a group that advocates for increased county involvement in H-2A housing—said the new health order is a big win.

"We've been pushing consistently over the last couple months to see this happen, and we're very excited," she said. "This is really an urgently needed step to prevent any further farmworker deaths from COVID-19 in Santa Barbara County."

During an outbreak in Alco Harvesting farmworker housing in Santa Maria earlier this year, 51-year-old Leo Begario Chavez-Alvarado died on July 7 after contracting COVID-19. More than 90 workers total caught the virus during the course of the outbreak.

Claire Wineman, president of the Grower-Shipper Association, said in an emailed statement that the association is "still gathering information on implementation logistics of the order."

"We continue our ongoing outreach efforts related to COVID prevention and response, including the county's recent participation in the Housing for the Harvest Program," Wineman added.

Housing for the Harvest is a state-run program that provides safe, temporary isolation spaces for agricultural workers who test positive or are exposed to the virus. The Central Coast is one of three regions where the program operates, according to a press release from the governor's office, as these regions have the highest number of agricultural workers.

Davalos said that CAUSE wants to see the county go one step further by establishing a clear line of communication for farmworkers and the community to report if there is noncompliance with the health order.

"With any good policy, we always need to make sure that they're enforceable," she said. "We'd like to ask the county to develop a farmworker hotline that's a standalone phone number where farmworkers can call and report violations to the county, and then public health can act accordingly."

Do-Reynoso said that the department is assessing its options for people to report violations. Right now, people can call 211, the Emergency Operations

Center's Joint Information Line at (805) 696-1188, or the county's Environmental Health Services Office, Do-Reynoso said.

"I know that has been requested of us by different groups," she said of a standalone farmworker hotline. "For right now, I want to tap into existing lines because I want to make sure that whatever line we have is linguistically appropriate, whether it's our line or in partnership with our community agencies."

Do-Reynoso added that the Public Health Department will be "in partnership with the operators of the two types of housing to make sure that they have the capacity [to follow the health order], and that there are no barriers to them doing it."

"So far, what I'm hearing is that this is very doable," Do-Reynoso added.

She continued that all health officer orders are produced in English and Spanish, and pushed out to the community through partner organizations.

"On our end, I think we really want to figure out how the local community and local farmworkers can chip in and be local watchdogs," Davalos said. "I really like to think about how we as a community can support the Public Health Department in that enforcement."

—Malea Martin



CONGREGATE REGULATIONS: Good Samaritan Shelter in Santa Maria is one congregate living facility that experienced a COVID-19 outbreak in Santa Barbara County. A new health order mandates COVID-19 prevention methods at both homeless shelters and H-2A housing.

in order to begin the construction process.

"We're closer than we've ever been. There's more of an emphasis, I think, to get the project done because the property that was on Frontage Road where the kids made this makeshift skateboard park was recently sold," Compton said.

A Southern California developer bought it and has already contracted with three to four businesses to put their facilities in that location, she said.

SLO County Parks and Recreation Director Nick Franco said applications for the Per Capita Grant Funds close in December, and the department will only have to wait on the state before it can put the project to bid for a construction company.

The project is ready to go from there, he said, as it already has the construction plans, underwent the environmental review process, and received its permits.

Slater told the *Sun* that the kids using the makeshift park who spent their own time, money, and resources to build their own skate park "on an abandoned slab shows how badly we need this recreational resource."

His club was instrumental in putting a spotlight on the project by creating T-shirts to raise awareness, creating a GoFundMe to raise funds, and taking a seat at the table in designing the project.

The skate park is part of a larger upgrade to the Nipomo Community Park Master Plan, which Slater said is needed for the community at large. The goal of the park is not just for skateboarders, but to be a place where youth can hang out and families can go as well.

"When you think about Nipomo, there really isn't a central place because the downtown's not developed. There isn't really a central meeting place for young kids, so this will be the epicenter for them," he said.

Slater said the youth are also hoping that there could be a plaque honoring their peer Matt Diaz, 24, who was struck by a car and killed in 2019 as he was leaving the makeshift skatepark. Diaz, Slater and Russell said, made an impact on the local skateboard community and they would like to commemorate him in this way, if possible.

—Karen Garcia

Nipomo could finally see skate park construction in 2021

San Luis Obispo County is closing in on its \$1.5 million funding goal for the Nipomo Skate Park with the hopes of breaking ground on construction next spring.

It's taken more than six years to get to this point in the project process, but if you ask Wyatt Russell how he feels about it, he remains optimistic.

"I've always been pretty excited about the idea, and I never expected it to be a quick process. I'm just glad we've had this opportunity and glad to be a part of it," he said.

Russell was in the eighth grade at Mesa Middle School when he joined the campus Skate and Surf Club, run by his teacher Tom Slater. At the club meetings, he learned about the Nipomo Skate Park project and was encouraged to reach out to his local officials and SLO County Board of Supervisors to see the project through.

At the age of 13, Russell and his peers normally skateboarded in a makeshift skate park off South Frontage Road in Nipomo. The property was private but hadn't been used for several years and lent itself to the local skate community and individuals experiencing homelessness.

He wanted something more, and was engaged in the project process, which included a six-month period of several meetings with youth like him who were using the makeshift skate park.

Russell is now 19 and hopeful he'll be able to test out the new park that he's been a part of since the beginning.

At the Sept. 1 SLO County Board of Supervisors meeting, the board authorized the Department of Parks and Recreation to submit an application for \$456,230 in Per Capita Grant Funds for project construction.

SLO County 4th District Supervisor Lynn Compton told the *Sun* she's confident the application will be approved. After that, the project will only need to raise about \$250,000 to \$300,000

Santa Barbara County supervisors vote to support controversial Prop. 15

After roughly two-dozen comments from the public and a lively debate, the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors voted on Sept. 15 to symbolically support a controversial state ballot measure that would change California's current property tax assessment formula.

Proposition 15 will be on every Californian's ballot

NEWS from page 4

in November, and if passed, it would amend the California Constitution and ensure that commercial and industrial properties are taxed based on their fair market value. Residential properties, property used for commercial agriculture, and properties owned by those with \$3 million or less in holdings in California would be exempt from the changes outlined in Proposition 15.

Under California's current tax system—which was passed as Proposition 13 in 1978—all residential, commercial, and industrial properties in California are taxed based on their purchasing prices, with the tax limited to no more than 2 percent each year.

Although opponents say Proposition 15 would increase costs for business owners already hurting amid the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting economic downturn, supporters, including 1st District Supervisor Das Williams, say it would close Proposition 13's loopholes and even the playing field for small and new businesses.

"I fundamentally agree with the goal of Prop. 13, which was to keep people in their homes," Williams said at the meeting on Sept. 15. "I do not think that the majority of the electorate who voted for Prop. 13 meant to provide tax exemptions for commercial properties that are over \$3 million."

Williams said as it stands now, California gives preference to older businesses that are passed down through generations of families and large corporations that might have purchased a property decades ago and are still paying taxes based on that price. Meanwhile, up and coming business owners hoping to buy a property now would have to pay significantly more.

Plus, Williams said Proposition 15 would generate revenue for schools and governments that are currently hurting financially.

The California Legislative Analyst's Office estimates that Proposition 15 could generate between \$7.5 billion and \$12.5 billion in additional revenue each year statewide, according to a county staff report. A little less than 60 percent of that would go toward local jurisdictions, and roughly 40 percent would go toward schools and community colleges. An estimated \$51 million—not including revenue for schools—would go toward local Santa Barbara County jurisdictions.

"We ask a lot of our education systems," Williams said at the meeting on Sept. 15. "We ask this all of our schools and yet we do not give them the resources necessary to perform these tasks. And of all times when schools need help, now is most conspicuous because to even be able to provide basic education services to all students requires not less resources but more."

But 5th District Supervisor Steve Lavagnino said including schools as recipients of revenue generated by Proposition 15 is likely just a ploy to get votes.

"First off, only 40 percent of the money goes to schools," Lavagnino said at the meeting. "If you named it the California pension backfill initiative I don't think it would get much traction."

Lavagnino said Proposition 15 actually would impact small businesses. Most small business owners rent commercial space from large corporations, he said. If those corporations have to pay more in property taxes, they'll increase rent, and small businesses will have to either eat the cost, close down, or push the cost onto consumers.

The Santa Maria Valley Chamber of Commerce, Grower-Shipper Association of Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties, and Santa Barbara County Farm Bureau agree, and all oppose Proposition 15.

Lavagnino and 4th District Supervisor Peter Adam voted against supporting the measure, but were outnumbered by the three other board members.

"It's a really bad idea at probably the worst possible time ever," Lavagnino said, "You have a small business that's trying to make it through a pandemic. And they're finally coming up and getting their head above water. They're coming up from their third time of drowning and instead of throwing them a life preserver, you're throwing them a brick or an anchor."

—Kasey Bubnash

Additional Santa Barbara County schools approved to reopen

Santa Barbara County Public Health Director Dr. Van Do-Reynoso announced at a Sept. 15 Board of Supervisors meeting that this week the county is, once again, assigned to the "purple tier" in California's new reopening system. This means that schools have to stay distanced, gyms and restaurants must operate outdoors, and the county continues to deal with widespread COVID-19 infection according to state metrics.

But for K-6 schools, there's a glimmer of hope: the state's elementary school waiver program allows schools in purple tier counties to reopen—if they can prove that they're ready.

So far, Do-Reynoso told the *Sun*, 24 schools have applied for waivers with the county. The California Department of Public Health approved 14 of those schools. Of the remaining 10, five schools are receiving technical assistance from the county to strengthen their applications, three schools submitted their applications to the state and are awaiting approval, and two more schools just submitted their applications to the county on Sept. 14.

Do-Reynoso said the approval process starts with submitting the in-depth waiver application to the county, which includes questions about cleaning and disinfection, health screening, what a school's trigger would be to switch back to distance learning, how the school plans to cohort students, and more.

The county then assesses how strong the application is and provides technical assistance to schools that need additional documentation. Once the county's review committee deems an application to be strong enough, "we will advance them to the CDPH [California Department of Public Health] for concurrence upon our approval process," Do-Reynoso said.

Northern Santa Barbara County schools approved for reopening as of Sept. 15 include Santa Ynez Valley Family School, Santa Ynez Valley Christian Academy, Pacific Christian Elementary School, Valley Christian Academy, and St. Mary of the Assumption School, according to the state's list.

If the county can move into the red zone for 14 consecutive days, then elementary and secondary schools will have the opportunity to return without having to go through the waiver process.

"It's not a guarantee all the schools will open, because there are a number of complex issues that need to be addressed to ensure the safety of students and staff," County Board of Supervisors Chair Gregg Hart said at a Sept. 11 press conference. "But, the opportunity to reopen is very important."

Though the state's tier system is only a few weeks old, Do-Reynoso presented a graph at the Sept. 15 Board of Supervisors meeting. The graph shows which color-coded tier the county's case rate metric would theoretically have been placed in since March.

"It is after Memorial Day and the reopening of many sectors that we saw an increase in our cases," Do-Reynoso said as she presented the graph.

The county's case rate metric moved into the purple or "widespread" tier at the beginning of July, and has remained there ever since. However, the apex of the county's case rate occurred around July 11 and has consistently declined since then.

"The state threshold to move from our currently designated purple tier to the less restrictive red tier is seven positive cases per 100,000 population," Hart said at the press conference.

With Santa Barbara County hovering around eight to nine cases per 100,000 over the past couple of weeks, "reaching the less restrictive red threshold is tantalizingly close," Hart said. ☉

—Malea Martin



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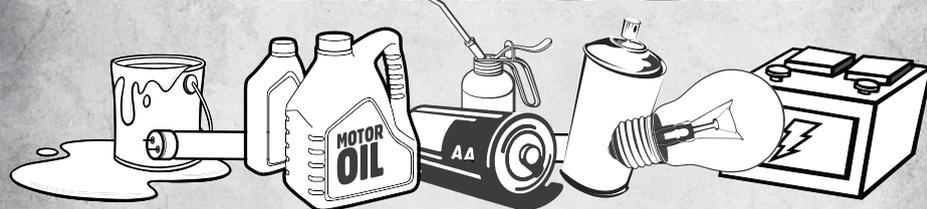
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Widening gaps

As commercially insured patients pay more to hospitals and clinics, lawmakers fail to pass a local senator's bill expanding oversight of the health care industry

Editor's note: This article is the second of a two-part series produced as a data fellowship with the USC Annenberg Center for Health Journalism. The first part, "Consolidated," published on Sept. 10.

BY PETER JOHNSON

Annual hospital financial reports highlight one big-picture health care trend across California: Hospitals are making increasingly higher profits on commercially insured patients, while they're suffering steeper losses on Medicare patients.

Many experts blame hospital industry consolidation for that growing disparity—and the Central Coast is no exception. A *Sun* analysis of hospital data for Northern Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties found that between 2005 and 2018, hospitals' net-revenue on "third-party payers" (or commercially insured payers) shot up 354 percent, while its net losses on Medicare payers plummeted 641 percent.

Looked at another way, for every inpatient day logged at local Dignity Health- or Tenet Healthcare-owned hospitals during 2018, providers made three times more revenue if that patient was privately insured versus if he or she was on Medicare.

When asked why patients with commercial insurance are charged so much more, Arroyo Grande resident Jamie Maraviglia had a simple answer: "Because they can."

Maraviglia's daughter, Ara, suffers from Hirschsprung disease, a rare intestinal illness that requires periodic hospital stays, which produce expensive medical bills for the family.

"The hospitals have the leverage," Maraviglia told the *Sun*. "There's a reason our premiums keep going up."

While Dignity and Tenet officials declined to comment, health care experts and insiders have differing views on the development. Critics of hospitals and their growing monopolies in communities say they are simply price gouging commercial insurers to make more money. Hospitals, though, argue that Medicare has failed to keep up with their expenses over the years. Others say that the hospitals are simply spending too much and now have little choice but to charge the groups they have control over.

"We have this unbalanced system," explained Jay Gellert, the former CEO of Health Net insurance, "where these guys really do have to chase the limited number of commercial patients in order to be economic."

In 2010, Gellert was part of an insurance industry team that assisted the Obama administration with the development of the

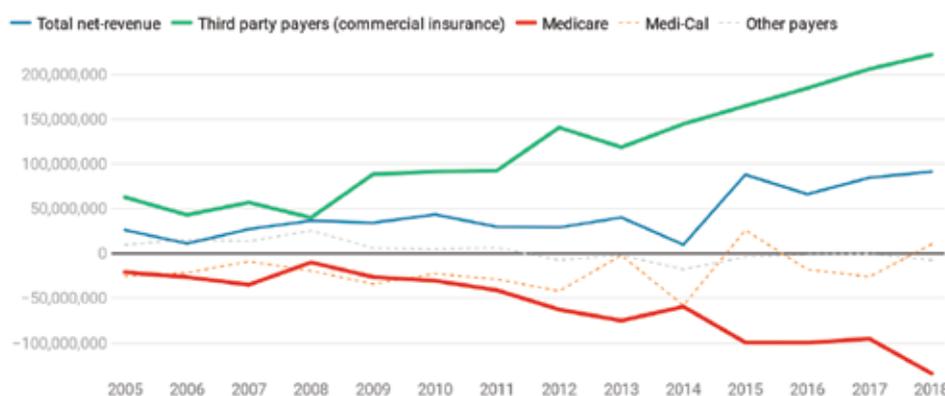
'Just like in much of America, companies have learned that true competition is hard, and it's a lot easier to consolidate and have some ability to limit price competition.'

—Jay Gellert, former CEO of Health Net insurance

GRAPHS CREATED BY PETER JOHNSON ON DATAWRAPPER

Medicare vs. Commercial: Net-revenue (\$) from Dignity Health and Tenet Healthcare patients in SLO County and Santa Maria

Total net-revenue and by payer type

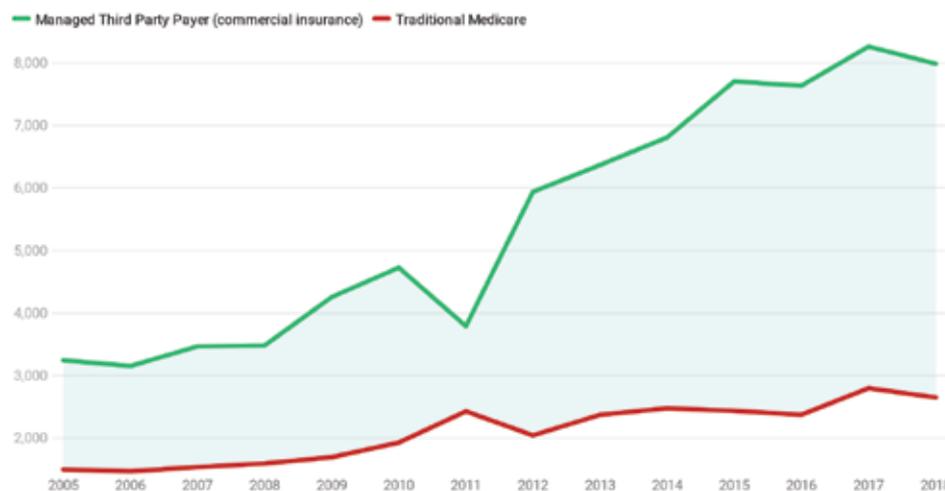


Data includes Twin Cities Community Hospital, French Hospital Medical Center, Sierra Vista Regional Hospital, Arroyo Grande Community Hospital, and Marian Regional Medical Center

Source: California's Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development • Created with Datawrapper

COMMERCIAL VS. MEDICARE: State hospital data shows a growing disparity between what hospitals earn off private insurance compared to government plans like Medicare. In 2018, Northern Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo county hospitals made 3.5 times more profit from commercial insurance payers than they did in 2005, up to \$222 million, while they lost more than \$130 million on Medicare patients, down six-fold from 2005.

Medicare vs. Commercial: Net-revenue (\$) per inpatient day at Dignity Health and Tenet Healthcare hospitals in SLO County and Santa Maria



Data includes Twin Cities Community Hospital, French Hospital Medical Center, Sierra Vista Regional Hospital, Arroyo Grande Community Hospital, and Marian Regional Medical Center

Source: California's Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development • Created with Datawrapper

Affordable Care Act. Gellert said that while the act gave insurance to many Americans, it also left the door wide open to more consolidation.

"They basically encouraged consolidation of hospitals, hospitals buying up physician practices, the theory of integration, but there was no accountability behind it," he said. "They had no cost containment in the system."

Gellert said that the consolidation phenomenon is inherently anticompetitive.

"Just like in much of America, companies have learned that true competition is hard, and it's a lot easier to consolidate and have some ability to limit price competition," he said.

David Palchak, who has an independent oncology practice in Arroyo Grande, said he experiences those anticompetitive effects firsthand—receiving no more than Medicare rates from commercial plans. Every year, Palchak writes to Blue Cross and Blue Shield to make an offer: If it paid him 30 percent above Medicare, he would

be able to grow his practice and expand services throughout the community—while saving patients and health plans money.

He's yet to receive a response.

"If they would contract with me at this rate, I could provide all cancer care for the community as I would have enough money to expand throughout the region," he said.

State bill regulating hospital mergers dies

While some Californians call for major national health care reform, like Medicare for all, as a solution to rising medical bills, state lawmakers have tried advancing more nuanced legislation aimed at controlling costs and preventing anticompetitive behavior.

Assembly Bill 3087, which was proposed in 2019 but killed, would've established a commission to oversee and put ceilings on commercial insurance payments to medical providers.

This year, Sen. Bill Monning (D-Carmel) introduced Senate Bill 977, which would've given the Attorney General's Office oversight of for-profit hospital mergers and acquisitions. Currently, the attorney general only has purview over nonprofit hospital transactions. It would've also carved out new enforcement mechanisms for the attorney general to fight anticompetitive behavior and established a Health Policy Advisory

Board to analyze California health care markets.

"The basic mantra is patient protection," Monning told the *Sun* in July. "When you have larger systems that may seek to acquire a solo hospital or other types of medical services of a certain size, the goal is to make sure patient services are protected."

But despite the bill passing the Senate floor and multiple Assembly committees, the full Assembly declined to take it up for a vote prior to a Sept. 1 legislative deadline—which means the bill died. It had received substantial opposition from the California Hospital Association and other health care provider groups.

"The outcome of SB 977 today represents a win for the large health care conglomerates that monopolize the health care marketplace," Monning said in a statement on Sept. 1. "We have failed to protect Californians and failed to protect their right to affordable, accessible health care from anticompetitive, market manipulation."

Tenet Healthcare, the national for-profit chain that owns two hospitals in SLO County, was among the hospital players to come out against the bill. In a July 2 letter to the state Assembly Health Committee, the company's four California CEOs said the bill would've created "a presumption that these transactions are anticompetitive, ... creating a 'guilty until proven innocent' system."

"There are many reasons hospitals merge or affiliate," the CEOs wrote, "including to preserve and expand access to care across the communities they serve, introduce new services, coordinate and integrate the delivery of services, create centers for excellence for complex procedures, better support nurses and physicians, and more."

The executives said the bill would've hampered hospitals' mobility as they struggle with COVID-19 and its fallout.

"The timing for SB 977 couldn't be worse, as California hospitals of all sizes are already struggling under the enormous strain and financial impacts in meeting the generational challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic," the letter read. "Such mergers, affiliations, and related transactions can be not just timely, but vital to preserving a safety net and access to care for residents of these particular communities."

Monning countered that the instability created by COVID-19 made his bill even more timely and important.

"The opposition said, now with COVID-19 and the economy in distress, this really isn't a good time to do this. My response is just the opposite," he said. "Because of COVID-19, you have some systems that are in economic distress and could be susceptible to a large hedge fund that could see an opportunity to make a quick, below-market acquisition without any commitment to the local community."

Jaime King, a law professor and health care policy expert at UC Hastings College of the Law, echoed this concern and said it could exacerbate the effects caused by hospital consolidation.

"COVID-19 has put a massive strain on small hospitals, on physician practices," King told the *Sun*. "People are going to the doctor less. The remaining independent entities are looking at either closing their doors or selling to a big hospital system that's going to allow for an influx of cash for them. I think we're going to see a lot more consolidation come out of this."

Maraviglia, the mother of Ara in Arroyo Grande, said that she'll continue fighting for a future that gives families like hers access to more affordable health care.

"I think once you're actually part of the system, you go, 'This is so messed up,'" she said. "It moves people into bankruptcy and financial distress, just because they want to live. They don't want their kids to get sick."

"We're trying to keep our kids alive." ○

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



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RUNNING FOR MAYOR: Victor Vega, Lompoc's 2nd District City Council member, and Lompoc Mayor Jenelle Osborne will face off for mayor in November.

he said. "Without addressing the budgetary issue there, we can't move forward at all. [The tax] is meant to support our public safety and address a repayment program for that unfunded liability, so we can move forward finally with a payment schedule for the next 15 years."

But Osborne believes the council majority's move toward what she called an "aggressive" payment plan

might be the wrong one. She wishes the sales tax revenue could be used in other arenas, especially in the wake of the pandemic, to improve Lompoc residents' quality of life.

"Had COVID not hit us, and had the economy not changed, and had we known that the 1 percent additional revenue would stay at \$5 million, I wouldn't have a problem with it," she said. "But we have a different economy than when we first talked about this, and we don't know how much our normal sales tax collection's going to be."

For this reason, Osborne believes that using the additional sales tax revenue to pay down the unfunded liability with CalPERS was "a bad idea in 2020."

"As much as my opponent likes to talk about how this has saved the city \$20 million, that's not \$20 million sitting in a savings account that I can now pivot and spend somewhere else," she added.

Osborne's other major campaign pillars include steering at-risk youth away from gang violence and fostering public safety. She emphasized a "proactive instead of just reactive" approach to crime.

"It's identifying ways that we as a city can support other organizations and our own public safety department to engage with at-risk youths and provide opportunities to steer them away from gang life," she said.

Vega spoke about the need to address nationwide conversations around policing in Lompoc.

"Absolutely we need to reform; it's being called upon throughout the nation," he said. "People feel that their needs are not being addressed. We may have to look at some oversight to make sure that the community feels safe."

Highlight:

- The Central Coast Writers Conference, held from Sept. 24 to 26, is going virtual this year, with a few new scholarship opportunities available. The Voices of Color Scholarship, according to a press release, "is open to any persons of color interested in attending the conference and sharing their story." Another available scholarship is the Teachers Writing Program, which is open to "Central Coast teachers navigating these unprecedented times." The Teens Program Scholarship is available to youth age 11 to 18 years old attending public, private, or home schools in San Luis Obispo or Santa Barbara counties. Those interested in these scholarship opportunities can contact centralcoastwritersconference@gmail.com. ○

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

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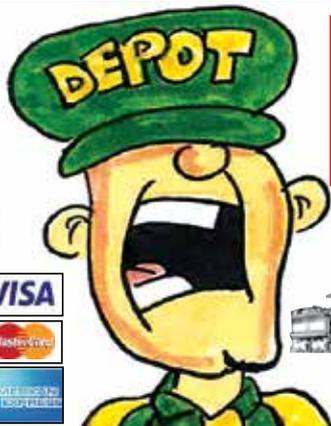
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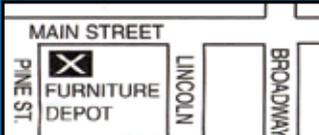
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COMMENTARY

Online Poll

Should the Santa Barbara County District Attorney's Office file charges against people who violate COVID-19 rules?

- 48%** After no voluntary compliance and multiple warnings, it's fair.
- 26%** The county should consider whether the business poses an actual health risk.
- 22%** Leave local businesses alone, they're suffering as it is.
- 4%** The governor is the one making the rules, don't blame the county.

27 Votes

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

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Keep OHVs out

More families use the beach in Oceano and Grover Beach because it's closed to vehicles

BY EVELYN DELANY

Recently, at one of the South County Chambers of Commerce meetings, members seemed to be rallying in support of an individual member who claimed he had lost hundreds of thousands of dollars in business since the beaches were closed to off-highway vehicles (OHVs).

Meanwhile, parking lots that usually had been nearly empty at the end of Pier Avenue in Oceano and Grand Avenue in Grover Beach are overflowing even on weekdays, as hundreds of people throng to beaches now that they are closed to vehicle use. In other words, vehicle use seems to deter families from using the beach.

If a gang of thugs, drug dealers, and rapists hung out on the beach, families would probably stop going to the beach. Dealing drugs is a lucrative business, and the dealers do spend their money on nice things like fancy cars and eating out. If a gang of thugs, drug dealers, and

rapists were somehow put out of business, would the Chambers of Commerce run to the aid of the thugs? Now, I'm not saying that OHV users are thugs, drug dealers, and rapists.

In the old days, Pismo Beach was kind of a raunchy town, and driving on the beach was the "in" thing to do in Pismo. However, when Pismo Beach closed its vehicle ramp to the beach in the 1970s, the town changed. More tourists came and enjoyed what Pismo Beach had to offer. The number of visitor-serving facilities significantly increased. There are now attractions at all price ranges, and using the beach is free. Pismo Beach is a safe, vibrant beach town with visitor-serving activities throughout the year.

People come for a certain activity and stay awhile, enjoying more than they thought they would. For example, come for a beach walk, discover the butterfly preserve, and stay for lunch. Enjoy a Dixieland music weekend and shop at the outlet center before leaving town. Come for a wedding and return for their anniversary. I could go on.

Most of the people filling the parking lots to use the beach buy stuff, maybe just a snack, beach toys, or sunscreen at first. Knowing they can have a nice time at the beach, they probably will come back. They might stay for dinner and a show at the Great American Melodrama. Grover Beach has done a nice job highlighting the sidewalks on Grand Avenue between

Fourth Street and the beach. Out-of-towners might browse in the shops on Grand Avenue—Ron's Nursery, the bead shop, maybe buy some bread or pastries at Grover Beach Sourdough, catch lunch at The Rib Line or Station Grill, and watch the trains go by. They might try golf at the nine-hole course near Finn's or maybe do a little wine tasting.

Come to think of it, I have never seen an OHV rig parked near a business on Grand Avenue or anywhere near Sylvester's in Oceano. I've only seen them buying gas before they make the beeline home to the valley.

So let's get real. OHV riding is not a coastal-dependent activity. It is damaging to the fragile ecology of the dunes. Driving to the OHV riding area has made the beach unusable by people who want to just enjoy the beach. Would you let your kids play in traffic? There are many other places in California where OHVs can ride and have a good time.

Did it ever occur to the Chambers of Commerce that Oceano and Grover Beach could become more prosperous like Pismo with more people using the beach instead of supporting an activity that drives them away? ☺

Evelyn Delany gave her two cents from South SLO County. Write a response for publication by emailing a letter or commentary to letters@santamariasun.com.

Don't tax wineries without representation

The Santa Barbara Vintners have been working on a wine business improvement district (BID) for two years.

Their first proposal was a 2 percent tax on all direct to consumer (DTC) wine sales, which would include wine clubs, tasting rooms, wine merchandise sales, food sales, winemaker's dinners, and weddings. The 2 percent tax would not apply to wholesale wine sales to grocery stores, wine shops, hotels, and restaurants (the

trade), despite the law's requirement that the funds raised be used for the "direct benefit" of those paying the tax. Wholesale sales to the trade are mostly made by the large wineries.

The funds raised would be used to promote Santa Barbara wines to consumers and sales to the trade. In other words, the small mom-and-pop, 10,000-case wineries would be paying for the large wineries' marketing costs to the trade.

This initial tax proposal was not met with a lot of enthusiasm. The Vintners, to make it more appealing, reduced the 2 percent to 1 percent saying the county had provided the Vintners with

the wrong tax information, and only 1 percent was needed.

This second proposal of 1 percent received pushback from wine club members who said, "You tell us we are 'special' and part of your wine 'family,' so why are we paying a 1 percent tax the same as someone who is not a wine club member?"

The Vintners then conducted a "survey," which asked, "Do you favor a 1 percent on all wine sales or 1.5 percent on tasting room sales, which would include food, wine merchandise, etc., sales but not wine club or sales to the trade?" Noticeably, "none of the above" was *not* a survey choice.

Allegedly 60 percent voted for the 1.5 percent tax on tasting room sales. The Vintners have refused to report how many wineries responded.

The Vintners then scheduled an "informational" meeting with the Board of Supervisors on Aug. 18. The auditor-controller's staff report, which was issued around Aug. 14, said the 1.5 percent "may not be practical or feasible." Nevertheless, the Vintners went ahead with the Board of Supervisors "informational" meeting on the 18th having their Sacramento consultant make a presentation as well as several Vintners board members. Some of the supervisors expressed concern about the self-reporting and the inability to verify and audit the 1.5 percent.

On Sept. 3, the Vintners announced they were scrapping their third wine BID proposal—the 1.5 percent on tasting room sales—and would later propose 1 percent on all DTC sales, which would include wine club sales but not wholesale wine sales to the trade. So, the mom-and-pop small wineries will still have to pay for the large wineries' promotion and marketing costs to the trade.

What is the Vintners' problem? It is structural. There are 270 bonded wineries in Santa Barbara County. The Vintners' website list 78 wineries as members. Yet the Vintners want to tax the 192 wineries who are not members. Is there any surprise that the wine BID's taxation without representation is being opposed? Where are Sam and John Adams when you need them?

Stephen Pepe
Lompoc

The roof is on fire

If you think your life is bad during 2020, you can take solace in the fact that **Lompoc** had *actual dumpster fires* over the second weekend in September—well, you can take solace if you don't *actually* live in Lompoc.

Ismael Zaragoza Chavez is suspected of starting multiple dumpster fires, as well as a vehicle fire and a backyard shed fire on Sept. 14. As if 2020 wasn't already a dumpster fire, as if we didn't have enough fires in the state, some guy gets angry and allegedly decides Lompoc safety services needs even more to do in the middle of a smoke-and-pandemic-filled world.



Luckily, they got the fires out. Now all we need is for **California** to do the same. So all that wind and heat can just go ahead and scam! Bring on **La Niña!**

And perhaps, if we increase our COVID-19 testing levels, Santa Barbara County can go ahead and move on down the colored tiers of chaos that the **California Public Health Department** "unveiled" in August as part of **Gov. Gavin Newsom's Blueprint for a Safer (And More Confused) Economy.**

The county is in the "purple tier," aka "keep it all closed." That means we have more than seven cases per 100,000 people, and more than 8 percent of the COVID-19 tests in the county have a positive result—among other things, of course.

Hospitalization rates? State public health peeps decided that don't matter no more! Even though experts, such as **Cottage Health's Infectious Disease Specialist Dr. Lynn Fitzgibbons**, say that the number of patients hospitalized due to the virus is one of the most accurate metrics of a community's COVID-19 condition. And those rates are literally the reason we shut the whole economy down in March!

Remember? Everyone was worried that hospitals wouldn't be able to provide service to all the sick patients if everyone got COVID-19 at the same time. They were worried that people would die because the hospitals were too full. And that actually did happen in some states! So why is it missing?

As far as hospitalizations go, "We really like to think that they're not affected by things like how many people get tested," Fitzgibbons told the *Sun*.

You know what is? Positivity rates for COVID-19 tests.

So, now, after putting the brakes on every Tom, Dick, Harry, and Susan getting tested, the county is begging residents to go out and get tested! In order to move from purple to red—which is a much scarier color than purple, but the state apparently didn't think so (Who's doing their marketing? Call me!)—county **Emergency Medical Services Agency Director Nick Clay** said the community needs to work together! (But stay separated, right?)

"So, how do we do this? Frankly, getting tested," Clay said during a Sept. 11 press briefing. "We are now asking the community to get tested."

Hey everyone, this is a metric that we can beat! If everyone goes out and gets tested, our positivity rate goes down. Duh! How stupid is that?

But wait, there are more tiers! We also have orange and yellow. As far as yellow is concerned, good luck! We need less than one positive case per 100,000. So we might not ever open back up again. How's that for positivity? ☉

The canary thinks the blueprint is a dumpster fire. Send water to canary@santamariasun.com.

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WRITE ON
The 2020 Central Coast Writers Conference begins online on Thursday, Sept. 24, and is scheduled to run through Saturday, Sept. 26. Participants of this annual workshop series can expect a variety of virtual panels and writing classes to attend. Admission to the complete series starts at \$225. For registration details and more info on this year's conference, visit centralcoastwritersconference.com.
—Caleb Wiseblood

FILE PHOTO BY MALEA MARTIN

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. 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.

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.

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.

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.

SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS

ART PACK PICK-UP PROGRAM Register to pick up an art pack to create your own masterpiece at home. For kids aged 6 to 12. Through Sept. 18 Free. 805-925-0994. engagedpatrons.org. Santa Maria Public Library, 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria.

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. PCPA: The Pacific Conservatory Theatre, 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, Santa Maria, 805-922-8313, 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, 805-922-8313, 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. 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, Santa Maria, 805-922-8313, pcpa.org.

SOUTH COAST SLO COUNTY

MIXED MEDIA WORKSHOP FOR AGES 5-6, ALSO FOR AGES 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. LiIA 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. LiIA Creative Community, 1147 East Grand Ave. suite 101, Arroyo Grande.

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/. 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/. 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/. San Luis Obispo Museum of Art, 1010 Broad St., San Luis Obispo.

CENTRAL COAST WRITERS CONFERENCE Central Coast Writers Conference goes virtual in 2020. Register today for courses. **Sept. 24, Sept. 25 and Sept. 26** \$225. 805-546-3132. CentralCoastWritersConference.com. Zoom, Online, Inquire for Zoom ID.

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. Mondays-Sundays. through Sept. 27 Free. 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-Thursdays, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. through Sept. 21 \$10. 805-546-3132. outschool.com. Zoom, Online, Inquire for Zoom ID.

THE REBOOT: SEASON FINALE The final run in 2020 features a curated mix of diverse storytellers sharing true tales around getting dirty and coming clean. **Sept. 18**, 7-8:30 p.m. Free. 805-225-1553. zoom.com. Zoom, Online, Inquire for Zoom ID.

SLOMA: WEEKLY ART PROJECTS Kids can enjoy new activities from home (posted online every Monday). Mondays 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/. 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, pryaf.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 **Sept. 19**, 1-4 p.m. \$75. 310-993-1732. Marie A Ramey, 7460 Pinal Ave, Atascadero.

STUDIOS ON THE PARK: ONLINE CLASSES AND WORKSHOPS Check site for a variety of virtual classes and workshops online. ongoing studiosonthepark.org. Studios on the Park, Paso Robles, 805-238-9800.

NORTH COAST SLO COUNTY

CAMBRIA CENTER FOR THE ARTS ONLINE: TAMING THE RESTLESS MIND A virtual exhibit. These featured artists for September bring works of abstraction.



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

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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. 18, Sept. 19, Sept. 20, Sept. 25, Sept. 26** and **Sept. 27** through Sept. 27 Free. cambriacenterforthearts.org. Cambria Center for the Arts, 1350 Main St., Cambria.

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. Gallery at Marina Square, 601 Embarcadero suite 10, Morro Bay.

FEATURED ARTISTS: BENJAMIN EDMISTON AND SAMUEL T. ADAMS A duo show for the month of September. Through Oct. 1 Left Field Gallery, 1036 Los Osos Valley Road, Los Osos, 805-305-9292, leftfieldgallery.com.

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. 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. 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. Art Center Morro Bay, 835 Main St.

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/. Top Dog Coffee Bar, 857 Main St., Morro Bay.

CULTURE & LIFESTYLE

LOMPOC/VANDENBERG

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

SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS

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. Santa Maria, 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. 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.

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, unwind santamaria.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. Yoga for Mankind, 130 N Broadway, suite B, Orcutt.

SOUTH COAST SLO COUNTY

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/.

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. 5cityesswimsschool.com. 5 Cities Swim School, 425 Traffic Way, Arroyo Grande.

SAN LUIS OBISPO

BIRDS OF A FEATHER FLOCK TOGETHER MCAS September Community Program presented by Jessica Griffiths. **Sept. 21**, 7-8 p.m. Free. 805-772-1991. zoom.com. Zoom, Online, Inquire for Zoom ID.

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/. County-Wide, Artists Throughout SLO County, San Luis Obispo.

HOMESHARESLO CALL-IN COFFEE CHAT Connect with the folks at HomeShareSLO to talk about homesharing and other housing solutions twice a month during our Call-In Coffee Chat events. Fourth Wednesday of every month, 12-1 p.m. through Nov. 11 Free. 805-215-5474. smartsharehousingolutions.org/events/. Zoom, Online, Inquire for Zoom ID.

FILE PHOTO COURTESY OF PATRICIA WATKINS



ALL EARS

Simple Pleasures, a new duo show, runs through Monday, Sept. 28, at Gallery Los Olivos. This exhibition features handcrafted jewelry by Patricia Watkins and oil paintings by Cheryl Ambrecht. The exhibit is open during the gallery's new hours, Thursday through Monday, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Call (805) 688-7517 or visit gallerylosolivos.com for more info. The gallery is located at 2920 Grand Ave., Los Olivos.

—C.W.

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@literacyforlifeslo.org. Both sessions are required. Saturdays, 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m. through Sept. 19 805-541-4219. literacyforlifeslo.org/become-a-tutor.php. Zoom, Online, Inquire for Zoom ID.

OCTAGON BARN VIRTUAL TOUR (LIVE) The Land Conservancy is proud to partner with The History Center of SLO County to host public virtual tours via Zoom of the famous Octagon Barn of San Luis Obispo. Fourth Thursday of every month, 4-4:30 p.m. through Oct. 22 \$5. 805-544-9096. lcslo.org. Zoom, Online, Inquire for Zoom ID.

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, 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. Zoom, Online, Inquire for Zoom ID.

VIRTUAL 28TH ANNUAL WIGGLE WAGGLE WALK FOR WOODS AND 5K Woods Humane Society's

CULTURE & LIFESTYLE continued page 14



Visit the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History SEA CENTER

At the Sea Center, you can visit sharks, sea stars, urchins, cucumbers, and more! On our Wet Deck, learn how scientists use oceanographic tools to sample the ocean and examine marine life.

Friday-Sunday, Noon-4:00 PM
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MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

SEA CENTER

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Santa Barbara, CA 93101

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5 Cities Homeless Coalition



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Joshua Daniels (miso-carrots)
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includes your seating.
The number of seats is
limited to 10 guests per day.
For tickets, contact Sarah Waggle, Executive Director
by calling 805-536-5376 or email sarah@woodshumane.org
An intimate benefit event for
SAN LUIS OBISPO
MASTER CHORALE

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



Wild Fields Colony Square Drive In: Space Chimps
THURSDAY, SEPT. 17
Wild Fields Brewhouse



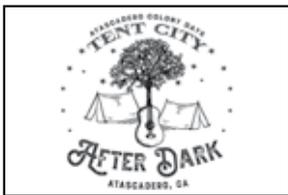
Point San Luis Lighthouse Virtual Tour
WEDNESDAYS: SEPT. 23, 30
Point San Luis Lighthouse



Bang Muay Thai Seminar w/ Sensei Duane Ludwig
SATURDAY, SEPT. 26
Los Osos/SLO Master Chorale



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



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



Barre & Brunch at The Castle
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 4
Tooth & Nail Winery, Paso Robles



Point San Luis Lighthouse Virtual Tour
WEDNESDAYS: OCT. 7, 14, 21, 25, 28
Point San Luis Lighthouse



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



Krav Maga Level 2 Weekend
SAT & SUN, OCTOBER 17 & 18
Sleeping Tiger Fitness, San Luis Obispo



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



Point San Luis Lighthouse Virtual Tour
WEDNESDAYS: NOV. 4, 11, 18, 21, 25
Point San Luis Lighthouse



2020 Estate Beef Dinner Series: Brisket
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 6
Cass Winery, Paso Robles



Paint n Sip at Point SLO
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 21
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

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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. Woods Humane Society, 875 Oklahoma Ave., San Luis Obispo.

VIRTUAL AG FORUM WITH REP. CARBAJAL To hear what challenges the ag community is experiencing during the COVID-19 pandemic, share info on the USDA programs available to help, and understand how they are working for our farmers, ranchers, and growers. Call or email for Zoom link. **Sept. 18, 1:30-2:30 p.m.** Free. 202-281-7612. zoom.com. Zoom, Online, Inquire for Zoom ID.



GO FISH

Out on a Whim, a new art show presented by the Morro Bay Art Association, opens at Art Center Morro Bay on Thursday, Sept. 17, and is scheduled to remain on display through Monday, Nov. 2. This exhibit showcases Larry Le Brane's multimedia art created from repurposed shoes, musical instruments, and other objects. Call (805) 772-2504 or visit artcentermorrobay.org for more info. The gallery is located at 835 Main St., Morro Bay.

—C.W.

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. 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/. Downtown Paso Robles Shopping Core, 12th and Park Streets, Paso Robles.

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. 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. 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. 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 starting June 6). ongoing Presqu'ile Winery, 5391 Presqu'ile Dr., Santa Maria, 805-937-8110, presquilewine.com.

SOUTH COAST SLO COUNTY

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

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. 19** and **Sept. 26** 805-574-1638. 5CHC.org. Trilogy at Monarch Dunes, 1640 Trilogy Pkwy, Nipomo.

SAN LUIS OBISPO

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

NORTH SLO COUNTY

VIRTUAL WINE TASTING PACKAGES AT CASS WINERY Wine by the glass and bottles are also available for purchase. Check site for specific virtual tasting packages. ongoing Free. 805-239-1730. casswinery.com/. Cass Winery And Vineyard, 7350 Linne Rd., Paso Robles.

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. Soundcloud (Santa Maria Philharmonic), Online, Santa Maria.

SOUTH COAST SLO COUNTY

41K LIVE The group features musician/songwriter/producer Damon Castillo on guitar, musician/arranger/producer Dave Becker on all woodwinds, bassist Dylan Johnson, and others. **Sept. 26, 3:30-6:30 p.m.** \$20-\$35. my805tix.com. Point San Luis Lighthouse, 1 Lighthouse Rd., Avila Beach.

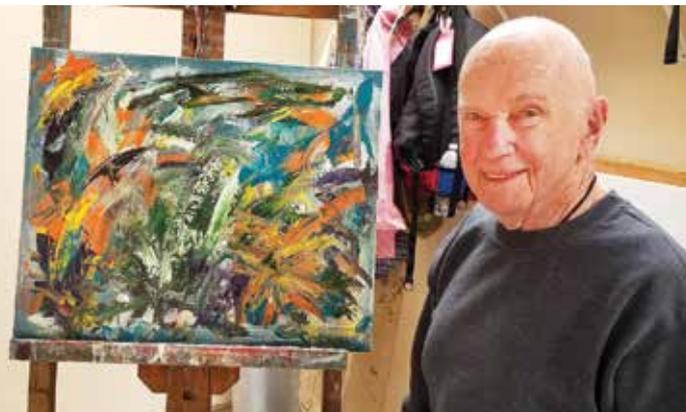
SAN LUIS OBISPO

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. Spanos Theatre, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, 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. Atascadero Lake Park, 9305 Pismo Ave., Atascadero, 461-5000.

FILE PHOTO COURTESY OF MARVIN SOSNA



WELCOME ABSTRACTION

The Cambria Center for the Arts Gallery presents Taming the Restless Mind, a duo exhibit showcasing abstract artworks by Marvin Sosna and Deborah Pepin, through Sunday, Sept. 27. Among Sosna's featured pieces in the show is Rising Tides (pictured). The gallery is located at 1350 Main St., Cambria. Visit cambriacenterforthearts.org/gallery to find out more.

—C.W.

Arts Briefs

Hancock Centennial Celebration features opening of 1995 time capsule, other events

SCREENSHOT FROM ALLAN HANCOCK COLLEGE'S YOUTUBE PAGE



In recognition of its 100th anniversary, Allan Hancock College announced its plans to host several virtual and live events, starting this month and through its spring 2021 semester (culminating with the commencement of its 100th graduating class in May 2021).

The college will kick off its Centennial Celebration events on Sept. 23, at 10:30 a.m., when past and current Hancock administrators, faculty, and staff will open a time capsule buried on the Santa Maria campus in 1995 (in celebration of the college's 75th anniversary at the time).

The time capsule opening will be broadcast live on the college's social media pages as well as the Centennial Celebration's official website, hancockcollege.edu/100. The website also provides more info on other upcoming events in the series and links to videos, podcasts, archived photos, and other multimedia related to the college's history.

Hancock originated in 1920, when the Santa Maria High School District established Santa Maria Junior College. The college's first class consisted of only six students. In 1954, the school was renamed to Allan Hancock College, to honor Capt. G. Allan Hancock, a local community leader who donated the land and facilities of the airfield to the college (originally located at Santa Maria High School before moving due to an expansion in student enrollment).

"Hancock has a hundred-year history of providing a quality education to generations of students in Northern Santa Barbara County," Kevin G. Walther, Hancock superintendent and president, said in a statement. "We want to celebrate that important mission for the next 100 years and beyond."

Upcoming virtual auction benefits Nipomo's Dana Adobe and Cultural Center

FILE PHOTO BY CAMILLIA LANHAM



The Dana Adobe and Cultural Center in Nipomo recently announced plans for its Fall Online Auction, which will open on Sept. 28 at 9 a.m. and is scheduled to run through Oct. 5, closing at 5 p.m. Patrons can view the full catalog of auction items and pre-register to enter the auction online at danaadobe.org. Proceeds from the auction will benefit the center's educational resources and programming.

Although museum tours remain suspended until further notice, the museum's gift shop is currently open (masks are required). The museum's mission statement is to engage visitors with the history of California's Rancho Era. Call (805) 929-5679 for more details. The Dana Adobe and Cultural Center is located at 671 S. Oakglen Ave., Nipomo. ○

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



IN DEEPEST WATERS: The third annual NatureTrack Film Festival's lineup includes *Kokoly*, described as a heartbreaking look at the decimation of coastal waters near a village in southwest Madagascar, from the point of view of a local, Madam Kokoly (pictured), who depends on fishing for sustenance.

Outside the box office

The NatureTrack Foundation takes its third annual film festival online with dozens of virtual screenings

BY CALEB WISEBLOOD

"We have to cancel, it's no longer a choice," KC Thompson texted in a group chat on March 12, nine days before Los Olivos' third annual NatureTrack Film Festival was set to open.

The chat was between Thompson and fellow festival co-director Holly Cline and NatureTrack founder Sue Eisaguirre.

"We all debated what to do, watched what other festivals were doing, and ultimately had to face the hard realization that we had to postpone the festival until October," Cline told the *Sun*. "Right after our decision, California shut down. It was a wrenching and mind-numbing decision, but the right one. Ultimately, the safety of our volunteers, staff, filmmakers, audience, and community was a priority for us."

But the festival's postponement was announced under the assumption that the COVID-19 crisis would be well in hand come autumn, Cline explained.

"At the time, we all hoped that by October, the United States would have a handle on the pandemic, and we would be able to have a live event," Cline said. "But it became clear a couple months ago a live event would not be possible, and all our efforts turned toward a completely virtual event."

The NatureTrack Film Festival originated in 2018 as an extension of the NatureTrack Foundation, a nonprofit dedicated to facilitating cost-free outdoor activities and field trips for students throughout Santa Barbara and Ventura counties, hence the festival's theme of showcasing nature-based documentaries.

Eisaguirre, also the foundation's executive director, said the nonprofit "took a huge hit" upon the festival's event cancellations back in March, having already paid for the rentals of the participating venues and other expenses.

"Proceeds from the festival were projected to cover operating expenses for the remainder of this fiscal year, which ended June 30, 2020, for us," Eisaguirre said. "Without this revenue or ability to

cover operating and program expenses, the 10th season of our program will be severely impacted."

The decision to take the NatureTrack Film Festival online—by offering dozens of virtual film-streaming opportunities between Oct. 9 and 18—was inspired by observing other postponed film festivals' reactions to the ongoing pandemic, Thompson explained.

"Eventually we started to see other film festivals struggling, and succeeding in migrating to an online platform, and this gave us hope that we could too," Thompson said. "We briefly contemplated drive-in movie options and social-distanced screenings at the Solvang Festival Theater. But any gathering, even outdoors, was going to be inadvisable, which left us with the sole option of a virtual festival."

Among the featured films available to stream during this year's festival is *The Lost Kings of Bioko*, documentarian Oliver Goetzl's examination of an endangered primate species on an island off the coast of Central Africa.

Filmmaker Matthias Mayr will transport viewers to the Arctic's northernmost mountain range during his featured documentary, *83 Degrees: Ski the North*.

Other films include *Kokoly*, described as a heartbreaking look at the decimation of coastal waters near a village in southwest Madagascar, from the point of view of a local who depends on fishing for sustenance.

During *The Birth of a Pride*, filmmakers Dereck and Beverly Joubert follow the adventures of six new lion cubs in Selinda, Botswana.

For the festival's organizers, the benefits of taking the festival online include the ability to reach audiences all around the world rather than just locally, while also offering flexibility for attendees to stream the featured films anytime they choose within the festival's 10-day span. An all-access pass to view the festival's complete lineup is available for \$100. "The virtual platform offers a global reach that an



BETWEEN THE LIONS: During *The Birth of a Pride*, filmmakers Dereck and Beverly Joubert (pictured) follow the adventures of six new lion cubs in Selinda, Botswana.



LET IT SNOW: Filmmaker Matthias Mayr will transport viewers to the Arctic's northernmost mountain range during his featured documentary, *83 Degrees: Ski the North*.



LOST AND FOUND: Among the featured films available to stream during this year's festival is *The Lost Kings of Bioko*, Oliver Goetzl's documentary about an endangered primate species on an island off the coast of Central Africa.

on-site event obviously doesn't capture," Thompson said. "The downside of course is the missing camaraderie and community energy that we all generate when we're gathered together in Los Olivos over three days."

This year's festival was originally slated to hold film screenings and special events at various locations throughout Los Olivos, including Epiphany Cellars, St. Mark's In-the-Valley, the Global Eye Art Collective, the Carhartt tasting room, Wildflower Women Boutique, Lavinia Campbell Park, and other venues.

"No matter how hard you try, you can't replace the feeling of a live event," Cline said. "The ability to talk with the filmmakers and other audience members, wander the streets and drink in the vibe, the excitement of engagement during a party—that is what I will really miss this year." ○

Arts Editor Caleb Wiseblood is making popcorn. Send comments to cwiseblood@santamariasun.com.

IMAGES COURTESY OF LIZ POULIN ALVAREZ



VINEYARD VIEW: Presented by the Lompoc Art Association, California Landmarks showcases a variety of landscapes by local artist and art teacher Liz Poulin Alvarez.



ARTIST AND TEACHER: A full-time art teacher at Lompoc High School, Liz Poulin Alvarez first came across the Cypress Gallery while searching for a local venue where she could promote and showcase her students' artworks.

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*Cypress Gallery's
California Landmarks
showcases landscapes
by Liz Poulin Alvarez*

BY CALEB WISEBLOOD

While her choice of media varies between each artwork—from oil to watercolor, acrylic, or charcoal—the theme that ties together each piece in Liz Poulin Alvarez's new landscape exhibition is exactly what its title suggests.

Presented by the Lompoc Art Association, California Landmarks is the second exhibit to be held at Cypress Gallery since its official reopening to the public in August. The show opened on Sept. 2 and is scheduled to run through Sept. 27.

"Being an intrepid traveler, painting outside gives me more enjoyment to appreciate the sensory feel of a place," Alvarez said, expressing her preference for plein air and painting on the go during her travels. "California Landmarks

is a collection of local scenes that visitors and residents alike recognize as they travel through Central California."

Born and raised in Maine, Alvarez didn't move to California until after college, but she's been painting nearly her whole life, she said.

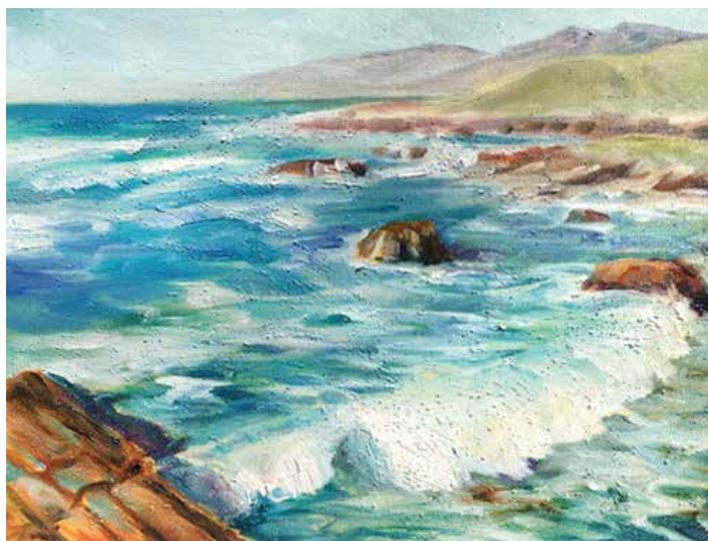
"I learned to view the natural world with the eye of an artist and began my formal art training at 8 years old," said Alvarez, who went on to study art at the Rhode Island School of Design, where she earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree.

"A job after college brought me to California where I fell in love with the landscape and met my future husband to be," she said.

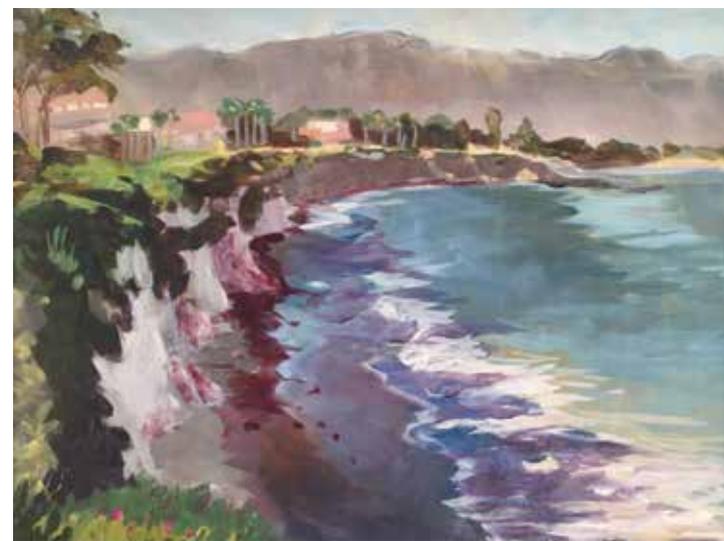
"It was not until I moved from Maine to the Central California Coast that I learned to appreciate the variety of textures and nuances of green in the landscape," added Alvarez, who said she aims to capture the subtleties of weather and changing seasons within her works through varying amounts of shadow and light.

A full-time art teacher at Lompoc High School, Alvarez first came across the Cypress Gallery while searching for a local venue where she could promote and showcase her students' artworks. She described the gallery as a positive support system for local artists of all abilities and ages.

"There is something for every level of artist at the gallery, from the budding high school artist who is looking for support to the more established artist who enjoys being in a local community of other like-minded artists," Alvarez said.



OCEAN EYES: "The pandemic gave me renewed appreciation for my surroundings, and that's what I wanted to paint—to promote a sense of stability of a recognizable place and the calm memories that go with it," Liz Poulin Alvarez said.



BY THE SEA: "California Landmarks is a collection of local scenes that visitors and residents alike recognize as they travel through Central California," Liz Poulin Alvarez said, describing her latest exhibit.

Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, Alvarez painted around 20 new landscapes, all included in the California Landmarks exhibit.

"The pandemic gave me renewed appreciation for my surroundings and that's what I wanted to paint—to promote a sense of stability of a recognizable place and the calm memories that go with it," she said.

Although the pandemic put a halt to most of her planned travels this year, Alvarez found comfort in revisiting old photographs from previous trips, which also fueled her creativity.

"Looking at photos of past vacations helped me to feel better and take my mind off of current events," said Alvarez, who opted to paint landscapes closer to home, including many destinations she had already painted before.

"It felt natural to return to familiar places to paint outside and appreciate my surroundings with renewed interest," she said. ○

Arts Editor Caleb Wiseblood embraces familiarity, occasionally to a fault. Pop his comfort bubble at cwiseblood@santamariasun.com.

Make your mark

California Landmarks, an exhibition of landscapes by Liz Poulin Alvarez, runs at the Cypress Gallery through Sept. 27. The gallery is located at 119 E. Cypress, Lompoc. Visit lompocvalleyartassociation.com for more details. You can also find out more about Alvarez and her artwork at elizabethpalvarez.com.

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FEMALE POWER: Standing in for her father, Hua Mulan (Yifei Liu) impersonates a male to fight in the Imperial Army against Bori Khan and his warriors in the Disney live-action remake of *Mulan*.



Fighters don't sing

Director Niki Caro (*Whale Rider*, *McFarland, USA*, *The Zookeeper's Wife*) helms this live-action remake of Disney's beloved 1998 animated film. To save her ailing father from being drafted into a war, a young woman, Hua Mulan, disguises herself as a man to fight in his place. (120 min.)

Editor's note: Arts Editor Caleb Wiseblood and New Times Staff Writer Karen Garcia took over *Sun Screen* while the *Starkeys* enjoyed the week off.

Caleb: Like its animated predecessor, *Mulan* begins with an executive order

from an unnamed emperor of China (played here by Jet Li), who decrees that one male from every household in the nation must join the Imperial Army in its fight against northern invaders. But unlike the original film, where the opposing side is an army of Huns, this remake's primary antagonist is Bori Khan (Jason Scott Lee), who leads a battalion of Rouran warriors into China and vows to murder its emperor. #TheWrathOfKhan. Besides bloodlust, another attribute the

original's villain shares with Khan is a penchant for pet falcons. But Khan's falcon is more than just a falcon, 'tis rather a shapeshifting sorceress of sorts, Xianniang (Gong Li), who can jump between her animal and human form at will (think Professor McGonagall except evil). I love how the filmmakers decided to expand upon the falcon character while simultaneously omitting Mushu, the original film's primary comic relief (voiced by Eddie Murphy), in favor of a more "realistic" take on *Mulan*. I can picture how it all went down in the writer's room: "Nobody's gonna buy a talking dragon in live-action form. But remember how successful *Birdman* was? Maybe we can have our very own Birdwoman?"

Karen: Xianniang is an interesting addition to a beloved Disney classic, but I feel like she was thrown into the film to do Khan's dirty work of invading villages. However Xianniang and Mulan (Yifei Liu) have something in common: They both have strength and power that is dismissed because they're females in a patriarchal world. I appreciate the sentiment, but Xianniang's side story is a bit of a stretch for me. Actually, the recent Disney live-action reboots of old films are all a stretch for me. At least most of them have the original songs in the film—I'm

just bitter that I didn't get to sing along to "Reflection." I get it, this was more of a serious adaptation of the film, and on that note, the actors were also very serious, dare I say ... flat. In the original when Mulan goes to a training camp for the Imperial Army, she meets a group of men with comical personalities who become her friends, something that was sorely lacking in this go around. Who is that girl I see on my television screen staring straight back at me? Well, it's not the best reflection of the 1998 *Mulan*. **Caleb:** Ancestors, hear my plea/ Please bring my \$30 back to me. *Mulan* isn't worth the "Premier Access" price it's currently offered at (\$29.99 with a subscription to Disney Plus). But if you've already got Disney Plus, I recommend streaming *Mulan* a few months from now when the additional fee goes away. In the meantime, my advice is just stick to the original. I can relate to your bitterness, Karen, I also missed the songs, especially "I'll Make a Man Out of You" and "A Girl Worth Fighting For." I really wish they would have tried integrating the musical numbers into the remake. Is a character bursting into song any less believable than Xianniang's "animorph" powers? Even the warfare scenes felt more powerful and atmospheric in the animated film. Mulan's training sequences feel watered down as well. The remake implies Mulan was gifted with *qi* (depicted in the film as a

magical energy source rather than the traditional martial arts concept it's named after), which is how she's able to fight so well. In the original film, Mulan is an ordinary woman who trains hard to become a natural badass, no magic required. I think it's clear which of the two versions is more empowering. **Karen:** If you don't want to take our word for it, *The New York Times* reported that Disney had high hopes that the \$200 million film would culturally resonate with moviegoers in China, but instead it was met with complaints. The audience was reportedly troubled by the westernized character that "succumbed to Orientalist stereotypes." On par with Caleb's perspective, another issue was the fact that Mulan is turned into a hero because of her *qi* powers rather than finding the power of inner strength to be who she wants to be—how is that relatable? If you're looking for a film that will empower your youngsters and teens, stick to the original. This just doesn't cut it. That goes for you too, Disney, leave the classics alone. Stop being lazy, and come up with new characters and stories that can transcend generations. Personally, I'm just tired of reboots. (120 min.) ○

Arts Editor Caleb Wiseblood and New Times Staff Writer Karen Garcia wrote this week's *Sun Screen*. Send comments to gstarkey@newtimeslo.com.

MULAN

What's it rated? **PG-13**
What's it worth, Karen? **Stream it**
What's it worth, Caleb? **Stream it**
Where's it showing? **Disney Plus**

TV & Film Reviews

PHOTO COURTESY OF NETFLIX



SWEEP THE LEG: The rivalry between *Karate Kid* characters Johnny Lawrence (William Zabka) and Daniel LaRusso (Ralph Macchio) reignites after Lawrence decides to reopen his alma mater karate dojo, in the popular YouTube Red series, *Cobra Kai*, which was recently acquired by Netflix.

COBRA KAI

What's it rated? **TV-14**
When? **2018-ongoing**
Where's it streaming? **Netflix**
More than three decades have passed since the central event of *The Karate Kid* took place—the All Valley Karate Tournament, which culminated in its final round between young fighters Daniel LaRusso (Ralph Macchio) and Johnny Lawrence (William Zabka). Now both in their 50s, the rivalry between the two reignites when Lawrence, a recently fired part-time handyman, decides to reopen his alma mater karate dojo, Cobra Kai, which closed down shortly after his defeat in the tournament. LaRusso, now the successful owner of a car dealership, decides to retaliate by opening a dojo of his own, inspired by the teachings of his former master, Mr. Miyagi. I binged both seasons of *Cobra Kai* within the span of two to three days, and I don't regret a single moment. I can't quite put my finger on it, but there's something remarkable

about seeing Zabka and Macchio reprise their roles as adults, especially Zabka, whose character—once a ruthless, sadistic high school bully—is more humanized and layered than ever before. (20 30-min. episodes)

—Caleb

I'M THINKING OF ENDING THINGS

What's it rated? **R**
When? **2020**
Where's it streaming? **Netflix**
In the middle of a mild snowstorm, a young woman (Jessie Buckley) narrates the long drive with her boyfriend, Jake (Jesse Plemons), to visit his parents in Oklahoma. But there's something off about the trip. Between the woman's drifting thoughts of the seemingly new relationship and questioning her suitor, her mind always drifts into "thinking of ending things." The outing becomes eerier when the couple finally makes it to Jake's parents' house where the night seems to go on forever as she

watches his parents age before her eyes.

This adaptation of the novel with the same name has a strange and uncomfortable atmosphere that director and writer Charlie Kaufman often creates—think *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* and *Being John Malkovich*. Kaufman did a fascinating job of crafting a world that appears to center on the subconscious mind of the young woman, and yet we know nothing about her. But we know everything about Jake.

The film is dark and questions reality, and you can't help but be sucked into this trip that heads toward an end that isn't clear to the audience. It's worth a watch or two to truly wrap your head around the anxiety-riddled evening. (134 min.) ○

—Karen

Arts Editor Caleb Wiseblood and New Times Staff Writer Karen Garcia wrote this week's *Sun Screen*. Send comments to gstarkey@newtimeslo.com.

PHOTO COURTESY OF NETFLIX



DARK ROADS: *I'm Thinking of Ending Things* finds a young woman (Jessie Buckley) and her boyfriend, Jake (Jesse Plemons), on a bizarre and anxiety-inducing trip to visit his parents while questioning the merits of her relationship.



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THE LITTLE THINGS: Birchwood Beer Garden in Nipomo serves up simple pleasures such as Figueroa Mountain's Mosaic IPA.



ROOM TO BREATHE: With ample outdoor seating, spaced out for your social-distancing pleasure, Nipomo's Birchwood Beer Garden has plenty of space for your crew to eat and drink.

Gathering place

Birchwood Beer Garden gives Nipomo residents a family-friendly spot to eat, drink, and be merry at a distance

BY CAMILLIA LANHAM

It's hard to tell whether smoke or fog hangs over Nipomo on Sept. 10 as we walk over to Birchwood Beer Garden around 5 p.m.

Field to Table Catering & Events' food truck, The Cruiser, is parked in the front parking lot serving up the Aloha Menu—your choice of Kalua pork sandwich, Huli Huli chicken, garlic shrimp, an ahi poke bowl, or Hawaiian fried rice.

We step up to the outdoor bar and order our beers—one Space Dust IPA from Elysian Brewing and two Mosaic IPAs from Figueroa Mountain (I guess we're definitely Californians)—through face masks. After we pay, we turn around to find a spot to sit on the deck.

Sliding into the seats of a wooden picnic table, I spot a swing hanging from one of the old pepper trees along the beer garden, nursery, and event center's pathway, which leads into the depths of plant heaven.

This space has always been a nursery, and Birchwood's current owners took over about five years ago, continuing to sell specialty plants and adding it to the list of available event spaces in the area.

Owner Lauren Withers said they've also had food trucks in the parking lot on most

Thursdays for the last few years, but Birchwood's newest addition is the beer garden, which celebrated its grand opening on Aug. 15.

"We came in with the thought that we wanted a community space this summer for the people of Nipomo—and giving them more food options," Withers said. "And just making it more of a family space instead of just a bar."

Many of Nipomo's food options are indoor, which is a no-no during the COVID-19 pandemic, so residents don't have many options for eating out, Withers said. And when things are "normal," most of the town's drinking establishments aren't exactly kid-friendly. Their intention for opening the beer garden, Withers

said, was to give the community a place where they could safely gather in an outdoor space.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, however, adult beverages are required to be served with food, so Birchwood is now bringing in food trucks to coincide with beer garden hours, Thursday through Sunday afternoons (unless Birchwood is hosting a private event).

"The only option right now is to eat outside, and guess what, the only place we have is to eat outside," Withers said with a laugh. "We have 3 acres and plenty of space to sprawl out."

As the chill in the air starts to become chillier, Withers said they plan to adapt by creating covered areas in the garden and having outdoor heaters.

So far, the food truck nights have been busier than they anticipated, so Withers said Birchwood is already thinking about expanding the eating/drinking area, which is currently on a deck that stretches along one side into the nursery's succulents area.

"We're trying to expand the fenced-off area into the nursery because we can't keep up," she said on Sept. 14. "I'm out right now getting more seating. ... It's a good surprise."

Another surprise is that Birchwood has been receiving a number of last-minute requests to host small weddings because bigger, indoor event spaces have canceled due to the pandemic. Withers said their pricing is reasonable, and the nursery has a number of different spaces to choose from, such as a patio area, the beer garden, and the pergola.

But those events do compete with community beer garden time, so stay up-to-date on what's happening via Birchwood's Facebook page.

The regular crew of food trucks includes Cubanissimo, Lidos, Big Truck Foods, Feed My Seoul, and Field to Table.

The Cruiser from Field to Table, which is out on Sept. 10 serving up island-style deliciousness, is busy. We order the Hawaiian fried rice, a couple



TRUCK TO TABLE: Field to Table's ahi poke bowl comes with avocado, edamame, white rice, and furikake.



ALOHA MENU: The Cruiser, Field to Table Catering & Events' food truck, served up Hawaiian island fare on Sept. 10 at Birchwood in Nipomo.



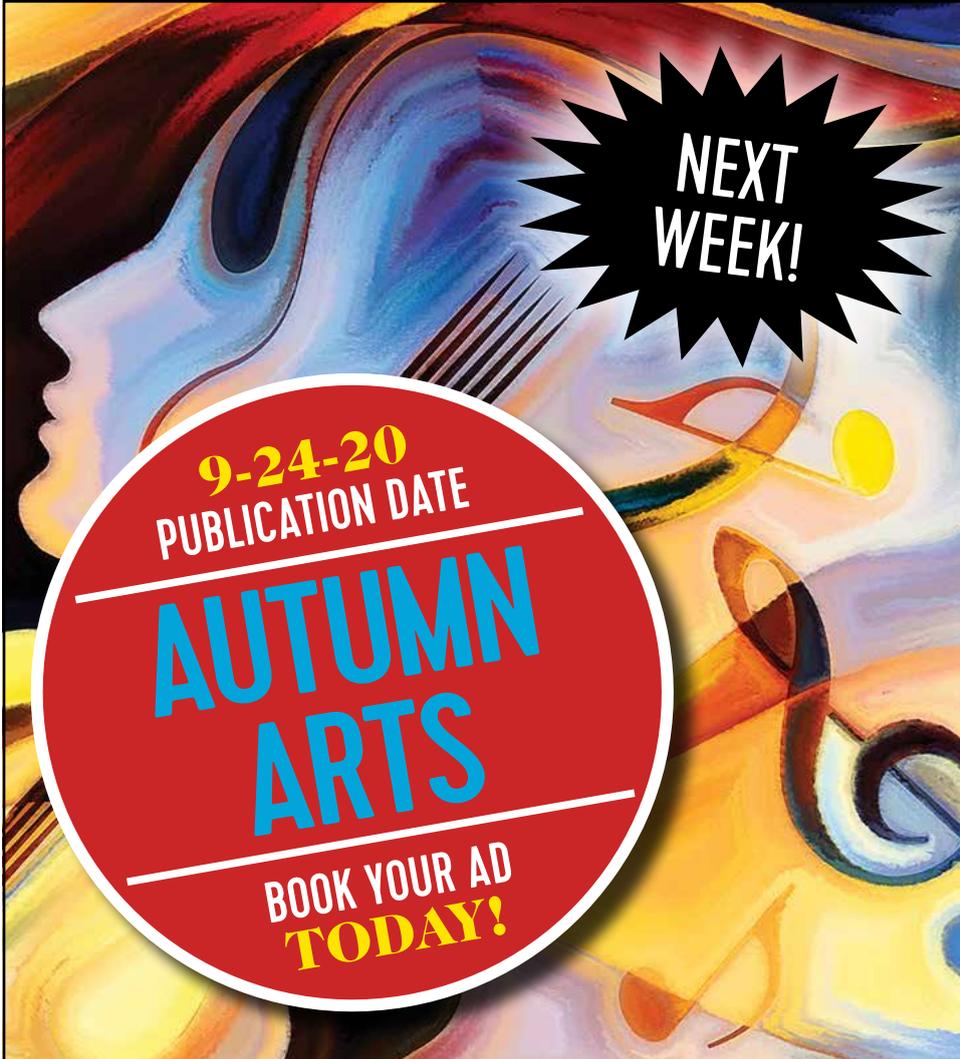
DELISH DISH: Macaroni salad and pineapple fried rice support the salty-sweet crunch of Field to Table's Kalua pork sandwich, which comes with Asian cabbage slaw and fried shallots on a Hawaiian bun.

of ahi poke bowls, and the Kalua pork sandwich. Served up (except for the fried rice) with white rice, macaroni salad, and a Hawaiian roll, what's not to like?

We grab a second round of beers and sit down to feast. And we aren't disappointed. The pork is salty, sweet, and succulent with a little bit of a crunch. The ahi is fresh with a soy sauce and acid tang. And the pineapple fried rice is delicious—although I wish I had ordered it with the Spam! As we finish, my friend eyes the bright pink

pop-up tent set up across the garden path. Gina's Piece of Cake has cupcakes, cookies, and other sweet treats in individual containers. He comes back to the table bearing cupcakes—and yes, a couple of them are absolutely pumpkin spice. I don't know if you know this, but fall is just about here, and Halloween is on the way. ☺

Editor Camillia Lanham loved that Kalua pork. Send her foodie salutations at clanham@santamariasun.com.



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