Clearing the air

New APCD hearing board appointment stirs concern regarding conflict of interest with Phillips 66 refinery issues [7]

BY KASEY BUBNASH

Rideshare companies pump millions into Yes on 22 [8]

The art of activism in the county [18]

Learn the ABCs of Tom’s Burgers in Lompoc [24]
The board of directors for the SLO County Air Pollution Control District (APCD) recently appointed a new member to the APCD hearing board, which helps make rulings and navigate air quality issues for the district and the agencies it governs. But, in the name of clearing the air, one local APCD board member called into question the appointment of Jim Anderson, who works as a maintenance superintendent at the Phillips 66-owned Santa Maria Refinery. Staff Writer Kasey Bubnash talked with APCD board members regarding the potential for conflict of interest.

This week, you can also read about who’s behind support for Proposition 22, which aims to further define rideshare drivers’ employment; getting out the vote through artistic awareness; and the legendary menu and strong community spirit at Tom’s Burgers in Lompoc.

Andrea Rooks  
associate editor
Introducing
Jessica Prather,
C.N.P.

WELCOME JESSICA PRATHER
CERTIFIED NURSE PRACTITIONER

After graduating with her Bachelor’s of Science in Nursing from California State University, Bakersfield (CSUB), Jessica worked in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) in Bakersfield for about 4 years before enrolling and completing her Masters of Science in Nursing in 2010 at CSUB. Jessica taught in the Undergraduate Department of Nursing in Pediatrics at CSUB as clinical faculty. Additionally, she has worked full-time as a Nurse Practitioner in a primary Pediatric setting in Bakersfield for 10 years.

The American Academy of Pediatrics reports that Childhood vaccinations and well exams have plummeted this year due to Covid-19 leading to concerns for possible outbreaks of infectious diseases and other missed health care that occurs during those visits, including physical exams, developmental screenings and other important care that should not be delayed.

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Congressional candidates Carabajal, Caldwell face off in virtual debate


Debate moderator Scott Hennessey kicked off by asking about COVID-19 recovery plans. Hennessey noted Caldwell, who has said he proposes to "isolate, serve, and protect the most vulnerable while pursuing herd immunity for those least susceptible.

"However, Hennessey added, "the head of the World Health Organization [WHO] said, 'allowing a dangerous virus that we don't fully understand to run free is simply unethical.'"

"Is that what you're suggesting?" Hennessey asked Caldwell.

Caldwell disputed Hennessey's WHO quote, saying it was from an old report. "The problem here is we shut down parts of our economy," Caldwell said. "We didn't shut down Target, Captain Morgan, or Walmart, but we shut down mom-and-pop shops and stores, and that was a huge problem."

Hennessey clarified that the WHO quote was in fact from Oct. 12, five days before the debate, but that he had not been thinking about the same question over to Carabajal.

"We shouldn't have to choose between our public health and our economy," Carabajal said. "We need to listen to our public health professionals and our scientists … and all the guidance that they've been providing."  Continuing on the topic of the struggling economy, the candidates were asked how they plan to bring high-paying jobs to the Central Coast in the wake of the Diablo Canyon Power Plant closure in 2024 and 2025.

Caldwell didn't suggest any avenues for job creation, instead he emphasized his stance against the planned closure.

"Diablo is not closing because it's inefficient, or it's old, or it's unsafe. It's closing because of rules and regulations that California put in," Caldwell said. "There is no substitute for the base load that Diablo generates 24/7."

Caldwell supports offshore wind and other renewable energy options as ways to both make up for the energy losses and create jobs.

"What we need to do is start looking at that facility as a way to be able to help," Carabajal said. "We also need to look at making sure we're investing in more renewable energy to create new employment sectors that will help us produce our energy and at the same time create good jobs that will help those workers that will be displaced."  Candidates also discussed jobs and the labor force in the context of the local agriculture industry. With a White House administration that threatens to increase deportations and 60 percent of California's agricultural workforce estimated to be undocumented, the candidates were asked what they would do for the Central Coast's farmworkers.

Carabajal pointed to his co-sponsorship of the Farm Workforce Modernization Act, a bipartisan bill that would "provide a legal path for farmworkers who are here without papers, thereby also creating a sustainable labor force for agriculture."

"I've been working to advocate to move that forward, but with this administration, we've had no success," Carabajal said.

Caldwell pointed to his organization, the Coalition of Labor, Agriculture and Business (COLAB), and campaign contributions from local farming families as "proof positive" that he is supported by the farming community. However, he didn't specify what he would do for the farmworkers employed by these farms.

The candidates were asked to describe the nation's problem with police brutality and how they each propose to address the issue. Carabajal said that the death of George Floyd and others at the hands of the police "reminds us that we really need to bring about police reforms.

"That's why I supported the Justice in Policing Act that would bring about sensible reforms for law enforcement throughout the country," he continued.

Caldwell said that while he was "shocked at the treatment of George Floyd," he was "equally shocked by cop getting murdered, police stations being firebombed, and the like."

Caldwell asserted that Carabajal supports defunding the police, to which Carabajal responded, "I am not for defunding the police, I am for moving forward reforms."

In his closing statement, Caldwell emphasized his commitment to building on the Affordable Care Act, protecting a woman's right to choose, stopping future oil drilling in the region, and pushing through more federal economic stimulus.

Caldwell closed by saying, "I've been working for the general public and taxpayers and small businesses my entire adult life. I want to continue that in Congress."

—Maeza Martin

PETA protests Solvang Trolley, owners blame City Council member

The Solvang Trolley and Carriage Company is again at odds with City Council member Chris Djernaes, as the business's owners claim Djernaes is the reason PETA protested outside their business on Oct. 10.

Protesters stood outside of the Solvang Trolley on Copenhagen Drive, speaking into a megaphone and holding signs that read "Honor Hazel with Ban on Horse-Drawn Carriages."

The Orona family claims that the protests caused them to cease trolley rides that day. During the Oct. 12 Solvang City Council meeting, Solvang Trolley co-owners Lorena and Hector and their son Sal Jr. Orona alleged that PETA was contacted by the owner of Esko Eko, a local gift apparel and accessory store.

Sal Jr. posted a video recording on YouTube of Djernaes speaking with the PETA protesters that Saturday. Most of the video's audio is muffled by music and other nearby sounds, but it's clear that Djernaes asks protesters who they were contacted by or who supports them. An unidentified protester says they have a contact with a location in Solvang, but they don't have his name.

Djernaes asks if it's Esko, and the protestor says "probably."

Esko owner Esko K.T. Lama responded to the allegations during public comment, saying he's a local business owner and it's very normal for him to talk to people who are in town or in front of his store because he wants to know what's happening in town.

I have no control over PETA. I did not invite PETA people, Yes, I spoke to them but I don't think I need a permit, to speak to PETA people, from others," Lama said.

The Orona family claims Djernaes has ties to the Oct. 10 protest because he is friends with Lama.

"I'm tired of worrying about the harassment instigated by Mr. Djernaes, every time I come to work. You see a business but you don't see all the work behind it," Lorena said.

Community members and Solvang Trolley owners clashed with the council member in July during the business's one-year license renewal. On Oct. 12, several public commenters called for the council to "take action" against Councilmember Djernaes. Solvang resident Linda Palmer said she was appalled that a city official did not recognize the impact the protesters have on businesses.

"The protesters were walking up and down the sidewalk in Copenhagen in front of the businesses and several times blocked access to a business simply by their presence and the large signs," Palmer said. "[Djernaes] can support PETA if he wants, but he cannot do it as an official of this city, so I call upon him to immediately resign if he's going to damage Solvang's image. At the very least I suggest the City Council censure him and disqualify him from all future discussions and votes on horse-drawn carriage matters."

Djernaes requested to respond to the allegations, saying "it's not true," but the council denied his request and continued with its meeting agenda—the council neither took action nor responded to the community's claims.

The Sun reached out to Djernaes for comment, but he did not respond before press time.

PETA said it had planned to gather at the Solvang Visitor Center to continue the work of Hazel Mortensen, a Solvang resident and PETA supporter who recently died. According to a media release from the organization, Mortensen campaigned for years against "the city's archaic horse-drawn carriage and trolley rides."

"PETA is calling on the city to honor Hazel Mortensen's memory by outlawing an old-fashioned business that broke her heart and that harms horses as well as Solvang's reputation," PETA Senior Vice President of Campaigns Dan Mathews said in the statement.
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PAID POLITICAL AD
County supervisors vote to target large gatherings with administrative fines

After a COVID-19 update on Oct. 20 discussing outbreaks in Isla Vista, the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors voted to pass an ordinance allowing the county to levy fines against large gatherings and businesses that don’t comply with public health orders.

UC Santa Barbara issued an emergency notification on Oct. 16 stating that the university and the Santa Barbara County Public Health Department had identified two separate clusters of COVID-19 cases in privately owned fraternity and sorority houses in Isla Vista. At the time of the notification, 13 individuals living in the separate houses had tested positive.

During her Oct. 20 update to supervisors, county Public Health Director Dr. Van Do-Reynoso didn’t state the total number of positive cases in Isla Vista related to the outbreaks, but county COVID-19 status reports indicate that at least 24 more Isla Vista residents tested positive between Oct. 17 and 19.

Do-Reynoso stated that the county and UCSB were collaborating to ramp up testing and education efforts in Isla Vista, as well as coordinating contact tracing in an effort to prevent the outbreaks from spreading.

“It does seem likely that this outbreak is significant enough that it might affect our numbers,” 2nd District Supervisor Gregg Hart said, referring to the county’s red tier status on the state’s Blueprint for a Safer Economy.

Although the county is still holding strong in the red tier category with 121 active cases, 12 hospitalized cases, and a positive case rate of 4.3 per 100,000 cases, the Isla Vista outbreaks won’t be reflected on the state’s Blueprint until Oct. 27.

“The college community figured prominently in the ordinance discussion that took place later in the supervisors’ meeting, with several UCSB students speaking in support of the proposed ordinance,” Assistant County Executive Officer Barney Hubbard told supervisors that enforcement of COVID-19 public health orders has been a balance between maintaining public health and individual liberty. Finding that balance, he said, “is proving to be a real line-walker for law enforcement.”

The board majority—Hartmann, 1st District Supervisor Das Williams, and Hart—voted for the ordinance as a way to push the county into a more liberal reopening tier (Santa Barbara County is in the second out of four) safely.

“I share some of the ideals that the supervisor [Adam] is articulating, but it leads me to a different course of action,” Williams said. “Freedom is contingent on reducing transmission. Whether we agree with the state framework or are against it, that is the reality.”

“The first reading of the ordinance passed 3-2, with a second reading slated for the board’s Nov. 10 meeting.”

Propositions 20 and 25 would impact sentence lengths, DNA collection, parole, and cash bail system

California voters will have the opportunity to vote on criminal justice reforms through two separate measures on the ballot this November: Propositions 20 and 25.

Proposition 20 would restrict access to parole for some nonviolent offenses, increase penalties for certain theft-related crimes, and add opportunities for DNA collection. The fiscal result would be higher law enforcement costs.

Proponents argue that it closes a loophole allowing some offenders to be released early through parole programs, while opponents call it a prison spending scam that would result in cuts to rehabilitation and mental health funding.

Santa Barbara County District Attorney Joyce Dudley is in favor of the measure. She said her main reasons for supporting it come down to the increased opportunities for DNA collection and the higher penalties for certain theft-related crimes.

“Because of DNA being taken from somebody when they were arrested for a different offense, we were able to solve one of the worst rape cases we’ve ever had,” Dudley said. “So I’m very supportive of increasing the number of crimes, and therefore the number of people, whose DNA we do retrieve.”

Dudley also supports the proposition because it would increase penalties for crimes like repeat shoplifting. She pointed out that if thieves stay under a certain amount of property value stolen, they don’t get arrested, “and they can do it day after day after day.”

“That needs to be stopped, and I think this is a good way to stop it,” Dudley said.

As is often the case with ballot measures, Proposition 20 lumps together these two changes that Dudley supports with another piece that is in direct conflict with the county’s policy: authorizing the fining of citizens for their failure to submit to an unenacted health officer’s order. In this view, this is an abdication of our sacred duty to submit to an unelected health officer’s order. In my view, this is an abdication of our sacred duty to submit to an unelected health officer’s order. In my view, this is an abdication of our sacred duty to submit to an unelected health officer’s order. In my view, this is an abdication of our sacred duty to submit to an unelected health officer’s order.

Child concurred with the district attorney’s assessment.

“If an individual has no income or very low income, they’re left to stand in pretrial in jail for extended periods of time,” she said. “Not only are they held longer in jail, but there’s significant public safety risk that is in place in jail that we think can be better redirected into treatment programs outside of the jail.”

Some chapters of the NAACP oppose the proposition, as does the Association of Los Angeles County Sheriffs. They say that the cash bail system would be replaced by a more discriminatory system of risk assessment that could lead to increased racial profiling.

Prop. 25 uses computer algorithms to determine the future of accused of a crime.”

Joe Coto, former Assembly member and chair of the Latino Caucus, states on stopprop25.com. “These algorithms have been proven to lead to more biased outcomes from Latinos and other people of color.”

Child argued that the new risk assessment system would be just one tool that judges use to make their determination, and it is not the sole determinant of someone’s release.

“From our perspective, it’s important that it be understood that the courts make the determination on this, and not algorithms,” he said. “But to the extent that you use these tools—they’re evidence-based tools and have been proven to make a difference—there are flaws in those. We have the opportunity to improve and enhance those tools.”

—Malea Martin
Potential for conflict

Phillips 66 refinery employee appointed to APCD hearing board in 6-5 vote, leading to concerns about potential conflict of interest

BY KASEY BUBNASH

For the last two decades, Cal Poly environmental engineering professor Yarrow Nelson has served as a member of the SLO County Air Pollution Control District’s (APCD) hearing board, using his background in scientific research to help the district navigate air pollution conflicts and emergencies, including the ongoing dust mitigation efforts at the Oceano Dunes. But Nelson’s most recent three-year term expired at the end of July, and in a move surprising to many community members, the APCD board of directors voted 6-5 to oust Nelson at a meeting on Sept. 23, instead appointing Jim Anderson, a local engineer who works as a maintenance superintendent at the Phillips 66-owned Santa Maria Refinery.

Although Anderson previously served on the hearing board as Nelson’s alternate, his recent appointment is stirring up questions and concerns about how he’ll handle matters related to Phillips 66, which is regulated by the APCD and contributes to pollution in SLO County.

The APCD board of directors discussed that potential for a conflict of interest at length on Sept. 23, and it’s why Arroyo Grande City Councilmember and APCD board member Jimmy Paulding said he couldn’t support Anderson’s appointment.

“It’s kind of a classic case of putting the fox in charge of guarding the henhouse from a perception standpoint,” Paulding told the Sun.

The APCD hearing board is an independent, quasi-judicial body that decides on matters of environmental regulations. It is the only state in the U.S. that doesn’t have an independent hearing board. To get licensed, Anderson would have to get a civil engineering license, which Nelson said is not his area of expertise.

Still, 5th District Supervisor Debbie Arnold, Supervisor Compton, and the rest of the board majority made it clear they wanted to appoint one of the three other applicants with professional engineering licenses, and eventually landed on Anderson because of his previous experience as the APCD alternate and his residency in SLO County (one application was from a resident of Newport Beach).

“First of all, he’s been an alternate for many, many years,” Supervisor Compton told the Sun. “And nobody has raised any concerns in the past about his activity as an alternate. So he’s been trained, he’s sat through the meetings, he’s done that before.”

She added that no members of the public called in to the meeting to comment on Anderson’s appointment. Plus, she said, Anderson is a registered engineer with a lot of experience with environmental regulations in SLO County.

“He’s eminently qualified for this,” Compton said. “And Anderson said he too is confident he can do the job. As a longtime alternate, he’s already through the training required of new hearing board members, and knows how the APCD operates. Throughout his lengthy career at the refinery, where he oversees all maintenance and environmental regulations, he’s worked alongside the APCD to acquire various permits and gain compliance with environmental regulations.

Throughout the ‘90s, Anderson helped develop the county’s Clean Air Plan, and made what he said were “great strides in the air quality countywide.”

Anderson said he completely understands the concerns about his work with Phillips 66, and if any matters related to Phillips 66 do come before the hearing board, “I would recuse myself.”

He’s not, however, convinced that the potential land acquisition at State Parks Phillips 66 would impede his ability to serve on the hearing board.

The hearing board, he said, likely wouldn’t have any hand in land sales of any kind, and APCD Officer Gary Willey confirmed that wouldn’t be something the hearing board would be involved in. Anderson said he’s really just interested in serving the community he’s lived in and worked in for decades now.

Although he works in North County, he said he’s still involved in the board, “and so I’ve got you, I know I’ve got a stake in air quality here.”

Staff Writer Kasey Bubnash can be reached at kbubnash@santamariasun.com.

PHILLIPS 66: At a meeting on Sept. 23, the SLO County Air Pollution Control District board of directors voted 6-5 to appoint Santa Maria Refinery Maintenance Superintendent Jim Anderson to the APCD hearing board. The Phillips 66-owned refinery (pictured) is regulated by the APCD.

‘It’s kind of a classic case of putting the fox in charge of guarding the henhouse from a perception standpoint’

— Jimmy Paulding, APCD board of directors member

With Phillips 66, combined with Phillips 66’s potential ties to State Parks, could lead to conflicts of interest for Anderson in all APCD hearing board matters related to State Parks. Anderson could recuse himself from all votes related to State Parks, Paulding said, but considering the ongoing hearings regarding State Parks’ dust mitigation efforts at the Oceano Dunes, that would leave Anderson with little else to work on.

Paulding also questioned the APCD board of directors’ conservative majority and their admittance toward replacing Nelson with Anderson, who 4th District Supervisor Lynn Compton described as a “stellar individual” she’s known for years. Is the overarching goal, Paulding asked, to undermine ongoing dust mitigation efforts at the dunes by appointing “Lynn’s friend?”

“We need somebody who can serve in an unbiased, unconflicted capacity,” Paulding said.

But Anderson rejected that accusation, and told the Sun that it’s not his intention to disrupt the APCD’s work reducing dust emissions at the Oceano Dunes. That’s a local issue that Anderson said he admittedly hasn’t actively followed, even as an alternate for the APCD hearing board.

That’s part of the reason Anderson said he was actually shocked when the board voted to appoint him as the hearing board’s engineer member instead of Nelson, who had held the position since 2001.

“That was a bit of surprise to me too,” Anderson told the Sun.

Although Nelson did apply to fill the hearing board position for another term, some members of the board of directors at the Sept. 23 APCD meeting pointed out that the engineer position is, according to state law, supposed to be reserved for a registered professional engineer, unless the board is unable to get the votes to appoint someone with those qualifications.

Phillips 66 is a professor of environmental engineering and has a Ph.D. in that field, but he does not have a professional engineering license. California, he explained at the meeting, is the only state in the U.S. that doesn’t have an independent license for environmental engineers. To get licensed, he would have to get a civil engineering license, which Nelson said is not his area of expertise.

According to state law, the APCD board of directors at the Sept. 23 APCD meeting pointed out that the engineer position is, according to state law, supposed to be reserved for a registered professional engineer, unless the board is unable to get the votes to appoint someone with those qualifications.

Since Phillips 66 is regulated by the APCD, it’s obvious that Anderson will have to refrain from voting on any future items involving his employer. But what’s more concerning, Paulding said, is the budding potential for a land acquisition deal between Phillips 66 and State Parks.

At a California Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Commission meeting on Sept. 24, staff and commissioners discussed the state’s long-term goal of creating a southern entrance to the Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area, which staff said would provide direct access to the park’s off-highway riding areas while reducing traffic and other issues at the existing entrance.

The idea of a southern entrance has been fairly abstract for years, staff said at the Sept. 24 meeting, but when Phillips 66 announced in August plans to close the Santa Maria Refinery in 2023, staff considered it a “game changer.”

Situated on the Nipomo Mesa, the land currently holding the oil refinery could provide the necessary space for a future southern entrance, and staff said on Sept. 24 that State Parks plans to pursue acquisition of the soon-to-be freed-up land.

That, Paulding said, means Anderson’s work at Phillips 66, which is regulated by the APCD and contributes to pollution in SLO County.

The APCD board of directors discussed that potential for a conflict of interest at length on Sept. 23, and it’s why Arroyo Grande City Councilmember and APCD board member Jimmy Paulding said he couldn’t support Anderson’s appointment.

“Although I work in South County, I live in North County,” Paulding said, “so I’ve got you, I know I’ve got a stake in air quality here.”

Staff Writer Kasey Bubnash can be reached at kbubnash@santamariasun.com.
Rideshare companies dump $180 million into Yes on 22 campaign; drivers urge a no vote on the proposition

By Karen Garcia

Proposition 22 on this year’s California ballot reexamines whether gig workers for app-based transportation and delivery are independent contractors or if they’ll continue to be categorized as employees, which state law currently requires.

The proposed law—created by Uber, Lyft, Instacart, and DoorDash—would exempt app-based transportation and delivery companies from providing employee benefits to certain drivers and would reclassify drivers as independent contractors. According to campaign finance reports, as of Sept. 4, Uber, Lyft, DoorDash, and Instacart have collectively poured more than $180 million into their initiative Yes on 22.

Lyft and Uber driver Justin Vitcov, 42, said he believes the proposition also sets a dangerous precedent for the potential future of the gig economy.

“He’s against the proposition. While the proposition is industry-specific and is only going before voters in California, he said that if it’s passed, other industries might want to benefit from the exemption. And the rideshare companies could place the initiative on the ballot in other states as well.

“The problem with Prop. 22, we’re still defined as independent contractors, but it takes away our ability to negotiate the terms of that contract,” Vitcov said.

Vitcov is a Santa Cruz native who started driving for Uber and Lyft in 2018 on the cusp of a career change. He needed a flexible job to cover his expenses while he returned to school.

He said he focuses on commuter hours in Silicon Valley but takes pickup requests in Santa Cruz as well.

“My goal is always to bring home about $30 to $40 an hour range. But of course when you subtract car expenses, gas, and whatnot, you’re of course taking home a lot less than that,” he said.

On top of driving for the ridesharing apps, Vitcov also has a few independent contracting jobs that he works throughout the year to make ends meet. With the other independent contracting gigs, Vitcov said he meets with his direct employer when the contract is up at the end of the year and discusses its terms, including wages.

“That doesn’t happen with Uber and Lyft. You go online, sign up, and read their fine print contract agreement. And then as time goes on, you find out that they can change the rates that they’re paying you literally overnight,” he said. “Sometimes you log in to the app and the rates have changed.”

Vitcov is a member of the Rideshare Drivers United, an organization working toward a fair, dignified, and sustainable rideshare industry. It’s advocating for voters to vote against the proposition.

Proposition 22 comes a year after California passed Assembly Bill 5, which was designed to determine a worker’s status as an independent contractor or as an employee. Under the bill, which went into effect on Jan. 1, 2020, companies were forced to provide their drivers with health insurance, paid time off, and other benefits.

Under the Assembly bill, a worker is an employee rather than an independent contractor unless the hiring business can prove otherwise through an ABC test. The test includes determining whether the person is free from the control and direction of the hiring entity; whether the person performs work that is outside the usual course of the hiring entity’s business; and whether the person is customarily engaged in an independently established trade, occupation, or business of the same nature as that involved in the work performed.

Proponents of Proposition 22 include the Yes on 22 coalition. They say that a vote in favor will keep the job flexible with guaranteed hourly earnings and per-mile compensation, implement new public safety protections that hook for providing their drivers with benefits, which could come at a cost to app users. The analysis, which Lyft shared via its website, found that rideshare service consumers could pay increases ranging from 25.9 percent to 100 percent in some markets—meaning a typical ride across town could cost between $19 and $30.

The consulting firm also reported that drivers’ average hourly compensation could be reduced from $19.35 per hour to roughly $14.60 per hour under the employment model.

The study also concluded that there could be “a reduction of the customer base served to only those persons residing in the most densely populated areas of the state—meaning little or no service to most Californians living in rural or suburban areas of the state.”

Staff Writer Karen Garcia can be reached at kgarcia@newtimesslo.com.
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SUNKISSED SKIN: Sunkissed Tanning Salon owner Cristin Nightingale opened her salon just days before state orders forced personal care services like hers to shut down. Now, she's finally able to open her doors again.

Get your tan on
Things are looking sunnier for Central Coast tanning salon owners who are finally getting back to business

BY MALEA MARTIN

Cristin Nightingale, owner of Sunkissed Tanning Salon in Santa Maria, had always wanted to own her own salon, “even since high school.” In mid 2019, she decided to take the leap.

“It was a long process,” Nightingale recalled. “I had to find the spot, get the [tanning] beds, decorate it, and all that fun stuff.”

But as the salon’s March grand opening date neared, Nightingale started to get nervous: More and more COVID-19 cases were cropping up across the state.

“I already had the flyers made, it was already set in stone,” she said. “We had to open.”

Sunkissed Tanning Salon opened on March 15, the day that Santa Barbara County reported its first case of COVID-19. Nightingale was forced to close her doors just four days later.

Now, more than half a year later, personal care services like tanning salons are allowed to reopen, so long as the county they’re in stays in the red tier in the state’s reopening system.

Santa Barbara County allowed salons to reopen indoors as of Sept. 30, and SLO County’s salons were given the go-ahead at the end of August.

But Nightingale is still recovering from the losses.

“It was kind of a roller coaster,” she said. “But I also feel that everything happens for a reason and what doesn’t kill you makes you stronger.”

On another part of the Central Coast, Haley Murphy—owner of OATS, Organic Airbrush Tanning Salon, with locations in San Luis Obispo and Orcutt—said it was a grueling few months.

“Right before COVID I was just going into my busiest time of the year because wedding season was starting,” Murphy said. “So basically right when I was starting to get busy was right when we had to close down.”

Murphy said the mortgage company for her SLO location gave her a three month deferment for payments, which helped her make it through. But at her Orcutt location, Murphy said she had to pay rent as she normally would.

“Unemployment took almost two months to kick in,” she said. “I’m still dealing with the anxiety and the stress of it, but luckily I don’t need to close either one of my locations down.”

In the face of these hardships, both Nightingale and Murphy are finding ways to stay positive and keep their businesses alive.

“I’ve been the face here. I’ve been working 12-hour days, and I’m the only employee,” Nightingale said. “This is all me: I came up with the logo, the name. … I want people to know me.”

Murphy said that in order to incorporate required sanitization procedures, she has to space out her appointments more now—but this change came with a positive side effect.

“At first I was kind of bummed about that,” she said. “But it’s actually kind of a fortunate thing because it allowed me to give a better service. I’m able to talk to my clients more and not take it so fast-paced.”

As she reopen, Nightingale’s Sunkissed Tanning Salon offers both tanning beds and custom airbrushing.

“I have a really cool bed named the Sunboard XTX … that allows only a small percentage of the UVB rays,” she said.

Murphy said that OATS specializes in airbrushing, and she also offers lash extensions.

“I wanted to offer a healthy, organic alternative to going out into the sun,” Murphy said. “My mom had skin cancer really bad, so I grew up with her telling me, ‘Don’t go in the sun.’ So spray tanning became huge for me.”

As for adapting their business operations to the pandemic, both salon owners said that their services easily accommodate for mask wearing, social distancing, and sanitation.

“I just maintain the cleanliness that I normally do,” Nightingale said. “I’ve always wiped down everything that anybody could touch.”

Sunkissed Tanning Salon is located at 325 E. Betteravia, suite B-11, Santa Maria. Visit sunkissed.com for more info. OATS is located at 630 High St. in SLO and 3558 Skyway Dr., suite A1, in Orcutt. Find them online at oats360high.com and oatsorcutt.com, respectively.

Highlights

• The SLO Food Bank has been selected as a 2020 California Nonprofit of the Year by California Association of Nonprofits and Assemblymember Jordan Cunningham (R-San Luis Obispo). The SLO Food Bank is one of more than a hundred other nonprofits that will be honored by their state senators and Assembly members for their contributions to the communities they serve. For more information about the organization or to learn how to get involved, visit slofoodbank.org or email info@slofoodbank.org.

• 3C-REN, the Tri-County Regional Energy Network, is transforming building efficiency and developing environmental resilience with new programs and learning opportunities each month. In recognition of October being National Energy Awareness Month, 3C-REN is offering business and industry-focused educational webinars on topics like CALGreen requirements, solar photovoltaics, carbon-free homes, and passive house retrofits. For a full list of educational and training programming, and to register for the events, head to 3c-REN.org/calendar.

Staff Writer Malea Martin wrote this week’s Spotlight. Send tidbits to spotlight@santamariasun.com.
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REX MATSUNAGA, 59, a resident of Santa Maria, CA passed away on 10/8/2020. Arrangements are in the care of Dudley Hoffman Mortuary, Crematory & Memory Gardens.

NORMA NELL SCHOLAR, 85, a resident of Santa Maria, CA passed away on 10/8/2020. Arrangements are in the care of Dudley Hoffman Mortuary, Crematory & Memory Gardens.

MARIE GORDON, 79, a resident of Los Osos, CA passed away on 10/8/2020. Arrangements are in the care of Blue Sky Cremation Service.

KELSI RAY TYLER, 75, a resident of Nipomo, CA passed away on 10/9/2020. Arrangements are in the care of Marshall-Spoo Sunset Funeral Chapel.

MATTHEW G. JEFFERS, 39, passed away on 10/9/2020. Arrangements are in the care of Lady Family Mortuary.

DOROTHY JEAN LAMB, 76, passed away on 10/9/2020. Arrangements are in the care of Kuehl-Nicolay Funeral Home.

RITA FILECCI, 82, a resident of Arroyo Grande, CA passed away on 10/9/2020. Arrangements are in the care of Magner-Maloney Funeral Home & Crematory.

SUSIE J. PADUGANAN, 75, a resident of Orcutt, CA passed away on 10/10/2020. Arrangements are in the care of Dudley Hoffman Mortuary, Crematory & Memory Gardens.

GARY G. FOWLES, 79, a resident of Santa Maria, CA passed away on 10/10/2020. Arrangements are in the care of Dudley Hoffman Mortuary, Crematory & Memory Gardens.

BENJAMIN J. CASTRO, 44, a resident of Santa Maria CA passed away on 10/10/2020. Arrangements are in the care of Dudley Hoffman Mortuary, Crematory & Memory Gardens.

DELBERT WILLIAM BLANKS, 94, passed away on 10/10/2020. Arrangements are in the care of Los Osos Valley Mortuary and Memorial Park.

STANLEY DUANE SCHAFFER, 84, passed away on 10/11/2020. Arrangements are in the care of Marshall-Spoo Sunset Funeral Chapel.

CARL RAMBEAU, 53, a resident of Paso Robles, CA passed away on 10/11/2020. Arrangements are in the care of Blue Sky Cremation Service.

MS. NATALIE N BRIDGES, 95, passed away on 10/12/2020. Arrangements are in the care of Los Osos Valley Mortuary and Memorial Park.

IRMA LOPEZ BARAHONA, 56, a resident of Santa Maria, CA passed away on 10/12/2020. Arrangements are in the care of Magner-Maloney Funeral Home & Crematory.

ALVINA ZAL RUIZ, 90, a resident of Santa Maria, CA passed away on 10/12/2020. Arrangements are in the care of Dudley Hoffman Mortuary, Crematory & Memory Gardens.

LINDA PEREZ TIMPE, 71, a resident of Santa Maria, CA passed away on 10/13/2020. Arrangements are in the care of Dudley Hoffman Mortuary, Crematory & Memory Gardens.

KEITH RATHBONE, 87, a resident of Santa Maria, CA passed away on 10/13/2020. Arrangements are in the care of Magner-Maloney Funeral Home & Crematory.
Opinion

Conflicted interest?

Lompoc City Council member receives funds from city homebuyers loan program

BY RON FINK

I have been following Lompoc politics for about 30 years; anytime an elected official had a monetary interest or conducted business with the city, he/she would always recuse themselves from any discussion pertaining to their business interest.

I have also been following City Council meetings closely for the last six years: Councilman Victor Vega hasn’t expressed a lot of interest in most items that come before the council. For example, the key issue in the district he represents is public safety; most of the violent crime in the city occurs in the area he represents. But he hasn’t been demanding more police patrols, reinstatement of gang/ drug units, or even actively supporting recent discussions concerning the purchase of new fire equipment or police body cameras.

People run for office to serve their communities, however some feel that helping themselves is part of the deal. Councilman Vega has expressed continued interest in the Homebuyers Assistance Program since he was elected to the City Council. Most would say that helping first-time low- to medium-income homebuyers is a commendable goal; but there is more to this story.

The Lompoc Homebuyer Assistance Program guidebook explains that the program is designed to “expand homeownership opportunities in the community of Lompoc. The program helps bridge the homeownership affordability gap for local residents by providing 30-year deferred payment loans of up to $65,000 per household to assist first-time lower income homebuyers in purchasing a home in the city.”

When this program was first discussed, some asked if Vega, who is a real estate agent, should recuse himself from the discussion because he could gain financially when this program was implemented; the city attorney determined that since the program was open to “anyone,” he was not getting any benefit that any citizen couldn’t get.

This program has had only 22 applications, and of those only 11 loans/grants were funded, according to the city manager’s report on Oct. 9, 2020. A total of $688,395, or about $60,000 per applicant, has been used so far.

Vega is the broker of record for some of those loans, and even though this program is “open to anyone,” he has a leg up on the competition.

For example, on his chair on the council dais on May 1, 2018, the meeting minutes reflect that “Councilmember Vega requested the funding (of the Homebuyers Assistance Program) be revised to increase the closing cost grants.”

Then on May 7, 2019, Vega requested “a report on renewing the funding for the city’s first-time homebuyer assistance program.” So, he appears to have been protecting his bottom line, something that “anyone” couldn’t do unless they were sitting in his council seat.

He has also used his access to City Hall during the current closures due to COVID-19 to ask staff if specific loans had been approved and/or when they would be approved. Once again, “everyone” doesn’t have this in-person access, and it seems that he is using his elected position for his own personal benefit.

When he openly encourages the council to provide additional resources for closing fees from the in-lieu fund, it seems somewhat questionable what his motives really are: Is he trying to help people buy homes, or is he lining his own pockets with program cash?

This may not be technically “illegal,” this sure looks like a conflict of interest on his part.

Victor Vega is running for the mayor’s seat; we have to wonder what he will come up with next to line his pockets with public funds.

Ron Fink writes to the Sun from Lompoc. Send your thoughts, comments, and opinionated letters to letters@santamariasun.com.
The Sun’s Matching Grant Program is available to all nonprofit and arts organizations in Santa Barbara County

The Sun will provide matching funds to local nonprofit and arts organizations for a print and digital marketing campaign in the Sun from now until the end of 2020.

Let’s partner together and help get your messaging out to the Central Coast community.

For any questions, or to apply for a matching funds grant, please call (805) 347-1968 ext. 111
SANTA YNEZ VALLEY
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**Honey**
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Honey just lost her mum and finds herself living all alone in the house. Unfortunately there are no relatives willing to take her and this beautiful kitty needs a good home! Honey is an easy-to-love tortoiseshell kitty who has wonderful house manners and is friendly to everyone.

**Phoenix**
- **Age:** 6 years, 4 months
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- **Sex:** Male
- **Weight:** 72 lbs.

Phoenix is friendly to everyone. She is easy to love and is a good home! A male "friend" on social media.

**Gretchen**
- **Age:** 3 months
- **Breed:** Pit Bull mix
- **Sex:** Female
- **Weight:** 58 lbs.

All animals are health checked, spayed/neutered, vaccinated and microchipped.

Human trafficking is, unfortunately, happening in our communities. LEARN the warning signs! Exploiters and traffickers develop relationships with their victims either online or in person. They groom the victim with gifts and promises of love or acceptance and they slowly isolate the victim from family and friends until they have control over them.

Warning signs might consist of unexplained bruising, having multiple phones, being fearful or anxious, having unexplained gifts or cash, tattoos or branding on the face, neck, hands, or feet, controlled movement, and having older male "friends" on social media.

Traffickers may promise that they can provide shelter, financial support, love and even a family. Instead, the victim is isolated and sold for someone else's benefit. Trafficking is real! If you see something, say something!

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**What's Your Take?**
- **How do you feel about the propositions on this year's ballot?**
  - It takes a lot of research to understand them.
  - There are too many proposed efforts in each.
  - I don't vote on them; it's a waste of time.
  - I only vote on the props I care about.

**Vote Early—Avoid Long Lines!**
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- **KNOW MORE | DO MORE | NO MORE!**

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CULTURE & LIFESTYLE

SANTA MARIA VALLEY

SCARECROW FEST AND DAY IN THE COUNTRY
Celebrate Los Olivos charming businesses with great deals all over town. During the entire month, see more than 20 Scarecrows with different themes and vote on your faves. Through Oct. 31, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Free. 805-688-9049. losolivosca.com/day-in-the-country/. Downtown Los Olivos, Grand Ave., Los Olivos.

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.

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GARDEN GATHERING
The Santa Ynez Botanic Garden hosts its next Art in the Garden event on Saturday, Oct. 31, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Artists of every medium are welcome to join the group—co-led by local artists Stacey Thompson and Mac Duncan—to create art together outdoors while staying at least 6 feet apart. Visit syebotanicgarden.org for more info. The garden is located at 151 Sycamore Drive, Buellton.

—C.W.

NORTH SLO COUNTY


DIA DE LOS MUERTOS PLATE CLASS Create your own unique glass skull using pre-cut pieces of fusable glass that can be kept flat or slumped into curved plate. All materials included. Limit 6 people per class. Masks required. Oct. 24, 10 a.m.-noon $45. glassheadstudio.com, Glasshead Studio, 8793 Plata Lane, Suite H, Mascarada, 805-464-2633.

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 Tanner St., Paso Robles, 805-238-5825, pryaf.org.

SLOPE PAINTERS AT STUDIOS ON THE PARK Please stop by to see paintings by San Luis Outdoor Painters for the Environment (SLOPE), at Studios on the Park. SLOPE painters have been sheltering at home and are now ready to break out to show paintings and prints at open galleries. Fridays, Saturdays, 12-9 p.m. and Tuesdays, 2-4 p.m. through Dec. 31 $150 per picket or $600 for 5. 805-238-9800. Studios on the Park, 1130 Pine St., Paso Robles, studiosonthepark.org.

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, 1130 Pine St., Paso Robles, 805-238-9800.

CULTURE & LIFESTYLE

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. 3240 Terminal Rd., Santa Maria.

HUMAN BEING SUPPORT AND INSPIRATION ONLINE GROUP An online group to listen and get support from others of the comfort of your own home. Tuesdays, 6:30-8 p.m. 540 monthly subscription. 805-598-1509. divining.weebly.com. Divine Inspiration, 947 E. Orange 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, unwindandsantamaria.com.

YOGA FOR MANKIND: ZOOM CLASSES Offering a variety of virtual yoga and pilates classes over the

ARTS from page 14

SEA GLASS WIRE WRAP JEWELRY Learn how to wire wrap sea glass to create beautiful earrings and a necklace with step-by-step video instruction. Register, select kit, and instructor will provide video link and kit options. Mondays-Sundays. through Nov. 29 Various. 805-296-5993, creativeseminar.com. Cuesta College, Highway 1, San Luis Obispo.

PICKETS FOR PROGRAMS AT SLO BOTANICAL GARDEN Buy and paint a picket to be displayed on the SLO Botanical Children’s Garden fence from 2021 to 2023. Pickets, paint, and brushes supplied on site at SLO Botanical Garden. Your contribution to public art supports the garden and programs. Saturdays, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. and Tuesdays, 2-4:30 p.m. through Dec. 22 $150 per picket or $500 for 5. 805-541-1400. slobg.org/ calendar-of-events/pickets. San Luis Obispo Botanical Garden, 3450 Dairy Creek Rd., San Luis Obispo.

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 Monteray St., San Luis Obispo.

VIRTUAL OPEN STUDIOS ART TOUR Visit ARTS Obispo’s art tour to view works from several local artists and artisans. ongoing Free. facebook.com/artsobispo. Downtown SLO, Higuera Street, San Luis Obispo.

GARDEN GATHERING
The Santa Ynez Botanic Garden hosts its next Art in the Garden event on Saturday, Oct. 31, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Artists of every medium are welcome to join the group—co-led by local artists Stacey Thompson and Mac Duncan—to create art together outdoors while staying at least 6 feet apart. Visit syebotanicgarden.org for more info. The garden is located at 151 Sycamore Drive, Buellton.

—C.W.
FOOD & DRINK

SANTA YNEZ VALLEY

KALYRA: PURCHASES AND PICK-UPS Offering varietals from all over the world. Tuesdays-Sundays, 12:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. 805-693-7259. 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. to 3 p.m. 805-239-9463. standingsunwinery.com. Standing Sun Wines, 92nd 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 pickup and appointment info. Mondays, Thursdays-Sundays, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. 805-736-9032. flyinggoatcellars.com. Flying Goat Cellars, 1250 Chestnut Court, Lompoc.

SAN LUIS OBISPO

PRESQU’ILE WINERY: RESERVATIONS ONLY Call or go online to make a reservation (reservations are not required). Wednesdays-Sunday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. 805-239-9463. presquilewine.com. Presqu’ile Winery, 5391 Presqu’ile Dr., Santa Maria, 805-937-8110, presquilewine.com.

SAN LUIS OBISPO

S.R.F.C.F.A.M. COMMUNITY FOOD AND FARMING DISCUSSION SERIES: FOOD ACCESS AND FOOD SECURITY How do we (and how can we better) meet the basic food needs of our entire communities? How can we make food more accessible to local food resources? Oct. 29, 12-1:15 p.m. Free. sbrfcfaco.edu/community-food-farming-discussion-series/events. Online, Inquire for Zoom ID.

MUSIC

SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS

SANTA MARIA PHILHARMONIC: SOUNDCLOUD Features recordings of the Mozart Sinfonia from the Santa Maria Philharmonic’s last live concert and other recordings. Ongoing Free. smphilharmonic.org. Soundcloud (Santa Maria Philharmonic), Online, Santa Maria.


SOUTH COAST SLO COUNTY

TANGLE UP IN BLUE Studios on the Park in Paso Robles presents its latest fiber art exhibition, True Blue: See to Speak, through Monday, Nov. 2. This group show explores women’s history, ecology, and personal truths through fiber artworks with a predominant palette of blues. Call (805) 228-9890 or visit studiosonthePark.org to find out more. The gallery is located at 1310 Pine St., Paso Robles.

METABOLIC CONDITIONING We use primarily our own body weight in this interval training class to run through exercises and drills to raise the heart rate, condition our muscles, and stay flexible. This advanced class also includes a costume march, or "tread," and a socially distanced family-friendly movie night. Oct. 23, 5:30-10:30 p.m. $5 parking fee. 805-929-5679. DANA Adobe Center, 671 S. Gaige Ave., Nipomo, danaadobe.org.
Coalition of Arts Leaders addresses exclusion of performing arts in state, county reopening plans

Thirty-eight leading members of the Central Coast Coalition of Arts Leaders have signed a letter urging state and county elected leaders and health department officials to prioritize the performing arts industry in COVID-19 guidelines and reopening plans.

“It’s not like you can order Beethoven’s 7th for curbside pickup,” Anna James Miller, co-founder of the coalition and executive director of the San Luis Obispo Symphony, said in a statement. “The performing arts industry needs special attention, right now, if we are going to come through this crisis intact.”

According to the coalition, research shows the negative economic impact of the arts sector, hard-hit by COVID-19 closures and social-distancing mandates, to be $13.9 billion nationwide. The coalition also states that while the California Department of Health’s Blueprint for a Safer Economy has specific breakdowns for a wide range of industries, the performing arts industry has been excluded.

With no clear guidelines for arts groups or venues, many local arts groups have received contradictory answers after reaching out to state or county officials for help.

“We are all asking similar questions, but the answers seem to depend on who you speak to,” Miller said in a statement. “Local officials are left to their own devices to interpret the rules for the performing arts, while other industries have very clear guidelines.”

The letter from the coalition notes the discrepancies between the current guidelines for similar industries and oversight for the performing arts industry and also emphasizes the willingness of signing organizations to adapt performances to outdoor venues, pre-recorded events, drive-ins, and other socially distant options.

The quest for better COVID-19 reopening and recovery guidelines is part of what inspired Miller to co-found the coalition and unite local arts groups, according to the coalition’s press materials.

“There’s strength in numbers. The performing arts industry has always been a force for good on the Central Coast,” Miller said in a statement. “By coming together, we hope to encourage state and local leadership to include us in the conversation.”

Ann Foxworthy Gallery showcases artist and photographer Marcos Dorado with first virtual exhibit

The Ann Foxworthy Gallery at Allan Hancock College in Santa Maria presents its first virtual exhibition, a showcase of works by artist and photographer Marcos Dorado, which premiered online on Monday, Oct. 19, and is scheduled to run through Friday, Dec. 4. Visit hancockcollege.edu/gallery to access the show.

“Marcos focuses on the human side of art, delving into his subjects as inspiration but also as outreach helping us find those connections we share, whether it be dreams, family, shared emotions, or more,” gallery director Laura-Susan Thomas said of Dorado’s art in press materials.

Cast your ballots

Healing Justice Santa Barbara promotes voter empowerment through new campaign, Art is Activism

D escribed as a visual representation of solidarity, a new virtual, multimedia campaign from Healing Justice Santa Barbara—acountywide, Black-led and Black-centered organizing collective—urges viewers to act with urgency and intention while voting in upcoming local, state, and federal elections.

The primary goal of the project, like the collective’s other initiatives, is to “uplift the most marginalized voices,” Leticia Forney Resch, co-organizer of Healing Justice Santa Barbara, told the Sun.

“This concept came to me after seeing filters on Instagram with ‘vote’ on people’s faces. I immediately thought we could do more. Voting is of the utmost importance right now,” said Forney Resch, who also serves as the creative director behind the new campaign, titled Art is Activism.

A group of models, artists, and photographers contributed their talents to the campaign, and their collaborative photographs will be available to view as static content on the Healing Justice Santa Barbara website, as well as the collective’s social media platforms.

BY CALEB WISEBLOOD

Two painters—Chante Glover, with Copper Raven Studios, and Chelesha Willett, with Chelsea Willett Designs—illustrated representations of key voting issues onto the participating models’ bodies. The installations were documented by Terra Cobian Photography, Michelle Ramirez Photography, and Emily Ritter (with Anna Delores Photography).

“I was lucky enough to have such an outpour of support,” said Forney Resch, who reached out to local artists, models, and other potential collaborators through cold calls and video pitches. “As an organization, creating meaningful collaborations is a priority. Meaningful being: working alongside folks that are allies and accomplices in making change.”

Healing Justice Santa Barbara will also release the Art is Activism photos daily on Instagram and encourage the public to repost them, as part of a grassroots effort to spread awareness of various causes that will be affected by upcoming election results.

Key phrases illustrated on models’ bodies include Black Lives Matter, Trans Lives Matter, Abolish ICE, LGBTQ+ Equality Rights, and more. Pictured: model Jamie Dufek, as captured by Anna Delores Photography.

SPREADING TRUTH: Key phrases illustrated on models’ bodies include Coronavirus is Real, Black Lives Matter, Trans Lives Matter, Abolish ICE, LGBTQ+ Equality Rights, and more. Pictured: model Jamie Dufek, as captured by Anna Delores Photography.

Voice your vote to Arts Editor Caleb Wiseblood cwiseblood@santamariasun.com.

Virtual campaign

To find out more about Healing Justice Santa Barbara and its upcoming Art is Activism campaign, visit hjsb.org or follow the collective on Instagram, @healing_justice_sb.

Coronavirus is Real, and MMIWG (missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls).

“In no way were we able to encompass all the humanitarian issues we face in our world and our nation. It is in the works to continue this project to focus on subjects that we were unable to tackle in this particular series,” Forney Resch said.

Her role as co-organizer of Healing Justice Santa Barbara deals mostly with the collective’s arts and culture programming, which operates under a framework that “self-care is not sustainable without community care.”

“Arts and culture are a gift to humanity, allowing us to express our individuality and love for life,” Forney Resch said. “It is a gift to enrich our souls, to embrace the complexity of our history, and welcome old and new neighbors.”

As Healing Justice Santa Barbara, founded by Simone Rushkamp and Krystle Farmer Sighehe, aspires to build resilient communities for marginalized people throughout the Central Coast, joining the collective fulfilled a nearly lifelong urge to confront a lack of diversity, Forney Resch said.

“My family has lived in Santa Barbara for generations, and I am proud of my Chumash, Mexican, and African American ancestry, which connects me to the first African Americans in the Santa Barbara region,” Forney Resch said.

“I cannot tell you how many times I asked myself growing up, Where is the diversity in my schooling, my industry, and my community? I lacked role models that looked like me until I went to college.

“I, in many ways, continue the work of my ancestors who made my work possible,” Forney Resch said. “I will look to uplift the youth in this venture so their voices will be heard. After all, we must think the work we do today will be to enrich others in future generations.”

Voice your opinions to Arts Editor Caleb Wiseblood cwiseblood@santamariasun.com.

VOICE YOUR VOTE: The primary goal of the campaign, like the collective’s other initiatives, is to “uplift the most marginalized voices,” co-organizer Leticia Forney Resch said. Pictured: model Danica Acosta, as captured by Michelle Ramirez Photography.

ROLE MODEL: The Art is Activism campaign, presented by Healing Justice Santa Barbara, is described as a visual representation of solidarity. Pictured: model Bukola Ishola, as captured by Michelle Ramirez Photography.

PHOTO COURTESY OF HEALING JUSTICE SANTA BARBARA
The issue will contain interviews with and photos of the first place winners; and the second and third place winners will be announced, along with this year’s Readers’ Choice award!

Don’t miss this special publication that will shine a spotlight on some of the best musicians on the Central Coast.

NewTimesSLO.com

Winning songs will be featured on our NTMA 2020 playlist on Spotify.

Follow us on Spotify!
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DON'T MISS THIS YEAR'S SPECIAL NTMA PUBLICATION NOV. 12!
Maps to the stars

Visit five different destinations of live performances during SMCT’s Drive Up Theatre Spooktacular

BY CALEB WISEBLOOD

“Y ou may be wondering why I’m sitting in an empty theater. Perhaps it’s because I like large, dark, empty spaces,” a mysterious, masked vigilante tells viewers during a YouTube promo for Santa Maria Civic Theatre’s (SMCT) next production.

“Unfortunately, due to coronavirus, the Santa Maria Civic Theatre is currently empty and dark,” the Caped Crusader continues. “Fortunately, there’s a beacon of light in the distance, and it is not the Bat-Signal. It’s the Santa Maria Civic Theatre’s Drive Up Spooktacular!”

Bam! Pow! Wham!

If Batman’s endorsement wasn’t convincing enough, potential patrons are sure to go batty over the theater’s promise of skit reenactments from Young Frankenstein, The Addams Family, and other pop culture staples—especially ones embraced during Halloween season.

“As there is still a pandemic, we are all trying to find things to do, and now that the holidays are approaching and things aren’t going back to how they used to be just yet, there is a small way for us to share some holiday spirit with Santa Maria,” said Jaime Espinoza, secretary of SMCT’s board of directors.

Like the Civic Theatre’s inaugural drive-up event held at the end of August, ticket holders of the Spooktacular (Sunday, Oct. 25, from 1 to 4 p.m.) will receive a map that highlights five different outdoor destinations to visit throughout Santa Maria where they can enjoy a variety of live performances. To accommodate social distancing, guests can view the different shows from inside their vehicles or choose to park and sit outside—BYOLC (bring your own lawn chair).

“Turnout for the first drive-up theater was fantastic, way beyond anything we’d hoped for, and the response was amazing,” said Sally Buchanan, president of SMCT’s board of directors. “People loved to have something to do again on a Sunday afternoon.”

Buchanan is especially stoked for SMCT’s Young Frankenstein tribute to Young Frankenstein, as she will perform ‘He Vas My Boyfriend,’ from the classic film’s musical adaptation.

“This show has plenty of acting, singing, and dancing,” Buchanan said. “We tried to give every act a Halloween theme.”

Other performances in the event’s lineup include “Voices of the Villains,” a compilation of different songs sung by various stage and screen antagonists, a live band covering some popular Halloween hits. “I’m excited to get to revive my role of Igor that I played three years ago on the SMCT stage,” said actor Kyle Hawkins, who will join Buchanan and others performing in the Young Frankenstein segment of the event.

Proceeds from the Spooktacular will benefit some long-needed renovations to the SMCT building, including improved bathrooms and landscaping, as well as a new stage curtain. Admission to the event is $25 per carload, and the Civic Theatre is also accepting donations through Venmo (@thesmct).

“If anyone out there is a fan of live theater, please consider helping out not just us, but other local theaters in the area and donating anything you can to help us stay afloat,” Espinoza said.

“Times are hard for so many, but it would make SMCT’s future so much brighter if we had the support of local patrons or anyone out there.”

Arts Editor Caleb Wiseblood has a Bat-Signal nightlight. Send comments to cwiseblood@santamariasun.com.
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THE BOYS

What's it rated? TV-MA
What's it worth? Annie: Full price
Where's it showing? Amazon Prime

What if superheroes were actually corrupt and arrogant jerks who were owned by a corporation that monetizes them through films and merchandising while carefully crafting their heroic public personas to appear virtuous and selfless? And what if a group of vigilantes knew the truth about these so-called heroes and worked to take them down? Welcome to The Boys, an action comedy that pits the titular vigilantes—led by profane and irreverent Billy Butcher (Karl Urban)—against The Seven, Vought International's premier tier of superheroes—led by egotistical and increasingly unstable Homelander (Anthony Starr). (16-60-min. episodes)

Glen: We're obviously a little late to this series, which first came out in 2019. Season 2 is now wrapping up with a third scheduled for 2021. Now's the time to jump into this funny, violent, thoroughly entertaining, genre-flipping romp. The series opens with mild-mannered Hughie Campbell, who toils in an electronics store. He's a nerd, but he has one thing going for him—Robin (Jess Salgueiro), a terrific teenager in my soul had her heart broken right along with Mia. The dude is seriously into her.

Hughie is slowly recruited by Billy Butcher into his team of vigilantes, along with Mother's Milk (Laz Alonso) and Frenchie (Tomer Capon), all of whom have their own reasons to hate superheroes. What follows is Hughie's descent into crime in the service of something greater.

Anna: Gotta love a hero-turned-villain tale about taking the world out, and it's not that far from what could be reality. The dude is seriously into her.

What's it worth, Glen?

Glen: Doesn't get boring. I'm excited for the third season. It doesn't seem as though the story will really be wrapped up by the end, and I really want to see where this takes us.

What's it worth, Anna?

Anna: The series is filled with deftly choreographed violence, and though they lack superpowers, the titular Boys led by Butcher are a slippery lot, always managing to escape death. Other important characters are Queen Maeve (Dominique McElligott), Homelander's former paramour, who's at risk of replacement in the second season when Stormfront (Aya Cash) shows up. There's also The Seven's handler, Madelyn Stillwell (Elisabeth Shue), who has a delicate relationship with the volatile leader of The Seven. Now's a great time to get up to speed before the third season starts next year.

Anna: Watching Homelander's mental unraveling is both infuriating and fun. He knows how much power he wields, and he's not afraid to use it against people. There are moments where he's fantasizing about taking the world out, and it's not that far from what could be reality. The dude is seriously unhinged. He's jealous and haughty and just an all-around manipulative jerk. All these supes have some real need for therapy, and being touted for their greatness their whole lives hasn't led to healthy egos. Butcher's team isn't much better off—they're all wrestling their own demons. It's close to a big superhero movie as we're going to get in quarantine, and with longer episodes and several storylines happening at once, there's a lot to enjoy in the first couple of seasons.

New Times Staff Writer Glen Starkey and freelance Anna Starkey write Sun Screen. Glen compiles streaming listings. Comment at gstarkey@newtimeslo.com.
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Since 1979, Tom’s Burgers has served meals with an ample helping of community outreach to the Lompoc Valley

BY KENNY CRESS

The words on the window to the left of the Tom’s Burgers entrance, and on the window to the right of it, read, “Lompoc Strong.”

Those words signify a commitment the family business has made to the Lompoc Valley since opening its doors in 1979.

On an unseasonably balmy mid-October day, Jenn Villareal, Tom’s Burgers manager, spoke of the restaurant’s deep connection to the community. Kim Blea, Villareal’s mother, owns Tom’s Burgers, and Villareal said every family member—she has four siblings—has worked at the eatery at one time or another, though she is the only sibling who works there now.

Tom’s Burgers’ menu includes burgers offerings literally from A to Z—there’s a different burger for every letter of the alphabet (their lettering system is creative—the “C Burger,” for example, asks, “Curiosity, courage, or crazy” regarding its burger with peanut butter). Pictured here are the B Burger (left) with mushrooms; the F Burger with bacon, Ortega chiles, and Swiss cheese (center); and the G Burger with jalapeño and pepper jack cheese (right).

“Before the pandemic hit, our regulars would be lining up for breakfast before we opened the doors at 8 a.m.,” Villareal said. “Some of our regulars had regular days when they came here. At times, Tuesdays would be especially busy.”

As is the case with many other businesses, the local shutdowns had a huge impact on Tom’s Burgers.

Pre-pandemic, the burger joint was open 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. Then the restaurant made a bid to begin opening on Sundays. The pandemic altered those plans, too.

“We were open one Sunday,” before having to reduce hours, Villareal said. “We eventually hope to try again to open on Sundays.”

The business—which has been voted Best Lompoc Restaurant in the Sun’s annual Best of Northern Santa Barbara County readers poll—has been gradually rebounding.

Villareal said that as of the week of Oct. 22 Tom’s Burgers, located on College Avenue, in the College Center, Central Coast Specialty Foods is the only sibling who works there now.

Villareal played softball at Lompoc High School. She graduated in 2004 then went on to play at Charleston Southern in Charleston, South Carolina.

“I always knew I’d come home,” she said. “But she said she didn’t figure she’d come back to working at Tom’s Burgers.

“I honestly didn’t think that I would,” she said. “I just got drawn to it.”

And now, she is the manager of the family business, as supports youth football and Little League sports. She said Tom’s Burgers has also helped locally with Relay for Life and for the Cabrillo High School Madrigal singing group.

“We’ve helped with the Lompoc Lions Club and also assisted the North County Rape Crisis Center,” Villareal said.

The last live high school sports event on the Central Coast took place March 13. And in the meantime, the Little League on the Central Coast never got off the ground in 2020.

“It was so devastating,” Villareal said. “I have two boys, and 6 and 8 years old, who were about to start their Little League season. It was very disheartening.”

Codie Blea, an active area youth sports coach who owns Blea Enterprises in town and is “like a handyman” at Tom’s Burgers, Villareal said she was able to do some coaching during the pandemic.

A true-blue Lompoc local herself, Villareal played softball at Lompoc High School. She graduated in 2004 then went on to play at Charleston Southern.

“That was a wonderful time, I loved it;” she said. “I got to see another part of the country. It was beautiful, and I made a lot of wonderful friends.”

Still, she had no intention of staying in South Carolina when her school days were over.

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<td>205 East Hwy 246</td>
<td>1413 North H Street</td>
<td>628 State Street</td>
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<tr>
<td>Milpas</td>
<td>La Cumbre Plaza</td>
<td>Goleta (The Original)</td>
<td>Isla Vista</td>
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<tr>
<td>216 South Milpas</td>
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