Mobile books

Santa Maria Library’s new bookmobile is on the move, bringing books and resources all around the city [6]

BY MALEA MARTIN
T his is not your grandparents’ library. Since the COVID-19 pandemic hit locally in March, the Santa Maria Library has adapted to the needs of residents, offering Wi-Fi to community members and, most recently, bringing books to residents throughout the city. Elsewhere on the Central Coast, other libraries have increased access by distributing library cards to students. And local libraries have taken to YouTube to provide programming. Staff Writers Malea Martin and Karen Garcia hit the books for this story [6].

This week, you can also read about vaccine distribution in the county [4]; what shelter agencies are doing for adoption events [7]; peaceful nature at Gallery Los Olivos’ Winter Salon in person and online [18]; and Wahly’s Sweet Treats’ delicious and creative bakes [20].

Andrea Rooks
associate editor

Cover photo by Jayson Mellom > Cover design by Alex Zuniga

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**Political Watch**

- The House of Representatives passed the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) Conference Report for the 2021 fiscal year with a veto-proof majority on Dec. 8, according to a statement from U.S. Rep. Salud Carbajal's office. Carbajal (D-Santa Barbara) served as a co-conference and played a role in drafting the final product, which prioritizes the Central Coast in multiple arenas. Every year, Congress sets aside our differences and passes a bipartisan NDAA that delivers for our military, our veterans, and our communities,” Carbajal said. “As a conference, I worked hard to make sure the Central Coast had a voice in the negotiations, and I’m proud of the wins we’ve secured for our community and our country.” The Small Passenger Vessel Safety Act passed as part of the NDAA, and is written in response to the Conception boat fire tragedy that took 34 lives. “It was a preventable tragedy, and I’m not going to be silent about it. The Secretary of Commerce has acted quickly to pass this bill and save lives,” Carbajal said. The congressman also pushed for Central Coast priorities, such as offshore wind, military-university partnerships, and Vandenberg Air Force Base to be included in the NDAA. The final product “directs the secretary of the Navy to report to Congress on their progress working with the Offshore Wind Working Group,” authorizes $13 million in research funding for military-university partnerships with our local universities, and “includes $5 million in funding for space launch range services and capabilities, including for Vandenberg Air Force Base,” the statement said.

- Assemblment Jordan Cunningham (R-San Luis Obispo) announced Dec. 17 that he and a bipartisan group of state lawmakers sent a letter to Congress members asking them to pass a COVID-19 relief package. “It’s the federal government—not the state of California—that has the resources to help our local small businesses, workers and cities get through this crisis,” Cunningham said in a statement. “Congress must come together over the next few weeks to hammer out a deal that extends federal unemployment benefits, expands the PPP small business loan program, and provides critical relief to smaller municipal governments like those in San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara counties. Folks need the financial support, and we have to avert economic and social collapse while we wait for vaccine distribution.” The statement added that on Dec. 26, the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program, which provided funds to independent contractors who don’t normally qualify for unemployment insurance, is set to expire. The Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation program is also expiring Dec. 26. It provides people who have lost their job due to COVID-19 the option to retroactively file a claim. “With an estimated 750,000 Californians impacted by these program expirations, it is critical that Congress act immediately to extend them,” the statement said.

- The Western States Scientific Safety Review Workshop on Dec. 19 completed its review of the federal process and has concluded that the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine is safe and efficacious for use in the Western States,” a statement from Gov. Gavin Newsom’s office said. The confirmation comes after a 15-month review of the development and safety of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine supported for use in these states. “The workshop, made up of nationally acclaimed scientists with expertise in immunization and public health, has concurrently and independently reviewed the FDA’s actions related to COVID-19 vaccinations. It will continue to evaluate other COVID-19 vaccines as the federal process continues,” the statement said. Newsom added that, while California continues to struggle through its current surge in cases and hospitalizations, there is light at the end of the tunnel with two vaccines now approved for use. “This major step forward is vital to all who have experienced loss and hardship during this pandemic—those we hold in our hearts this holiday season,” Newsom said. “Until vaccines are available more widely across the state, it’s crucial that all Californians do their part to stop the surge by staying at home and wearing a mask when leaving home for essential work and needs.”

### Area hospitals receive, administer first round of COVID-19 vaccines

Hospital workers across Northern Santa Barbara County went to work with enthusiasm on the morning of Dec. 17 after receiving allotments from the Santa Barbara County Public Health Department. Marian Regional Medical Center vaccinated its first workers on Dec. 17, a moment that was met with applause and cheers from the hospital staff who have worked day and night throughout the pandemic to keep community members alive. Infectious Disease Specialist Dr. Trees Ritter was the first to receive it. Physically it doesn’t feel like anything, but emotionally it’s amazing,” Ritter said. The 1,950 doses that Marian received will be used to vaccinate as many people as possible, and the hospital isn’t holding back any of the doses for the second round that the vaccine requires. “Everyone requires two doses, but it will be resupplied enough that we want to get as many people the first dose as possible,” Ritter explained. “The data suggests that most people have about a 90 percent effectiveness after 10 days of their first dose, and the second dose is to supplement that… up to that high effectiveness of about 94, 95 percent. Ritter said that the hospital is prioritizing anyone who has contact with COVID-19 patients in the first round of vaccination, which includes emergency room workers, COVID-19 unit workers, anyone who works with people who are involved in other aspects of the care process such as dietary, cleaning, and environmental services. “Doctors and nurses are not more important than other people who work in our hospital,” Ritter said. “This is a team effort.” Ritter said that once more doses become available for the general public to begin receiving vaccinations, Marian Regional Medical Center will likely assist with that effort. “We try to partner with the county Public Health Department wherever we can, so we will continue to act as though we are all in this together, because we know that we are, and we will do whatever it takes to help our community,” Ritter said. Marian’s Dr. Scott Robertson said that while having enough manpower to administer the vaccine will be a challenge, he is confident that Santa Barbara County can get it done. “There’s never been a vaccination effort quite like this in the United States,” he said. “The CDC is also working with other community partners such as Walgreens and CVS to be major distributors of the COVID-19 vaccine. We also expect to use the Pacific Central Coast Health Centers and our urgent care locations… to also be major community partners in ensuring that the public is being taken care of.” Cottage Health also began vaccinating healthcare workers Dec. 17 with the same number of allotted first-round doses. Cottage infectious disease specialist Dr. David Fisk told the Sun that the hospital is prioritizing emergency room workers since they have the highest chance of contact with an undiagnosed COVID-19 patient. Such potential contact is particularly dangerous because emergency room workers are not able to wear the same amount of personal protective equipment (PPE) that COVID-19 unit workers wear. “It’s not practical to be wearing full PPE in the emergency department, nor is there enough availability,” he explained. “The highest risk cases and settings aren’t only based on national data, but also based on local experience over the last 10 months.” Fisk said that within Cottage Health there have been zero confirmed staff acquisitions from working with patients in COVID-19 cohort units, whereas they have seen acquisition in other areas like the emergency room. "A statement from Lompoc Valley Medical Center (LVMC) CEO Steve Popkin said that the hospital also began vaccinating its staff on Dec. 17. “I have been impressed with the efficiency and effectiveness of the logistics plan for the vaccine distribution,” Popkin wrote in the statement. “I have also been very impressed with, and very thankful for, our LVMC team who put together a very complex vaccination plan, on very short notice, and executed it flawlessly.” Dignity Health’s Ritter said that as happy as he was to finally be vaccinated, Santa Barbara County is nowhere near out of the woods with the pandemic. “The vaccine is good news, but I don’t want that to be stressed too much … we’re still in the midst of this worst for the vast majority of people,” he said. —Malea Martin

### Santa Barbara County Redistricting Commission completes selection process

The 11 members of Santa Barbara County’s Citizens Independent Redistricting Commission have officially been chosen, and although the commission isn’t perfectly representative of the population that inhabits this county, it’s more diverse than when the selection process started.

At a meeting on Dec. 14, the first five commissioners, who were randomly selected for their positions in October through a lottery system, announced the applicants chosen to fill the commission’s six remaining seats, the conclusion of a months-long and controversial selection process.

Santa Barbara County residents Karen Twibell, Megan Turley, James Hudley, Lata Musa, Jaret Rios, and Benjamin In Omeldo were selected out of hundreds of applicants to serve on the commission, which will be responsible for using data collected during the 2020 U.S. census to adjust the boundaries of the county’s supervisioral districts. “Folks, I think we’ve tried to unite a Gordian knot,” Commission Chair Glenn Morris said. “I’m not sure that we’ll have done it to everyone’s satisfaction, but I think we’ve got a team here of highly qualified, well-connected folks that I think we can all look forward to joining these Brady Bunch squares in the near future.”

The use of a redistricting commission is an attempt to create districts that will better represent the county’s current population independently from elected and county officials, but the Redistricting Commission selection process has been under fire since mid-October, when Registrar of Voters Joseph Holland released his list of the 45 qualified candidate pool chosen from about 200 applicants. Community members from across the county immediately complained that the group chosen by Holland consisted predominantly of white men and did not accurately represent Santa Barbara County’s demographics.

“We have, for example, only 13 percent Latino in this pool, whereas we have 46 percent in our population,” 3rd District Supervisor Joan Hartmann said at the first meeting. “We have only 14 percent under the age of 40, when they’re 57 percent of our population. We have it skewed toward males: 65 percent when there’s 50 percent female in our population. So in other words you’ve created a skewed pool that is old, white, and male.”

After the first five commissioners—Laura Katz, William McClintock, Norman Bradley, Cary Gray, and Morris—were randomly chosen from a pool of 450 applicants, Holland released his list of those that chose to fill the remaining seats on the Redistricting Commission would be representative of the county’s residents. The final 11-member commission now consists of six registered Democrats, one Republican, and four no-party-preference members; five women and six men; six white people, four of color, and one member who declined to state her ethnicity; and two members under the age of 30 and nine who are over 40.

Commissioner Gray said that considering the first five random picks—who are all white and mostly male—of the remaining applicants, it would be impossible to create a completely representative commission. To accurately parallel the county’s demographics, the first five members would have to choose five women and one man to fill the remaining six seats, including five Latino members, one Asian, Black, or Native American member; three members under the age of 45, and two over 70.

“So we have to try to balance with our final six along with our first five commissioners,” Gray said at the Dec. 14 meeting. “But I feel certain that we’ll be able to pick a dream team this morning that will make the citizens of Santa Barbara proud of the difficult task we have successfully completed.” —Kasey Babash

**ND News** continued page 5
County holds winter preparedness meeting to discuss debris flow prevention

Nearly three years after the Montecito mudslide tragedy that claimed 23 lives, Santa Barbara County continues to keep a close eye on vegetation recovery, debris basins, flood control systems, and winter weather to ensure that a similar incident isn’t repeated.

On Dec. 17, community members from across the county were invited to join a winter preparedness virtual meeting during which experts and county officials provided updates on how the area has recovered and how conditions have improved since the Jan. 9, 2018, incident.

“We’ve been working very hard to create the right kind of resiliency projects, the right kind of flood control projects, in order to increase our safety as a community,” 1st District Supervisor Das Williams said in a pre-recorded message at the meeting. “I’m proud to say that the first of those projects is online: the expansion of the Cold Springs debris basin to be able to take more large material.”

Williams said the Cold Springs project will be followed by the Romera Canyon expansion project next year, and San Ysidro debris basin in 2022.

“Most excitingly, we’ve received FEMA grant funding, and we’ll be building the Randall Road debris basin next year in 2021,” Williams added.

“Most excitingly, we’ve received FEMA grant funding, and we’ll be building the Randall Road debris basin next year in 2021,” Williams added.

Cooper explained that when vegetation burns as it did during the Thomas Fire, it creates “totally unprotected soils,” which when hit with intense rainfall can become “the precursor to our debris flows.”

“If we can see how important it is for this vegetation to recover,” Cooper said.

County Flood Control Engineering Manager Jon Frye followed Cooper’s presentation, highlighting six debris basins in the area of the 2018 incident—four of which already exist and two of which are proposed but not yet built— that will aid in preventing another debris flow. However, Frye also emphasized that such flows don’t only occur immediately following fires, and the risk is always present. He gave the example of the Santa Barbara Coyote Fire of 1964: A debris flow event occurred the first winter after the fire, but then another occurred about 4 1/2 years after the initial fire.

“So I think it’s important that we all remain vigilant and understand that we’re entering into winter after the Thomas Fire,” Frye said. “So recognize that these are high-hazard areas and that we all need to remain alert.”

The community also heard from Kevin Cooper, a biologist who has been monitoring vegetation and soil recovery since the Thomas Fire, which occurred shortly before and contributed to the Montecito mudslides.

Tracking the vegetation growth in the burned area from the Thomas Fire helps to determine the risk of future debris flows in the area, Cooper said.

“We’re entering our fourth rainy season, and we’ve had three good growing seasons up to now,” he said. “We’re on track to hit that five- or seven-year full recovery to pre-fire conditions of the watershed here.”

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“So we can see how important it is for this vegetation to recover,” Cooper said.

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‘We can adapt’

Libraries up and down the Central Coast are learning how to meet the community where they’re at during the pandemic.

**BY MALEA MARTIN & KAREN GARCIA**

Libraries have always been about more than the books. A library is a community gathering space, a place to access the internet, and a creative learning environment. So when the pandemic not only forced the city of Santa Maria Main Library’s physical doors to close, but also threatened its funding, the stakes were high for community members who rely on these resources.

When cuts to the library were initially proposed, the community quickly sprang into action to oppose such a measure, and City Council members found a way to move some money around and make it work.

“COVID-19 had really highlighted the inequities that exist, especially with education,” City Councilmember Gloria Soto told the Sun. “Library services, whether that be on a virtual platform or through their bookmobile or curbside pickup, helps us keep our community members and our young people engaged, have never been more important.”

As it turns out, there’s a lot that these institutions can do outside of the confines of brick-and-mortar buildings, and libraries up and down the Central Coast are learning how to adapt.

Prior to the pandemic, “our public here in Santa Maria did enjoy using our physical space for a variety of reasons,” said Santa Maria librarian Dawn Jackson.

“However, under our current restrictions .. people have come to realize that libraries can adapt, and can do so much more than what patrons, or perhaps even librarians, thought that we could do.”

For the Santa Maria Main Library, this looked like shifting instruction video. Families can log on for a live Zoom story time every Wednesday at 4 p.m. Writing Club to-go packs are designed for students up to the 12th grade and include a journal and prompts. These options and more can be found on the city of Santa Maria Engaged Patrons webpage.

“We’re still doing everything we did before, just in a new way so we can continue to serve our patrons,” Jackson said.

Another key function of library spaces is providing computer and internet access to people who need it. Santa Maria library found a way to still make it work.

“We have extended the Wi-Fi signal at our main library, and currently there’s not a password for that,” Jackson said. “We are also offering checkout of our bookmobiles and Chromebooks that come with a hotspot.”

The library also brings books, Wi-Fi, and laptops for checkout directly to residents through its bookmobile, which was unveiled earlier this year.

“That is going to eight locations around the city with regular stops,” Jackson said. “They have a grab-and-go service, and they’ve been able to reach patrons that haven’t been able, even prior to the pandemic, to visit the library.”

Ana Libbon, administrator of programs and services for Boys & Girls Clubs of Mid Central Coast, told the Sun that the library’s bookmobile has made a big difference for the kids they serve.

“Every Wednesday from 3 to about 5:30, they park in our parking lot, and kids are allowed to go through their bookmobile and check out books,” Libbon said of the organization’s Santa Maria location. “They help them all obtain library cards and answer their questions. ‘They’ve been absolutely amazing.”

The success is evident in the numbers: Jackson said the library had 278 views of their programs on YouTube since March, and circulation went up 20 percent over the past two months with its grab-and-go services.

Up in Santa Maria, the Paso Public Library also has a bookmobile that was brought up to eight locations earlier this year.

The partnership was made possible by Melissa Bailey, the Paso City children’s librarian; school district librarian Stephanie Lowe; and educational technology TOSA Ronalee Andersen, who collaborated to safely and efficiently provide the students with a card, said Jennifer Gaviola, deputy superintendent of Paso Unified.

Even pre-pandemic, the partnership had been in the works for several months. The team, via telephone. Patrons could access e-books, e-magazines, and homework resources virtually by using their library cards.

The library also worked hard to get library cards for ninth, 10th, and 11th graders at the Paso Robles Unified School District, Fortin said.

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Another successful program the library facilitated, similar to the Santa Maria library, was access to internet hotspots.

“There are people in our community that still don’t have access to the internet at home,” Fortin said. “At the end of April we extended our Wi-Fi network not only here at the library, but at our study center.”

Since March, the city library has had 4,475 connections to its Wi-Fi network.

Library volunteer Tammy Bourne, who has lent her time to the facility for six years, pulls book holds for the curbside and pickup service. She said it’s been amazing to see the library staff work hard to evolve and respond to new safety requirements to keep serving the Paso Robles community.

“The saddest thing about this new environment is not seeing people really enjoy the library,” Bourne said. “But I know the public is using the library because I get the list of books that people have put on hold and they want us to pull for them.”

The perception of libraries is changing, Fortin said. In the past, people viewed the library as “shushing environments.”

“We do have a lot of rules, I get that, but a lot of that is just organization and making sure that we have the resources people need,” she said. “It really comes from wanting to provide access.”

**Staff Writer Malea Martin can be reached at mmartin@santamariasun.com. Staff Writer Karen Garcia can be reached at kgaviola@newtimesslo.com.**
Winter whiskers

Wintertime promotions run by local animal shelters make it the perfect time of year to bring home a furry member of the family

BY MALEA MARTIN

Feeling lonely after canceling your holiday plans? Need something to fill the void of social interaction in 2020? Searching for a new companion for the New Year? Look no further than your local animal shelters! 'Tis the season to bring home a furry friend, and Santa Barbara County shelters are putting on some special holiday initiatives to encourage residents to foster or adopt an animal this winter.

Santa Barbara County Animal Services, ASAP Cats, and Bunnies Urgently Needing Shelter came together to offer a reduced $12 adoption fee through Christmas Eve for the 12 Days of Winter Whiskers event.

"The 12 Days of Christmas is always in our hearts, but not everybody celebrates Christmas," Animal Services Director Angela Walters Yates said. "We thought, well, everybody can celebrate Winter Whiskers." And it's not just furry pets that fall under the promotion.

"We are highlighting some animals on social media over the 12 days," Walters Yates said. "We've got a rooster featured today. His name is Kamalo. He's a really cute black rooster with a beautiful red comb."

On another day of Winter Whiskers, the county featured a bunny named Petey, who has spent more than a year in the shelter environment.

A different day, black cat siblings Jack and Jill stole the spotlight. There's even an iguana up for adoption, and though he lacks whiskers, Walters Yates said, "We thought, well, everybody can celebrate Winter Whiskers."

"If you're not ready to bring an animal into your life but still want to support the cause, CARE4Paws is putting on a holiday matching gift campaign so you can help twice as many animals in need. All donations are matched dollar for dollar through December, up to $25,000 total. CARE4Paws Executive Director Isabelle Gullo said the organization is already halfway to its goal, and that every donation goes to providing critically needed supplies and services in the immediate community."

As the pandemic rages on, "the need has not diminished whatsoever," Gullo said. "We're still spending $10,000 a month on pet food so we can continue distributing countywide."

CARE4Paws is rounding out the year with 2,000 spays and neuters, 600 more than the organization had planned for. Gullo additionally expects that CARE4Paws will have also given free and low-cost veterinary services to 1,800 pets by the end of 2020.

"We're revisiting all of that and really asking ourselves what's important. Not every home is the same," Walters Yates said. "We are challenging ourselves as employees of a shelter system to remove unconscious barriers and judgements that we might have about people in the community that are stepping forward and taking a leap of faith. Let's support them and try to match them with an animal that fits their lifestyle, their home environment, their family's needs."

"If you're not ready to bring an animal into your life but still want to support the cause, CARE4Paws is putting on a holiday matching gift campaign so you can help twice as many animals in need. All donations are matched dollar for dollar through December, up to $25,000 total. CARE4Paws Executive Director Isabelle Gullo said the organization is already halfway to its goal, and that every donation goes to providing critically needed supplies and services in the immediate community."

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Pamela Medical Group is scheduling well exam visits for children of all ages. Strict safety precautions have been put in place to ensure the safety of patients and their parents.

• We provide Rapid Covid-19 Tests (15 Min results) Flu tests, and Flu vaccines.
• All individuals entering the building are pre-screened and temperature is taken.
• Face masks are required to be worn
• Only well-patient visits are seen inside the building
• All sick visits are seen either outside in a tent or via telehealth
• Strict sanitation practices are in place including disinfecting exam rooms after each visit.

Pamela Medical Group wants to ensure all newborns, infants, children and adolescents are up-to-date on their comprehensive well-child care, inclusive of appropriate screenings, complete physical exam, laboratory exams, fluoride varnish and vaccines.

Call to schedule your child's well exam today.
Regarding ‘Reflections on the “New World”’

Very well said! Thank you for publishing it (Dec. 10).

The vast majority of us are immigrants, mostly back decades. My family arrived here about 1700 so I’m an Irish American like those that arrived here from Africa. We call them African Americans, even though 99 percent have never been there or speak any of the languages. Why don’t they call me an Irish American like them—I speak English and have been there. Maybe things would go smoother if we called all of us Americans, as far as the different races—there is only one: We all are Homo sapiens.

Michael D. Rogers
Arroyo Grande,

A community question

If cases of COVID-19 are traced to a business that has openly operated in violation of local, state, and Centers for Disease Control guidelines for COVID-19 safety, can the patrons of those businesses who contract COVID-19 or the families of those who die from COVID-19 sue those businesses for pain, suffering, loss, or wrongful death?

Wayne Montgomery
Grover Beach

Close the dunes again

Never in our lifetime have we faced a health crisis as we are in now. Getting back to “normal” clearly will not be happening for a long time. Since the county has reverted to purple, concrete action is being taken to limit the number and size of gatherings. Given all of the closure mandates in other parts of the county, Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area must be re-closed to vehicles.

Allowing visitors from outside of SLO County lines by keeping the beach open to 1,000 vehicles daily is an invitation to continued high levels of COVID-19 cases.

Protecting our public health must be the first priority. This is a plea to the SLO County public health officer, Dr. Penny Borenstein, and the director of California State Parks, Armando Quintero, to close the park to vehicular access for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dorothy Hines
Nipomo

Pick up that ear trumpet

I think one of the greatest shortcomings in the upbringing of the current generation is the lack of education regarding critical thinking and manners. When did we become content to accept what we’re told from just anybody, and start clinging to the belief that if it makes us feel good, it must be right? When did we lose sight of the fact that...

Cynthia Replique
Oceano
DEATH NOTICES

DRUSCILLA L. WATSON, 85, of Solvang passed away 11/27/2020 arrangements with Lori Family Mortuary

BENSON WEINBERG, 91, of Arroyo Grande passed away 12/7/2020 arrangements with Moreno Mortuary

TERRY HUNT, 80, of Cayucos passed away 12/9/2020 arrangements with Blue Sky Cremation

CARLTON ALLEN PICKENS JR, 56, of Paso Robles passed away 12/9/2020 arrangements with Kuehl-Nicolay Funeral Home

KATHERINE SAMS, 76, of Paso Robles passed away 12/9/2020 arrangements with Blue Sky Cremation

MATHEU ROYDEN, 46, of Grover Beach passed away 12/10/2020 arrangements with Reis Family Mortuary

CINDY L. SANDMAN, 76, of Paso Robles passed away 12/10/2020 arrangements with Kuehl-Nicolay Funeral Home

KIMBERLY ANN SARTAIN, 50, of Arroyo Grande passed away 12/10/2020 arrangements with Marshall-Spoo Sunset Funeral Chapel

RUBEN GONZALES, 68, of San Luis Obispo passed away 12/10/2020 arrangements with Reis Family Mortuary

SUZANNE HONEY STOUGHTON, 80, of San Luis Obispo passed away 12/10/2020 arrangements with Kuehl-Nicolay Funeral Home

BARBARA BOETTCHER, 71, of Paso Robles passed away 12/11/2020 arrangements with Blue Sky Cremation

BETTY MAY MCDONALD, 100, of Paso Robles passed away 12/11/2020 arrangements with Kuehl-Nicolay Funeral Home

MARTIN RICKARD, 78, of Paso Robles passed away 12/11/2020 arrangements with Blue Sky Cremation

WILLIAM OSTRANDER, 70, of Brad passed away 12/11/2020 arrangements with Blue Sky Cremation

DONALD ROSA, 87, of Los Osos passed away 12/11/2020 arrangements with Blue Sky Cremation

ROY HENRY BOYCE, 88, of Paso Robles passed away 12/11/2020 arrangements with Kuehl-Nicolay Funeral Home

HENRY RUSHING, 77, of Templeton passed away 12/12/2020 arrangements with Blue Sky Cremation

FRANCHOT "FRANK" CARSWELL JR, 62, of Santa Maria passed away 12/12/2020 arrangements with Dudley-Hoffman Mortuary, Crematory & Memory Gardens

CRUZ IBARRA, 80, of Guadalupe passed away 12/13/2020 arrangements with Moreno Mortuary

STEPHANIE SILL, 59, of Arroyo Grande passed away 12/13/2020 arrangements with Blue Sky Cremation

MARTHA ALVAREZ PONCE, 57, of Santa Maria passed away 12/13/2020 arrangements with Moreno Mortuary

CAROLYN SUE CRAWFORD, 78, of Paso Robles passed away 12/14/2020 arrangements with Kuehl-Nicolay Funeral Home

JEAN MACE KIKUCHI, 72, of Grover Beach passed away 12/14/2020 arrangements with Marshall-Spoo Sunset Funeral Chapel

RONNIE JOSEPH APARICIO, 63, of Santa Maria passed away 12/14/2020 arrangements with Dudley-Hoffman Mortuary, Crematory & Memory Gardens

CLARISSA MOENCH, 80, of Paso Robles passed away 12/14/2020 arrangements with Blue Sky Cremation

JAMES CONRAD WINGER, 89, of Santa Maria passed away 12/14/2020 arrangements with Dudley-Hoffman Mortuary, Crematory & Memory Gardens

ERIKA COOPER, 91, of Nipomo passed away 12/15/2020 arrangements with Dudley-Hoffman Mortuary, Crematory & Memory Gardens

STEPHANIE SILL, 59, of Arroyo Grande passed away 12/13/2020 arrangements with Blue Sky Cremation

MARTHA ALVAREZ PONCE, 57, of Santa Maria passed away 12/13/2020 arrangements with Moreno Mortuary

SUZANNE HONEY STOUGHTON, 80, of San Luis Obispo passed away 12/10/2020 arrangements with Reis Family Mortuary

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OBITUARIES

Want to memorialize a loved one?

We're here to help. Our obituary and in memoriam services are affordable, accessible, and handled with personal care.

Share your loved one's story with the local community in your local newspaper.

Contact Jennifer at (805) 347-1968, ext. 121 or obituaries@santamariasun.com

HELP MAKE THE SUN BETTER

SLO THE VIRUS

Get your latest local news and information regarding the COVID-19 health crisis from our award-winning journalists.

We're also here for you to tell the stories from our community. Please feel free to share any local notable news, ideas, stories, events, images, or positive actions deriving from the current nationwide crisis. You can send them to slothevirus@newtimeslo.com.

www.santamariasun.com
By now Santa’s long finished with making and double-checking his naughty and nice list, and though the Big Guy and I go way back, I don’t have access to those confidential papers. So, I’m making my own list. The not-nice list. Complete with North County’s naughtiest naysayers and nincompoops.

This biggest bad boy isn’t confined to Santa Barbara County, but it’s sure wreaked havoc in these parts, and not just physical havoc. That’s right, the COVID-19 pandemic gets the county’s top spot—more like the top 14,817 and counting spots.

While COVID-19 has been the naughtiest of viruses, and it’s brought out some serious nastiness in too many people in too many positions of power, some of those naughty ones have been on Santa’s, um, guano list for a long time. I’m talking about President Donald Trump. I know this is an understatement, but he’s made a mess of our politics on every level, doing nothing to bring the country together in this unprecedented time.

A little closer to home, Gov. Gavin Newsom has been rather naughty this year as well. All you Newsom recalls out there, don’t get too excited. Our governor’s only getting a mention on my not-nice list because the state’s shutdown orders and colored tiers and restaurant-salon-bars-gyms-closed lists have been confusing and contradictory at times.

Locally and across the state, the people who don’t believe the pandemic is real, aren’t wearing masks for the good of their fellow community members, and are hating on the people who do mask up, they’re definitely on the not-nice list.

Elected officials who have used their positions to ridicule and demean health experts urging caution and sharing statistics: They’re extra naughty. County Supervisor Peter Adam, I’m talking about you. You got enough of my energy last week (“Ridiculous ridicule,” Dec. 17), so nuff said.

Rounding out the list is our favorite little Danish drama capital of the Central Coast: Solvang. Well, not everyone and everything in Solvang was naughty, but it had more than its fair share of shenanigans, right up to the end of the year. Just last week, the incoming City Council publicly reversed course over the outgoing elected majority. Solvang was all but revolting against the Southern California region’s shutdown orders from the governor, asserting it would only enforce the previous purple tier restrictions. But the new council said no freakin’ way and asserted that the city was going to stay above board.

That move right there was enough to keep the city from being on the not-nice list wholesale. But both now-recalled City Councilmember Chris Djernaes and the people who recalled him are on the naughty list, with Lammy Johnstone as a special mention. You got what you wanted, recallers, but you continued to threaten the other City Council members to keep the city open in defiance of the state’s orders. If the city didn’t get itself out of the SoCal region, “your legacy will have a black spot on our history,” Johnstone told the council on Dec. 7. Definitely a naughty thing to say.

The new year is around the corner; let’s start it off on a nice foot.

The Canary needs more guano paper. Send sheets to canary@santamariasun.com.
A lot has changed in 2020, but CASA of Santa Barbara County continues to make a difference.

THANK YOU FOR SPONSORING!
SANTA MARIA SUN & HUTTON PARKER FOUNDATION
Jeff knows where he can make the most difference. Since becoming a CASA volunteer, he has fiercely advocated for three children who otherwise might not have had a CASA due to their severe developmental disabilities. These cases can be more demanding, needing a specific skill set beyond that required of a CASA volunteer. Jeff’s expertise has proven valuable on all of his assignments, but it was life saving for 8-year-old Elijah.

Jeff took Elijah out to the park for their weekly visit on a sunny afternoon, something he had done almost every week since accepting Elijah’s case. Fairly quickly, Jeff noticed Elijah wasn’t acting normal. He was tired, disengaged, and quiet – he wasn’t interested in playing their usual games. Jeff knew the child was on various medications, so after their visit, he mentioned to Elijah’s foster mom that he might need to be reevaluated by a doctor. Jeff then immediately alerted the social worker, sharing his observations.

To the social worker’s dismay, she learned that Elijah arrived at his new foster home with his medication in a Tupperware container—no labels, directions, or warnings. That situation could have been fatal for Elijah.

Jeff followed up to ensure Elijah’s caretakers knew the proper dosages of each medication he was taking. He worked with the social workers, teachers, and doctors to make sure the medicines worked the way they were supposed to. His diligent work, expertise, and attention to detail helped keep Elijah safe.

Long-time CASA volunteer Susan accepted a case in which the child behaved like a wild animal—no speech, no manners, and not toilet trained at five years old. Her mom had died, and her father had severe mental health issues. Labeled a problematic child, Destiny moved from foster home to foster home, displaying behavioral problems in each, as well as at school. While advocating for Destiny to get every possible service to help her, Susan never gave up on the idea of this little one finding a family. While studying the details of Destiny’s case, Susan identified a distant relative in Northern California as a possible placement. Destiny moved in with the relative, and Susan even made the drive once a month to visit and ensure this home was the best fit. Susan rallied for this family even when the potential adoptive mother had to go through cancer treatment. Holding onto hope that Destiny would have a forever home, Susan stayed on the case while the adoptive mother recovered her health. Not long after, Destiny was adopted and is thriving. She is excelling in school, has learned to swim, and has a secure family of her own.

Constancy isn’t a word you hear very often. Still, it correctly describes the unique dedication a CASA volunteer has to advocate for the most vulnerable children in Santa Barbara County - children who have experienced the trauma of abuse and neglect. We needed volunteers with this quality more this year than we could have possibly imagined.

These six stories are just a small sample of the 457 children who have had the much-needed constancy of a CASA volunteer this year. These stories focus on six key attributes related to the concept of constancy and are typical in a CASA volunteer: Expertise, Hope, Integrity, Connection, Advocacy, and Tenacity. These stories are only possible because the community supports CASA of Santa Barbara County.
Advocacy

CASA Katy was a committed advocate for Jessica, who came in to care when she tried to commit suicide by setting her house on fire. Jessica lived with her aunt after her father passed away. It was safer than living with her mother, who used Jessica to steal for her. Several volunteers had passed on the challenge of advocating for Jessica, but Katy, with no hesitation, said “Yes, that is my kiddo.” It was a roller coaster journey, considering Jessica’s many struggles with mental health treatments and challenges at school. Katy also built a supportive relationship with the aunt, advocating for support for them as a family. The case was closed when Jessica was legally adopted by her aunt, and the two now share a safe and loving home. Advocacy works.

Lisa is a seasoned CASA volunteer who accepted one of the most severe child abuse and neglect cases. At the hospital, doctors treated a two-year-old boy for multiple fractures and a broken leg and suspected he was a child abuse victim. When child welfare services went out to the home to investigate the family, they found four more children suffering from chronic head lice and learned the children were locked in their rooms with padlocks on the outside of the doors. The children were immediately removed but sadly separated and placed into different foster homes.

Lisa has been fearless and determined. From the moment she accepted the case, Lisa has gone above and beyond, visiting the children together and separately to get to know their unique personalities and individual needs. After two-year-old Logan’s release from the hospital, he was diagnosed with tuberculosis and required a high-level of medical advocacy. She learned that Jackson, who is six, was bullied by his peers when he attended school in soiled clothing. Eight-year-old Mitch has special needs, requires extra care and attention, and needs an Individualized education plan. The girls, Jasmine and Kylie, are having a difficult time getting used to their new home and miss their siblings terribly.

Despite the current circumstances of COVID-19 and the children moving to new foster homes in separate cities, Lisa continues to visit weekly. She helped get the school-aged children adjusted to their online studies, encouraging them to participate in their classes and complete their homework assignments.

It’s too soon to know the outcome of the case, but one thing is for sure, Lisa puts the needs and best interests of her assigned CASA children first. While under her watch, she will advocate for educational, medical, and behavioral health resources.

Tenacity

Eleven-year-old Christian came into the court’s care after disclosing physical abuse by his father. When he first met CASA Kenny, we could tell he just needed someone to talk to and interact with. Christian was very excited to share with us his first experience at Chick-fil-A on an outing with “Mr. Kenny”. He also shared that his CASA had entered him into a contest, and when they came through the CASA Halloween drive-thru (another visit with Mr. Kenny that he was excited about, coming in full costume!), he was eager to share that he had won! Although Mr. Kenny has only been in his life for a short time, we can see the strong connection has positively impacted Christian.

Connection

Kathy has been Lauren’s CASA for five years, standing by her through placements in several foster homes. Last year she stood up for Lauren when a certain foster home mom had given up and proclaimed, “I am just a hotel. She comes, and she goes, but we don’t speak anymore.” With very few options for foster homes, it seemed that Lauren would have no choice but to remain where she was, but Kathy voiced her concern that Lauren deserved more care and attention than she was getting. At the time, Lauren desperately wanted to stay in Lompoc so she could finish high school there, but when Kathy found space in a foster home in Santa Barbara, Lauren agreed to take it. She has been struggling with school for the last few years, and her new challenge is to navigate remote learning. Kathy has again spoken up to ensure that Lauren has a unique plan to meet her specific educational needs. Through so many challenges in Lauren’s life, Kathy has had the integrity to voice her concerns and advocate for Lauren’s best interests.
GET INVOLVED WITH CASA!

Volunteer

You do not have to be a lawyer, social worker, or professional in the field to be a CASA volunteer! We are simply looking for people who care about children and will be able to speak up for their best interest in court. As a volunteer, you will be thoroughly trained and well supported by professional staff to help you through your case.

You must pass a background check, participate in a 30-hour pre-service training course and agree to stay on a case until it is closed (a year and a half on average).

Learn more at SBCASA.ORG/VOLUNTEER

Donate

Give the gift of advocacy!

When you donate to CASA of Santa Barbara County, you are assuring that a victim of child abuse has a dedicated volunteer advocate. Having a CASA volunteer can change the trajectory of a child’s life, leading to more positive outcomes for our community’s most vulnerable children.

Donate now at SBCASA.ORG/DONATE

SBCASA.ORG  -  805-739-9102  -  info@sbcasa.org
**ARTS**

**SANTA YNEZ VALLEY**


**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. Wilding Museum of Art and Nature, 1531 B Mission Dr., Solvang. 805-688-1082, wildingmuseum.org.


** обращаются в Интернете каждого из них**

**KATHY BADRAK: LVAA FEATURED GOURD ARTIST** Kathy Badrak will be showcasing her gourd art in many different ways; from ground bowls and vases to wall hangings and lamps. Giftable items from Badrak will be on display at the show. Saturdays, Sundays, 10 a.m. through Dec. 27 Free. 805-737-1129. lompocart.org. Lompoc Valley Art Association, 119 E. Cypress, Lompoc.

**SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS**

**MIXED MEDIA WORKSHOP FOR AGES 5-6, FOR AGES 7-12, 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.

**GIVE A HOOT** Gallery at Marina Square in Morro Bay presents Feathered Friends, an ongoing fine art and photography show in celebration of January as Bird Month, which is scheduled to debut on Jan. 1 and remain on display through Jan. 29, 2021. Featured artists in this group exhibit include Alisha Cahill, Beth Sargent, Jack McNeal, Greg Siragusa, Ardelia Steinberg, Vash MacK, and Terry Garvin. Call (805) 772-1068 or visit galleryatmarinasquare.com for more info. The gallery is located at 601 Embarcadero, suite 10, Morro Bay.

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**NOTE:** Most venues are canceling or postponing events due to concerns about the spread of COVID-19. Please check with venues to make sure that scheduled events are still, in fact, happening, and most of all, stay safe!
SOLVANG NISSE ADVENTURE

Participants join in a city-wide hunt for the mysterious Solvang Nisse (Christmas elves) which will have hidden themselves throughout downtown Solvang. Elf trackers can visit site where clues will be provided to the various hiding spots which the Nisse frequents. Prizes awarded. Through Jan. 1, 2021. NisseAdventure.com. Downtown Solvang, Mission Dr., Solvang.

SOLVANG TREE DECORATING CONTEST

More than 100 Christmas trees will line Solvang’s lanes as the town’s businesses hold a tree decorating contest, similar to Solvang’s fall season Scarecrow Fest. Solvang’s shops, Danish bakeries, restaurants, wine tasting rooms, wine and beer bars, and hotels will put on the friendly competition. Through Jan. 1, 2021. SolvangJulefest.org. Downtown Solvang, Mission Dr., Solvang.

GOOD MORNING LOMPOC

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 ALMOS

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.

CHRISTMAS IN THE COUNTRY: DRIVE-THRU EVENT

A holiday light display to bring you all the warmth of the holidays. Drive through the gleaming light displays created by local organizations and families. Through Jan. 3, 2021. 7-10 a.m. 805-925-4125. elsrec.com. Elks Unocal Event Center, 4040 Highway 101, 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, Wednesdays, Thursdays; 6:30-8 p.m. 805-598-1509. divine.w.ewly.com. Divine Inspiration, 947 E Orange St., Santa Maria.

STORY TIME LIVE FOR FAMILIES: VIRTUAL EVENT FROM SANTA MARIA PUBLIC LIBRARY

Join us for a live story time for families; bilingual on alternating weeks. Includes songs, finger plays, and a few stories. Tune in for a fun story time the whole family will enjoy. Registration is required for a Zoom link. Wednesdays, 4-4:30 p.m. through Feb. 24. Free. 805-925-0994. engagedpatrons.org. Santa Maria Public Library, 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria.

STUFFED ANIMAL SLEEPOVER PACK: SANTA MARIA PUBLIC LIBRARY

Includes activities to do with your best stuffy as well as a booklist of fun bedtime reads and more. Dec. 24. Free. 805-925-0994. engagedpatrons.org. Santa Maria Public Library, 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria.

TEEN ANIME CLUB PACK: SANTA MARIA PUBLIC LIBRARY

Register to pick up a Teen Anime Pack from the Santa Maria Public Library which will include a variety of virtual workshops offerings. Ongoing. Unwind Studio, 130 N. Broadway, suite B, Santa Maria, 805-748-2539. unwind santamaria.com.

VICTORI T WORKSHOPS OVER ZOOM Visit site or call to learn about various virtual workshop offerings. Ongoing. Unwind Studio, 130 N. Broadway, suite B, Santa Maria.

SOUTH COAST SLO COUNTY

DANA ADobe ORNAMEN T FUNDRAISER A great gift idea and a way to support the DANA Adobe and Cultural Center. Each ornament is custom made by staff members. Visit site for more info. ongoing danaadobe.org. DANA Adobe Cultural Center, 671 S. Oak Glen Ave., Nipomo, 805-929-5679.

HALCYON PSYCHIC WEEKEND Offering a variety of techniques to provide guidance of love, travel, relationships, finance, and more. By appointment only. First Saturday, Sunday of every month. 9 a.m. through 5 p.m. by appointment only. 805-489-1434. Halcyon Store Post Office, 936 S. Halcyon Rd., Arroyo Grande.

POIN T SAN LUIS LIGHTHOUSE VIRTUAL HOLIDAY TOUR Join a live docent via Zoom for an interactive virtual tour of the Point San Luis Lighthouse. As online virtual tours are enhanced with traditional holiday décor and cheer.

Tickets on sale now at My805Tix.com and at our official Box Office at Boo Boo Records in SLO.

Good morning Lompoc

The Santa Maria Philharmonic Society presents Fridays at Four, a monthly virtual concert series on YouTube, which premieres its next video on Jan. 1, from 4 to 5 p.m. Each prerecorded concert in the free program features performances from different members of the orchestra. A new concert is uploaded on the first Friday of each month. Call (805) 925-0412 or visit santamariaphilharmonic.org to find out more.

CULTURE & LIFESTYLE continued page 17
CULTURE & LIFESTYLE | From page 16

decorations for the month of December. Wednesdays, Saturdays, 2 p.m. 310, pointsanluisobisphouse.org/. Point San Luis Lighthouse, 1 Lighthouse Rd. Avila Beach.

CENTRAL COAST CONJURERS (SLO COUNTY MAGIC CLUB) Monthly meeting of magicians of all levels. Please call or email for more info. Meet like-minded folks with an interest in magic, from close-up to stage performances. Last Wednesday of every month, 6:30-9 p.m. Free, 805-440-0116. HOP, 212 Madonna Rd., San Luis Obispo.

DOWNTOWN HOLIDAY STROLL Walk through Downtown San Luis Obispo to see businesses, windows and parklets lit up for the Holidays. Visit site to get your Merry map and itinerary to see bright and cheery decorated windows and other surprises and visual delights. Through Jan. 1, 2021 SLOholidays.com. Mission Plaza, 751 Palm St., San Luis Obispo.

GIVE JOY HOLIDAY FAMILY Campaign For the Family’s benefit the Give Joy Campaign matches families’ needs with our community’s heart to give. Help raise awareness, funds, and resources to make sure our families have everything they need for this holiday season and beyond. Participate and donate today. Through Dec. 31. fcn.org/givejoy. Online. See website, San Luis Obispo.

LIGHT UP DOWNTOWN SLO 2020 Visit Mission Plaza, which will include Santa’s House and the traditional Holiday Tree, which will be surrounded by creative and parklets lit up for the Holidays. Deadline to enter address to map is Nov. 19. Total: $49 plus $12 book. 714-273-9014. cccsl.org/ guidance. Tuesdays, 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. through Jan. 1, 2021. sloholidays.com.

MEMORIAL CONDITIONING We use primarily our own body weight in this interval training class to run through exercises and drills to raise the heart rate, condition our muscles, and stay flexible. This advanced class also incorporates hand weights and sand bags, if you have them. Mondays Thursdays, 8:15-9:15 a.m.

NORTH SLO COUNTY

PASO, HERE WE COME Redwings Horse Sanctuary is making their permanent home on Union Road in paso Robles. Donate to its $1 million fundraising campaign. Redwings offers public tours, volunteering with the horses, and a foster to adopt program. through Dec. 31.$45. slomakerspace.com/. SLOMakerSpace, 81 Higuera, San Luis Obispo.

TRAiL OF LiGHTS A new holiday lighting trail map offering city residents the chance to showcase their holiday lights. Deadline to enter address to map is Nov. 30. Maps available through Christmas. Christmas, Dec. 25. visitascadero.com/holidaylights. Sunken Gardens, 6505 El Camino Real, Ascadero.

SEASON OF RANGE Local artist and designer Jordan Quintero presents Coast Ranges, an exhibition of recent works, at Big Sky Cafe in San Luis Obispo through Dec. 31. This exhibit features a collection of California-based landscapes Quintero painted with oil on wooden panels. Admission is free. Call (805) 545-5401 or visit jordanquintero.com for more info. The cafe is located at 1121 Broad St., San Luis Obispo.

SOUTH COAST SLO COUNTY

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

San Luis Obispo

MAKE YOUR OWN HOLIDAY CERAMIC CUP AT HOME Offering a coco cup home kit. You will be provided with supplies needed, instructional video; we will glaze and fire your work for you. No experience needed; designed with the beginner maker in mind. Through Jan. 1, 2021 $45. slomakerspace.com/. SLOMakerSpace, 81 Higuera, suite 160, San Luis Obispo, 805-225-4783.

SOUTHERN SLO COUNTY

SAN LUIS OBISPO

SAN MARI VALL/LOS ALAMOS

SANTA MARIA PHILHARMONIC: FIRST FRIDAYS AT FOUR Featuring musicians from the Santa Maria Philharmonic, this monthly series of musical adventures are recorded in local settings and offered free to the public. First Friday of every month Free. philharmonic.org. Soundcloud (Santa Maria Philharmonic), Online, Santa Maria.

SOUTH COAST SLO COUNTY

CHRISTMAS IN THE COUNTRY: JAMES WAY BAND (VIRTUAL) All donations are shared equally between James Way Band, Santa Maria Elks, and the Clark Center. Concert will be available online through Jan. 4. Dec. 26. 6:7 p.m. Donations accepted. bigbigo.com, Clark Center for the Performing Arts, 487 Fair Oaks Ave., Arroyo Grande.

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SAN LUIS OBISPO

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SOUTH COAST SLO COUNTY

Santa Maria’s Lights, Sights, and Holiday Nights Decorating Contest announces winners

The city of Santa Maria Recreation and Parks Department has announced the winners of its annual Lights, Sights, and Holiday Nights Decorating Contest. A map of the city that highlights the winning residences is now available online for the community to view or print at cityofsantamaria.org.

Six additional residences were recognized by the department in its Holiday Hall of Fame (awarded to previous winners who have won three or more times in past contests): Michael Clayton (400 E. Orange), the Melina family (555 N. Lucas), the Bernard family (228 S. Linda), the Hiedel family (1010 Cortez), the Cardona family (2400 Lassen), and the Dickerson family (104 Palm Court).

Pioneer Valley High School students raise donations for families in need during special drive-through event

Student leaders at Pioneer Valley High School (PVHS) in Santa Maria organized Holiday Lights, a special drive-through event held directly for more info on the competition at (805) 925-0951, Ext. 2250.

Winter wonderland

Winter Salon exhibit, both in person and online

BY CALEB WISEBLOOD

With paintings hung from floor to ceiling, Gallery Los Olivos has enough space to showcase more than 50 different local artists during Winter Salon, the gallery’s annual salon-style exhibition. And for those unable to make it to the gallery in person this year, the exhibit is available online to view for free.

While the show’s paintings vary in size and subject matter, many of its featured landscapes share a running theme of finding peace through nature.

“I think we need some ‘calm right now, after this crazy year, and I hope the viewer finds some peace and calm while viewing,” pastel artist Kris Buck said, discussing her contribution to Winter Salon, All is Calm, which depicts Windy Cove in Morro Bay.

“The waters were so calm, the reflections were wonderful, and the boats looked so peaceful,” Buck recalled of the morning the piece was based on. “I asked the artist I was painting with why they called it ‘Windy Cove,’ when it was so peaceful. She laughed and said to wait for the winds to come up around noon, and they did!”

Winter Salon also showcases Terri Taber’s pastel piece, Golden Hour, which she painted from a reference photo she took while on one of her usual walks near the San Marcos Foothills Preserve.

“I have been walking this area for well over 10 years. This land has shown me peace and serenity and solidifies my love for the landscape,” Taber said. “At certain times of the year, and during that hour before sunset, the grasses can become this warm, burnt orange color. It becomes magical. It is hard to capture that in a painting, but I try.”

Featured artist Linda Mutti also chose to submit one of her pastel landscapes, titled Gaviota Glory, into Winter Salon. Mutti was inspired to paint this piece after admiring the spot from afar for so long, always noticing it from the 101 freeway before finally pulling over one day to capture it.

“All is Calm” by artist Kris Buck. (Photos courtesy of Gallery Los Olivos)

“Every time I passed by, I would think, ‘I’ve got to paint this,” Mutti said. “I have always loved the trees and trestle.”

Other featured pastel artists include Deborah Breedon, who is showcasing two of her paintings in this year’s group show.

“One of them was painted during the first few months of the pandemic,” Breedon said of her entries. “Nature’s promise of spring bloom arrived and I went for it. It was pure joy to be plein air painting again after weeks of being sequestered.”

For Breedon, seeing the blooming flowers along the Jalama Beach hillsides was a “welcome inspiration” urging her to paint one of her two featured pieces, Jalama Coreopsis, she said.

“A painter friend took me out to see the coreopsis as I’d never seen it before,” Breedon said. “Not only is the drive to the beach gorgeous, but Jalama Beach itself also has so much to encourage you to paint. Plus you can’t ignore the burgers.”

Oil painter Neil Andersson submitted two of his landscapes into Winter Salon, both of which depict Santa Barbara County parks. Based on a scenic pathway in Lompoc’s Beatty Park, Andersson completed one of his featured pieces, Eucalyptus Tree and Pathway, in his studio rather than on location.

“I think this painting creates the mood of both serenity and curiosity that one can experience in nature,” Andersson said. “I like the way the focus goes back and forth between the tree in the foreground and the line of trees in the middle ground.”

Stepping out of the studio, Andersson painted Sundial Hill plein air, near a peaceful hillside in Buellton’s River View Park. He described the piece as nontraditional and nonscenic, citing its simplicity.

“Sometimes going on location to paint, you can spend hours walking around trying to find the ‘perfect view.’ This painting tries to show that a painting can be about the simplest and most mundane objects,” Andersson said. “Beauty is one of the simplest things.”

One silver lining Andersson has embraced during the ongoing pandemic is taking more time to paint, especially outdoors, he said.

“I used to paint outdoors from nature a lot, but a few years ago, I started doing larger studio paintings,” Andersson said. “Painting from nature again has been really good for the never-ending goal of just being a better painter.”

Art gallery testimonials

“Not only is the drive to the beach gorgeous, but Jalama Beach itself also has so much to encourage you to paint,” said artist Deborah Breedon of her entry titled “Jalama Coreopsis”.

“Beauty is one of the simplest things,” said oil painter Neil Andersson of his piece titled “Sundial Hill”.

“Sometimes going on location to paint, you can spend hours walking around trying to find the ‘perfect view,’” said Neil Andersson of his piece titled “Eucalyptus Tree and Pathway.”

Student leaders at Pioneer Valley High School (PVHS) in Santa Maria organized Holiday Lights, a special drive-through event held directly for more info on the competition at (805) 925-0951, Ext. 2250.

Arts Briefs is compiled by Arts Editor Caleb Wiseblood. Send recommendations to cwiseblood@santamariasun.com.
**Film**

**Becoming Santa**

Editor's note: Staff Writer Karen Garcia and Calendar Editor Caleb Wiseblood took over Sun Screen while the Starkeys enjoy their holidays off.

There's always been an age-old question of how St. Nicholas becomes Santa Claus and delivers toys to boys and girls around the world in one night. Not to mention how he can eat so many cookies and wash them down with so much milk—does he take bathroom breaks? Director John Pasquin (Home Improvement, Miss Congeniality 2: Armed & Fabulous, Roseanne, Last Man Standing) takes a whack at answering those questions by telling the unconventional story of how Scott Calvin (Tim Allen) becomes Santa Claus and restores adults' faith in the magic of Christmas in this 1994 classic. (115 mins.)

**Caleb:** He sees you when you're sleeping. He knows when you awake. On paper, the premise of Disney's *The Santa Clause* sounds like a draconian nightmare. One fateful Christmas Eve, divorced father Scott Calvin (Tim Allen, Jungle 2 Jungle, Toy Story, Galaxy Quest) is forced to serve a lifetime of penance after an old man in Santa's red suit to deliver toys to sleeping children. The Night Before Christmas, Calvin encourages his father to climb a ladder that magically appears near the deceased St. Nicholas, and inspect the roof for possible reindeer. Calvin, being the logical adult he is, doubts such an animal even exists, until he follows Charlie up the ladder. And so begins the adventure of literally ferrying in Santa's red suit to deliver toys to sleeping children. You'll definitely get a kick of Calvin earning the ability to squeeze down any-size fireplace, as realized by director Ron Howard (How the Grinch Stole Christmas). Calvin even loses custody of his child by talking about the major players. The supporting cast includes Bernard the non-nonsense “Head Elf” (David Krumholtz), who helps Calvin get situated into his new role as Father Christmas, and Charlie's mother and stepfather (Wendy Crewson, Judge Reinhold, respectively), who share a very touching monologue about the moments they stopped believing in Santa Claus as children. My only quibble with this classic is something that confused me as a kid. I never understood that confused me as a kid. I never understood that confused me as a kid. I never understood that confused me as a kid. I never understood that confused me as a kid. I never understood that confused me as a kid. I never understood that confused me as a kid. I never understood that confused me as a kid. I never understood that confused me as a kid. I never understood that confused me as a kid. I never understood that confused me as a kid. I never understood that confused me as a kid. I never understood that confused me as a kid. I never understood that confused me as a kid. I never understood that confused me as a kid. I never understood that confused me as a kid. I never understood that confused me as a kid. I never understood that confused me as a kid. I never understood that confused me as a kid. I never understood that confused me as a kid. I never understood that confused me as a kid. I never understood that confused me as a kid. I never understood that confused me as a kid. I never understood that confused me as a kid. I never understood that confused me as a kid. I never understood that confused me as a kid. I never understood that confused me as a kid. I never understood that confused me as a kid. I never understood that confused me as a kid. I never understood that confused me as a kid. I never understood that confused me as a kid. I never understood that confused me as a kid. I never understood that confused me as a kid. I never understood.

Karen: Something that always puzzled me about the film was what would happen to Calvin if he fell off a roof. Would that person go through the trials of being a jolly man in a red suit? It's not an easy feat, as we learn through this film, but it has its benefits, such as getting hot chocolate that’s been perfected by an elf named Judy (Paige Tamada) who worked on her recipe for 500 years. Yes, you read that correctly—that little lady is more than 500 years old. The magic of Christmas is, so maybe it also equals the fountain of youth?! Either way, whatever age you are and whether you decide to watch *The Santa Clause* for the millionth time or for the first time, you’ll definitely feel the childlike magic of the holidays.

Sun Screen was written by Staff Writer Karen Garcia and Arts Editor Caleb Wiseblood this week. Comment at gstarkey@newtimessxs.com.
Let them eat cake

Lifelong Santa Maria resident Terri Wahlberg is baking up a storm from home through Wahlly’s Sweet Treats

BY CALEB WISEBLOOD

Whether it whets your appetite or not, there’s something objectively pure and life-fulfilling about seeing a tiny taco on top of a cupcake. It’s like crossing something off a bucket list you never thought was there to begin with.

But this particular taco was made of fondant icing, like many of home baker Terri Wahlberg’s themed creations, as part of a unique dessert selection she designed for a taco night dinner gathering. From Christmas trees to mermaid tails, Wahlberg jumps at the chance to customize cookies, cake pops, brownies, and other sweet treats based on whatever framework a client has in mind.

“Let’s get creative,” Wahlberg said, referring to one of her recent custom orders, a multilayered birthday cake topped off with an intricate, edible figure of everyone’s favorite animated flapper.

A full-time operations manager at Santa Maria Tire by day, Wahlberg’s part-time baking venture started on Instagram, with Wahlly’s Sweet Treats (@wahlyssweettreats), as a way to share her homemade goodies with friends and loved ones, but her endeavor quickly evolved into getting orders from strangers through direct messaging.

The last couple of years, it just kind of blew up,” said Wahlberg, a self-described night owl when it comes to baking until 9 p.m., “I usually start baking after dark,” Wahlberg told the Sun, as she usually only has time for dessert crafting in the evenings after each work day.

“Baking is fun, it’s a way to make your own comfort food at home,” Wahlberg explained. “It’s fun and it’s relaxing.”

And it certainly has been for Wahlberg. As a child, Wahlberg said it wasn’t until adulthood that she became interested in baking, almost more out of necessity than anything else, she explained.

“I baked because I was a child, Wahlberg said. “But I thought it was really cool watching these home bakers or professional bakers come in and on the fly just challenge themselves with oddball ingredients,” Wahlberg said of the show.

Wahlberg even found Pinterest to be a consistent source of inspiration when it comes to discovering unique dessert designs.

“In all honesty, I am not artistic. I cannot draw to save my life,” said Wahlberg, who usually works from a reference image but likes to add her own twists and turns. “It’s just sometimes and try to emulate it or tweak it to what I think it should be.”

When asked if she enjoyed baking as a child, Wahlberg said it wasn’t until adulthood that she became interested, almost more out of necessity than anything else, she explained.


Prior to Wahlberg’s Cupcake Wars obsession, she had already dipped her toes into dessert baking in order to have something homemade to offer at dinner parties, potlucks, and barbecues. The biggest irony is Wahlberg doesn’t have much of a comfort zone. But it’s allowing me to get better at it.”

While stay-at-home orders and COVID-19 closures have freed up time for Wahlberg to bake more often than usual, she also freed up space, she explained. After the first wave of the pandemic precautions began in March, Wahlberg decided it might be a good time to renovate a specific room in the house.

“Back in the day, scrapbooking was really popular, and I was into that heavily,” Wahlberg said, explaining her old craft room, which recently got a makeover. “But I thought to myself, my own stuff,” Wahlberg said. “My husband is the one who has benefited from all of this because he’s the taste tester.”

Wahlberg even named her Wahlly’s Sweet Treats Instagram handle after her husband’s childhood nickname, and as a nod to their last name of course.

“Some people are, ‘Why did you pick that?’ And I’m like, ‘Do you know what my last name is?’” Wahlberg laughed. “It’s been my husband’s nickname. As a kid, they always called him Wally.”

Wahlberg was born and raised in Santa Maria, where she continues to live with her husband. And although they’re not thinking of leaving the island, lots of storage,” she listed. “So I just bought some storage shelves and really organized the room for baking supplies.

“I didn’t really have enough space for everything before that, so things were sitting in bags everywhere,” Wahlberg added. “It’s kind of a challenge having these four different things going on in my small little kitchen at the same time. But I love getting creative.”

Arts Editor Caleb Wiseblood is craving a homemade cupcake. Send comments to cwiseblood@santamariasun.com.
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The open-air deck leads to the backyard and has a sliding glass door to the garage. This space could also be used as a family room. Master bathroom has newer laminate flooring and a huge closet. The master bathroom features a separate shower, garden tub, and double sinks. New furnace and A/C units. Low maintenance backyard with covered patio and a beautiful front lawn.

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