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Sun

AT THE MOVIES



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JANUARY 7 - JANUARY 14, 2020 VOL. 21 NO. 45

Both the Santa Barbara and SLO county sheriff's offices say they experienced an increase in reported crimes during the COVID-19 pandemic. While the reasons behind crime increases can be complicated, law enforcement attributes 2020's rise in part to a law designed to reduce jail and prison populations during the pandemic. Staff Writer Kasey Bubnash has the details [7].

This week, the Old Town Market is back open but its future is still uncertain [4]; take a journey with silk painter Belinda Hart [15]; and cnagy wines moves all its operations under one roof [17].

Camillia Lanham
editor



BALANCING ACT: Law enforcement agencies on the Central Coast say preventing COVID-19 from spreading in jails and prisons is causing an increase in crime.

Cover file image by Steve E. Miller > Cover design by Alex Zuniga

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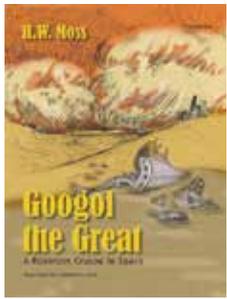
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This week's online poll 1/7-1/14

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A Robinson Crusoe of space
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Political Watch

• Both legislative bodies of Congress voted to override President Donald Trump's veto of the National Defense Authorization Act Conference Report, the annual defense bill for which U.S. Rep. Salud Carbajal (D-Santa Barbara) served as a conferee and helped draft the final product. According to a Jan. 1 statement from Carbajal's office, this marks the first time that the House and Senate have come together to override a Trump veto during his presidency. "The president's reckless veto put our national security at risk all to serve his own self-interest," Carbajal said in the statement. "With this overwhelming and bipartisan override vote in both chambers of Congress, we have once again proven that our military and our national security are more important than politics." Carbajal advocated for the Small Passenger Safety Act to be part of the bill, which will implement "long overdue safety reforms to small passenger vessels" in the wake of the *Conception* boat fire tragedy in 2019. Carbajal also advocated for the Offshore Wind Working Group, with the defense bill directing the secretary of the Navy to work with the group to identify a region for offshore wind development. The defense bill also authorizes funding for military-university partnerships for local schools like UC Santa Barbara and Cal Poly. Also included in the bill is a funding increase for space launch capabilities, including at Vandenberg Air Force Base.

• Gov. Gavin Newsom released the Safe Schools for All plan on Dec. 30, which his office described as "California's framework to support schools to continue operating safely in-person and to expand the number of schools safely resuming in-person instruction." The plan includes an "early action package" so that schools have the resources they need to safely reopen. "In-person is the best setting to meet not only the learning needs but the mental health and social-emotional needs of our kids," Newsom said in a statement. The plan is a phased strategy that will start with bringing back the youngest and most vulnerable children first, followed by other grade levels through the spring. "This phased-in return recognizes that younger children are at a lower risk of contracting and transmitting COVID-19," the statement said. "At the same time, distance learning will remain an option for parents and students who choose it and for those whose health status does not allow them to return to school in the near term."

• Rep. Salud Carbajal (D-Santa Barbara) joined 21 fellow California House members in sending a letter to the Trump administration to express "their strong opposition to any expansion of oil and gas drilling off the coast of California," according to a Dec. 29 statement. In the letter written to Department of the Interior Secretary David Bernhardt, the members wrote, "The inevitable onshore and offshore risks associated with offshore drilling impact public health, the environment, and our climate. For these reasons, every single coastal governor along the Atlantic and Pacific coasts, Republican and Democrat alike, has stood in opposition to offshore drilling. In coastal communities, where livelihoods are built around fishing, tourism, and recreation, it is critically important to guard against oil leaks or spills that could harm these ocean-dependent economies and fragile marine ecosystems." According to the statement, "while it is unlikely that the Trump administration would be able to formalize any new leases before the Biden administration takes office on Jan. 20," the members demanded that Secretary Bernhardt "put an immediate halt during the Trump administration's remaining time in office to any consideration of new oil and gas leasing off California." ○



REOPENED: The Old Town Market reopened as a grocery store under new ownership at the end of 2020, but its future is still uncertain.

Future of Old Town Market still unclear

Orcutt's Old Town Market is up and running as a local neighborhood grocery store again after a roller-coaster of a year, but the future of the store remains uncertain.

In May 2020, longtime market owners Mark and Wendy Steller announced in a Facebook post that they had suddenly received an eviction notice shortly after their building at 405 E. Clark Ave. was sold to the Natural Healing Center, the retail side of a cannabis cultivation company based on the Central Coast.

The Natural Healing Center hopes to use the space—one of the few locations in Old Town Orcutt that meets the county's zoning requirements for cannabis retail permits—as a café and marijuana dispensary and is in the middle of an extensive application process to do so.

News of the market's closure was met with pushback and grief from a number of community members who say the store is a staple of Old Town Orcutt, and one that offers necessary services as the only grocery store in the Old Town area.

"Our store's impending closure will be a loss not just for us, but for the community," the Stellers wrote in their May 2020 Facebook post. "The history of this market goes far beyond the 16 years in which we have had the honor of running it. It was the original Scolari's Market and has been serving this town as a grocery store since 1948. We know some will be concerned that Old Town Orcutt no longer has its own grocery store; please know that we did everything we could to save it but ultimately were unsuccessful."

Despite hundreds of comments of support online and outrage voiced at ensuing county meetings, the Stellers continued with liquidation sales through the summer and fall of 2020 and ultimately closed the doors of the market on Dec. 3, 2020.

But then on Dec. 23, the Old Town Market suddenly reopened under new ownership, and not as a Natural Healing Center dispensary, but as a local grocery store once more.

According to the Santa Barbara County Assessor Division, the Old Town Orcutt space was sold again on Dec. 11, 2020, to F and A Holding LLC, which lists Nabil Fidel as the main contact. Fidel and his brothers own several restaurants and markets on the Central Coast, according to the *Santa Maria Times*, including 7 Stars Food Store and Sr. Taco in Santa Maria, Hapy Bistro in Pismo Beach, and the Santa Ynez Café in Solvang.

The Fidel family couldn't be reached for comment before the *Sun's* press time.

Joe Armendariz, a spokesperson for the Natural Healing Center, confirmed that the company sold the Old Town Market space in December 2020 so it could continue to benefit the community as a grocery store while the Natural Healing Center continues its retail cannabis application process, which likely won't be completed until at least March of this year.

According to Santa Barbara County's existing cannabis ordinance, one dispensary is allowed within each of the county's six unincorporated community plan areas, including Orcutt and Los Alamos. The county's process to determine which companies are awarded these lucrative permits includes three phases and is supposed to heavily weigh the company's background and its potential fit within a community.

The Natural Healing Center is one of 23 applicants throughout the county that made it through the first phase of the county's application process, and is one of six applicants fighting for a single permit in the Orcutt area. Those applicants are now advancing to the second phase, which includes a county review of their business operations proposals and licensing teams.

Armendariz said that while he believes Natural Healing Center dispensaries are nothing short of

the best, the competition in Orcutt is stiff.

If Natural Healing Center is unsuccessful in obtaining its cannabis retail permit, he said the Old Town Market will remain in the hands of its new owners, who he said plan to continue offering grocery services. If Natural Healing Center is awarded the permit, Armendariz said the company plans to reacquire the market space and turn it into a dispensary and local café as proposed.

This somewhat complicated negotiation, he said, allowed the Old Town Market's previous owners, the Stellers, to profit from selling their liquor license to the store's new owners. And even if the new owners aren't able to keep the Old Town Market space in the future, Armendariz said they'll be able to use their highly coveted liquor license to operate elsewhere.

"This whole process from the beginning to now has really been an effort on our part to create a win-win-win," Armendariz told the *Sun*.

—Kasey Bubnash

Fatal shooting in Guadalupe is still under investigation

An investigation into a Dec. 22 shooting in Guadalupe is ongoing after the city's police department handed the case over to the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office. The shooting resulted in one death and one injury.

According to the county Sheriff's Office, the incident occurred just after 10 p.m. in the 1000 block of Escalante Street and the victim was 19-year-old Jesus Felipe Garcia Jr. of Guadalupe. So far, the Sheriff's Office hasn't released the identity of the injured person.

"The circumstances, including determining if this is gang-related, are part of the ongoing investigation," Sheriff's Office officials said in a

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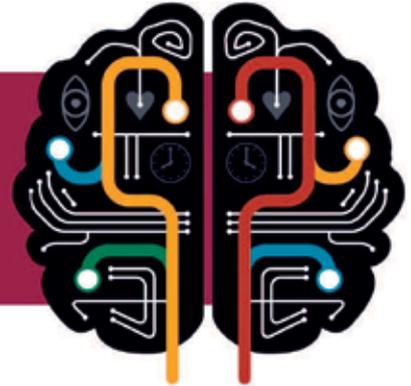
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NEWS from page 4

Dec. 30 statement said. “No arrests have been made and detectives are conducting thorough follow-up that includes forensic examination results.”

Sheriff’s Office Lt. Erik Raney told the *Sun* that the investigation is still ongoing, and that the county took on the case “as a matter of mutual aid at [the city’s] request.”

Guadalupe police Sgt. Frank Medina said the decision to pass the case along to the county was a matter of resources.

“It all depends on the case. Ultimately the one that makes that decision [to pass the case along] is the chief. In some of the more complex investigations they have more resources than Guadalupe,” Medina said. “At that point in time, we didn’t have resources available, so to speed up the investigation, the chief made the decision to turn it over to the sheriff’s. They had detectives that were available at that point in time to quickly start investigating the crime.”

Medina said that although it’s still unclear whether the Dec. 22 shooting was gang-related, in general, Guadalupe’s crime “went a little bit up” in 2020 and gang-related activity ticked up slightly as well. He said the city hasn’t pinpointed an exact cause of any increases in crime. The Guadalupe Police Department was unable to provide the *Sun* with 2020 crime data before press time.

—Malea Martin

Large gatherings can’t be stopped in Solvang but safety is encouraged

Despite the pandemic, Solvang—similar to many other communities—has had several unpermitted, politically oriented gatherings in 2020. Two such gatherings occurred over the Dec. 19 weekend at Solvang Park, prompting many residents to alert the city about their concerns over the crowds.

City Manager Xenia Bradford told the *Sun* that she learned one was an annual nativity show and the second was a rally in support of President Donald Trump. The city didn’t permit either event, she said.

In a citywide statement, Solvang said it’s currently following all state and Santa Barbara County guidelines with regards to permitting events, which means at this time that Solvang is not permitting events of any kind. The statement continued by saying that the city can’t pick and choose the groups that can and can’t exercise “their First Amendment rights.”

However, the city did turn off the park’s electricity during Sunday’s rally, saying it had done so in the past during similar gatherings. Over the last few months, Bradford said, there have



SAFE EXPRESSION: Two large gatherings in Solvang sparked concern among residents and pushed the city to respond saying it cannot stop these gatherings.

been multiple large gatherings in the community, beginning with a Black Lives Matter protest.

“We work with the [Santa Barbara County Sheriff’s Office] to rely on public safety aspects, and one of the considerations that they are being mindful of is not igniting more hostility by trying to get these groups dispersed,” Bradford said. “So their position is to be vigilant, know what’s going on, and standing by to ensure that everything is peaceful.”

During these unpermitted events, the city works with its service department to ensure public safety by posting additional signs with safety guidelines about mask-wearing and social distancing.

“We have limited ability to control when people come out with freedom of speech and expressing their position,” she said

Unless an event like a protest is going to close or block the public right of way, Sheriff’s Office Lt. Erik Raney said the agency doesn’t get involved other than to consult with the event planners on the location and whether there will be movement.

“We encourage them to consult with us because there are greater public safety concerns in terms of the number of people and whether or not there is going to be an infringement on the public right of way. We like to be aware of what’s going on in our jurisdiction so that we can plan appropriately if there’s going to be counter protestors and things like that,” Raney said.

The Sheriff’s Office, he said, has taken a stance from the beginning that it’s going to focus on education and voluntary compliance with public health orders and only practice enforcement if a violation is egregious. Raney said that many residents have approached the Sheriff’s Office with concerns about balancing constitutional rights, personal freedoms, and how they feel state and county public health orders are restricting them.

“Our response is always the same, and that is we are doing our best to balance people’s constitutional rights with the greater public health,” Raney said. “All of our actions are guided by what’s in the greater public health’s interest and always take into account people’s constitutional rights but, you know, it’s a global pandemic and we’re doing our part to try to educate the public and keep everybody well informed and as safe as we possibly can.”

Moving forward, Bradford said people who are going to gather for a protest or something similar must maintain a 6-foot distance and wear a mask—which is required in public places.

—Karen Garcia

Santa Maria pool closed until Jan. 14, no additional cases reported

The Paul Nelson Aquatic Center will be closed until at least Jan. 14 to those who use its facilities, which averages around 100 people daily.

According to Santa Maria Recreation Services Manager Dennis Smitherman, 20 percent of the pool’s lifeguard staff either tested positive for coronavirus or were exposed to someone who did. Those staff members are now in the middle of a 14-day quarantine, with no additional cases identified as of Jan. 4.

Smitherman said none of the exposures are believed to have occurred in the workplace.

“[The staff members] were exposed through the personal choices that they’re making and not here at the Paul Nelson Aquatic Center,” Smitherman said. “We have a really strict set of standards as far as COVID goes. If there’s any sign or symptoms of illness, you are not allowed to come to work.”

City Public Information Officer Mark van de Kamp said Recreation and Parks will “work in

consultation with the city manager’s office and see where things stand” come Jan. 14.

“If need be, then further closure is possible, or we may reopen,” he said.

The pool has around 30 staffed lifeguards. With 20 percent of them in quarantine and unable to work, staffing challenges contributed to the pool’s closure.

“We’re really watching those staff and making sure that they’re staying healthy. We don’t want them to bring it into work and infect our patrons or each other,” Smitherman said. “We do have a limited number of staff that can work all the shifts.”

It’s especially important that lifeguards are illness-free, given the nature of their job, Smitherman added.

“Thankfully it’s very rare, but in the case that a lifeguard does need to perform their duties, you can’t do that with social distancing. Whether it be using a back board to help [a patron] out of a pool, mouth to mouth, even just a basic rescue—that requires close contact,” Smitherman said. “It’s just safer that the lifeguards take this break and make sure everyone is healthy and well before we can reopen.”

Smitherman said the Recreation and Parks Department will continue to offer other avenues for the community to stay active and engaged at a distance.

“This year for 2021, we’re going to continue providing our virtual content, everything from exercise to music classes and programs,” Smitherman said. “We’re working with partners to provide the programs that we don’t have the expertise for in-house. We’ll be starting an online coding program here in the next couple weeks. And then we’re still going to focus on providing activities that allow for small groups, that allow for social distancing—making sure that we’re following all the CDC guidelines.”

Van de Kamp said Recreation and Parks isn’t the only city department that had to make some adaptations in the New Year.

“In the bigger picture, we are looking at revising all of the departments’ safety plans within the city,” van de Kamp said. “That’s because of additional rules from the state of California that everyone has to follow, so we’re going to be going back and looking at all of our safety plans. Those are done for the safety of the public and the employees.”

Assembly Bill 685, which took effect on Jan. 1, requires additional employer notifications for worksite exposure and outbreaks, and also “enhances CalOSHA’s [California Division of Occupational Safety and Health] enforcement of infection prevention requirements,” van de Kamp said.

“So we’re going to take another look and see where we’re at with preventative measures, training, and supplies,” he said. ○

—Malea Martin

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Public health vs. safety

The Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office blames an increase in crime on a rule aimed at decreasing jail populations amid COVID-19

BY KASEY BUBNASH

By the end of 2020, reports of the most serious violent crimes were trending 10 percent higher than the immediately preceding three-year average in areas of Santa Barbara County served by the Sheriff's Office. Reports of arson were trending 41 percent higher, reported robberies were up by 30 percent, and reports of forcible rape were up by 14 percent, according to Santa Barbara County Sheriff Bill Brown, who presented highlights of the county's latest crime statistics at a Board of Supervisors meeting on Dec. 1.

"We're also seeing a 23 percent increase in property crimes," Brown said at the meeting, "and rural crimes especially have spiked 52 percent over the three-year average, again since the pandemic."

And that, he said, is just in areas that fall within the jurisdiction of the Sheriff's Office, including all unincorporated areas of the county and the cities of Solvang, Buellton, Carpinteria, and Goleta. The rates only continue to rise when you throw in the cities of Santa Maria and Santa Barbara, he said.

Reported crimes were up in 2020 in both Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties, and the same is true for homicides throughout the U.S., according to a preliminary FBI report. While many officials say it's too early to tell what might be causing the spike and the causes are likely multifaceted, the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office is largely pointing to emergency orders aimed at decreasing jail and prison populations amid the pandemic, an effort to prevent the mass COVID-19 outbreaks among both inmates and staff that have been common throughout the nation since March.

In April, the Judicial Council of California adopted a statewide emergency bail schedule that set bail at \$0 for most people accused—but not yet tried—of misdemeanors and low-level felonies. Though the council rescinded its order in the summer as the state started to reopen, courts in a number of counties, including both Santa Barbara and SLO, extended their "zero bail" schedules locally.

"So people who would have normally been held on bail are being released back into the public," Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office Public Information Officer Raquel Zick said.

Between Santa Barbara and SLO counties, hundreds of inmates awaiting trial in jails

were released because of zero bail orders, and hundreds more arrestees have been released after initial bookings.

Zick said a "significant number" of those who have been arrested for crimes, booked, and then released on zero bail have been caught reoffending, though Zick couldn't say exactly how many.

That's an issue the SLO County Sheriff's Office has noticed as well, according to Public Information Officer Tony Cipolla. Since the zero bail schedule went into effect in April, roughly 450 people who would normally await trial in jail or have to pay bail were released free of charge.

From April to August last year, the SLO County Sheriff's Office recorded 59 instances in which people released on zero bail reoffended. Now, because of some work between the Sheriff's Office, local courts, SLO County District Attorney Dan Dow, and other law enforcement agencies in the area, Cipolla said a person who reoffends while out on zero bail is no longer eligible for future zero bail in SLO County.

"Since then," Cipolla wrote in an email to the *Sun*, "the numbers [of reoffenders] have dropped significantly."

From January to October of 2020, reports of serious crimes—homicides, rapes, robberies, domestic violence, burglary, aggravated assaults, larceny and motor vehicle theft, and arson—jumped by about 20 percent for the SLO County Sheriff's Office compared to the same time last year. While there were about 1,140 of those crimes reported to the Sheriff's Office from January to October in 2019, about 1,370 were reported in 2020.

Still, Cipolla said crime statistics always vary from year to year and it can be difficult to say why.

"It's reasonable to assume because of the general unease, tension, and anxiety associated with a lockdown, that there would be an increase in crimes," he wrote to the *Sun*, "as well as the fact that county jails all over the state have early released thousands of inmates back into our communities."

But Lea Villegas, chief trial deputy with the Santa Barbara County Offices of the Public Defender, said she has yet to see any hard data supporting Sheriff Brown's assertion that crime has increased dramatically during the

pandemic, let alone connecting such an increase to zero bail. The Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office denied the *Sun*'s Public Records Act request to see the county's crime statistics from 2020, saying that data for the full year won't be compiled and available to the public until February 2021. Sheriff Brown wasn't available to expand on the data he presented on Dec. 1 before the *Sun*'s press time.

"While we don't know for certain whether there has been a surge in crime in this county, we do know for certain that there has been a surge in COVID-19 transmissions, hospitalizations, and deaths," Villegas wrote in an email to the *Sun*. "We cannot forget that we are still in the middle of a pandemic. Public health is public safety. Right now, the most important data point that should be driving the public safety discussion is not how many cars have been burglarized, but rather how many lives have been saved."

Kim Shean, deputy chief of Adult Services in Santa Barbara County's Probation Department, helps to facilitate a relatively new program that allows people facing criminal charges to leave jail while awaiting trial without paying bail. From July 2019 to July 2020, Shean said 574 people entered the pretrial supervision program, and 339 were successful, meaning they showed up at all of their court hearings and did not reoffend.

While those numbers would suggest a majority of people awaiting trial do not reoffend, Shean said there are still dangerous people being released on zero bail. In those cases, Shean said law enforcement officers can request bail enhancement from a judge, which, if granted, could significantly increase a person's bail amount despite the zero bail schedule.

"So that is an opportunity that's there that can be used throughout any county in California," she said, "and that appears to be underutilized here locally."

Inmate advocates and supporters of the zero bail schedule say that decreasing prison and jail populations is the only truly effective way to prevent COVID-19 outbreaks that impact not only inmates, but their communities.

Santa Barbara County Jail has a long history of being overcrowded to the point that some inmates have been left without beds. Aaron Fischer is an attorney with Disability Rights California, and he's representing several current and former Santa Barbara County Jail inmates in a class action lawsuit regarding alleged unsafe conditions at the jail.

Fischer said the Sheriff's Office is working hard to keep coronavirus rates down in the jail through strict hygiene protocols and aggressive surveillance testing of inmates and staff, however in congregate living situations it's difficult.



COVID TINDERBOX: While the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office says relaxed bail rules aimed at decreasing jail and prison populations are leading to an increase in serious crime, inmate advocates say COVID-19 is the bigger safety risk.

Jails and prisons, he said, have proven to be tinderboxes for mass COVID-19 outbreaks, and locally such facilities are responsible for thousands of cases and a few deaths. Jails, which largely hold people who haven't yet been convicted of crimes, in both SLO and Santa Barbara counties have had multiple outbreaks among staff and inmates, as have the California Men's Colony in San Luis Obispo and the Federal Correctional Institution of Lompoc.

"It has never been more dangerous for a person to be in a crowded jail with poor ventilation than it is right now," Fischer said.

But it's not just inmates who are impacted by these outbreaks. There's a steady flow of people entering and leaving jails every day—people being booked into custody or released, family and friends visiting, staff coming and going. When inmates and staff become seriously ill, Fischer said they take up the already limited ICU beds and hospital staff and time.

"An outbreak inside the jail puts the community at risk," he said, later adding, "Releasing people two or three or even eight months before their sentence is up, with good discharge planning, is not going to create extreme public safety risk. Keeping larger numbers of people in crowded jails will." ○

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

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PHOTO COURTESY OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SOLUTIONS

Pandemic epidemic

Domestic Violence Solutions' executive director looks back at a year of meeting unprecedented need, all while pivoting to the virtual realm

BY MALEA MARTIN

When stay-at-home orders first came down in March, Domestic Violence Solutions Executive Director Jan Campbell expected her organization to be flooded with calls from victims quarantined at home with their abusers. At first, the opposite happened.

"The numbers in the beginning just clamped down," Campbell recalled. "It was like people had never heard of domestic violence."

This, of course, wasn't because the issue in Santa Barbara County had magically dried up overnight. The abuse was still happening, but with everyone stuck at home, there was no one to see it and intervene. Domestic Violence Solutions had to find a way to still reach the people who needed the organization's help during what Campbell called a "pandemic within the pandemic."

"When people are in trauma, they want to feel a human presence, and it's hard to do that on a Zoom call," Campbell said. "But we were able to convert that very quickly. We implemented a telehealth system that was HIPAA compliant, and our counseling calls really ratcheted up in late spring and throughout the summer."

As Domestic Violence Solutions rounded out 2020, the statistics make one thing clear: The organization's efforts to quickly adapt weren't in vain. The transition to the telehealth system led to a 30 percent increase in the number of clients served in one-on-one and group counseling sessions, which are free and available to the public.

Domestic Violence Solutions increased its work with hospitals and law enforcement to conduct remote crisis intervention and case management by 25 percent. The organization's emergency shelters have been at capacity for most of the pandemic, leading it to forge relationships with local hotels to house even more clients. And with a rise in technological abuse, Domestic Violence Solutions gave no-cost, non-traceable cellphones to clients who needed them.

During the 2019-20 fiscal year, the organization answered more than 4,000 hotline calls, provided more than 5,700 nights of shelter to survivors of domestic violence, responded to more than 500 calls from law enforcement and emergency rooms, and provided nearly 900 counseling sessions to survivors and their children.

Campbell doesn't see this unprecedented need for domestic violence services slowing down anytime soon.

"I really believe that the first two or three months of 2021, we're going to see a huge uptick in requests for our services. Once the holidays are over, we're going to be slammed," Campbell said.



ALL IN THIS TOGETHER: Domestic Violence Solutions stepped up to the plate this year to continue to support survivors of domestic violence, all while navigating uncharted virtual territory.

"But we're prepared. Now we have implemented all the protocols, so I feel hopeful. What's been really amazing to me is to look at all of our nonprofit partners and how they've adapted—how the social sector has worked together to support the most vulnerable."

This is the silver lining for Domestic Violence Solutions: the way the pandemic brought organizations together and inspired new people to support their causes.

"A lot of good things happened to us," she said. "We solidified our relationship with CARE4Paws, which is hugely important for our clients that have pets, as we can't take them in the shelter. There was a huge uptick in awareness about domestic violence. When we asked our donors or supporters for something, they responded immediately. Our year end [fundraising] appeal was the best I've ever seen."

Moving into the new year, Campbell hopes that the conversation around domestic violence will continue to shift toward one of prevention, to keep people from becoming victims in the first place.

"I really think that's the way of the future," she said. "Most domestic violence victims are not in our shelters. They're our next-door neighbors, or people that live down the street from us. So the real push going forward, I hope, is more on education, outreach, and prevention."

Highlight

• The city of Santa Maria wants to help residents discard their Christmas trees free of charge, but it must be done soon. Christmas trees will be collected on residential solid waste collection routes during the week of Jan. 4 through 8. After this week, charges will apply to pick up trees. "Place Christmas trees on the curb at least 3 feet away from collection containers on scheduled collection day (which is one day later during holiday weeks)," the city advised in a statement. "Trees must be free of all stands, tinsel, and ornaments. Flocked trees or artificial trees will not be accepted." ○

Malea Martin wrote this week's Spotlight. Send hot tips about businesses, nonprofits, and good samaritans to spotlight@santamariasun.com.

DEATH NOTICES

MICHAEL E. SKIFF, 54, of Oceano passed away 12/11/2020 arrangements with Marshall-Spoo Sunset Funeral Chapel

ANDREA SANTIAGO TINOCO, 44, of Santa Maria passed away 12/17/2020 arrangements with Moreno Mortuary

MARIA FUENTES DE PONCE, 91, of Santa Maria passed away 12/20/2020 arrangements with Moreno Mortuary

MARY ISABELLE MESSER, 80, of Paso Robles passed away 12/20/2020 arrangements with Kuehl-Nicolay Funeral Home

MARIA BUENROSTRO SORIA, 82, of Oceano passed away 12/20/2020 arrangements with Marshall-Spoo Sunset Funeral Chapel

MERCEDES BRAVO, 80, of Santa Maria passed away 12/21/2020 arrangements with Moreno Mortuary

LUIS RAYMOND DEL RIO, 77, of Santa Maria passed away 12/21/2020 arrangements with Dudley-Hoffman Mortuary, Crematory & Memory Gardens

JESUS F. GARCIA, JR., 19, of Guadalupe passed away 12/22/2020 arrangements with Moreno Mortuary

REBECCA DEMARCO, 71, of Santa Maria passed away 12/23/2020 arrangements with Magner-Maloney Funeral Home & Crematory

JOHANNA CACERES DE HERNANDEZ, 54, of San Luis Obispo passed away 12/23/2020 arrangements with Reis Family Mortuary

EMELIA MARASIGAN DEERING, 58, of Santa Maria passed away 12/23/2020 arrangements with Dudley-Hoffman Mortuary, Crematory & Memory Gardens

VICTORIA C. HERNANDEZ, 87, of Nipomo passed away 12/23/2020 arrangements with Marshall-Spoo Sunset Funeral Chapel

BRIAN BEANWAY, 68, of Santa Margarita passed away 12/24/2020 arrangements with Reis Family Mortuary

JESSE L.B. HILL, JR., 66, of Nipomo passed away 12/24/2020 arrangements with Marshall-Spoo Sunset Funeral Chapel

ESTELLA GUZMAN, 62, of Santa Maria passed away 12/24/2020 arrangements with Moreno Mortuary

JOHN MATTINGLY II, 74, of San Luis Obispo passed away 12/24/2020 arrangements with Reis Family Mortuary

EVA RUIZ, 87, of Santa Maria passed away 12/24/2020 arrangements with Moreno Mortuary

FRANCISCO ESPARZA, 51, of Santa Maria passed away 12/24/2020 arrangements with Dudley-Hoffman Mortuary, Crematory & Memory Gardens

MARY CANTRELL, 95, of San Luis Obispo passed away 12/25/2020 arrangements with Reis Family Mortuary

CHARLES PATRICK PARRA, 65, of Templeton passed away 12/25/2020 arrangements with Kuehl-Nicolay Funeral Home

AURELIA SANTA ANA RAMIREZ, 93, of Santa Maria passed away 12/25/2020 arrangements with Dudley-Hoffman Mortuary, Crematory & Memory Gardens

EVELYN M. RIVERA, 87, of Santa Maria passed away 12/25/2020 arrangements with Dudley-Hoffman Mortuary, Crematory & Memory Gardens

JOHN MEDINA-WORDEN, 20, of Santa Clarita passed away 12/25/2020 arrangements with Reis Family Mortuary

ANDREA VOELTZ, 68, of San Luis Obispo passed away 12/25/2020 arrangements with Reis Family Mortuary

PATSY ANN BENEDICT, 85, of Santa Maria passed away 12/25/2020 arrangements with Dudley-Hoffman Mortuary, Crematory & Memory Gardens

ADA CHEATHAM, 49, of San Luis Obispo passed away 12/26/2020 arrangements with Reis Family Mortuary

RANDALL KING, 68, of San Luis Obispo passed away 12/26/2020 arrangements with Reis Family Mortuary

JOAN BOYCE, 89, of San Luis Obispo passed away 12/26/2020 arrangements with Reis Family Mortuary

ELLA HANSEN, 103, of Santa Maria passed away 12/27/2020 arrangements with Magner-Maloney Funeral Home & Crematory

GEORGIA ANN SHEELA, 85, of Grover Beach passed away 12/27/2020 arrangements with Marshall-Spoo Sunset Funeral Chapel

STEFFANI LOUANNE COHO-JOHNSON, 67, of Santa Maria passed away 12/27/2020 arrangements with Marshall-Spoo Sunset Funeral Chapel

JOSEPH ADAMSKI, 95, of San Luis Obispo passed away 12/27/2020 arrangements with Reis Family Mortuary

JOEL WOOD, 75, of Santa Maria passed away 12/28/2020 arrangements with Magner-Maloney Funeral Home & Crematory

JOHN E. SHUFFIELD, 91, of Orcutt passed away 12/28/2020 arrangements with Dudley-Hoffman Mortuary, Crematory & Memory Gardens

NANCY EASTON, 85, of Cambria passed away 12/28/2020 arrangements with Reis Family Mortuary

RICHARD NOCK, 89, of San Luis Obispo passed away 12/28/2020 arrangements with Reis Family Mortuary

JESSICA E. MALDONADO, 33, of Guadalupe passed away 12/28/2020 arrangements with Dudley-Hoffman Mortuary, Crematory & Memory Gardens

RALPH LAWRENCE TURNER, 80, of Paso Robles passed away 12/28/2020 arrangements with Kuehl-Nicolay Funeral Home

PHYLLIS ALDEANE DAVIS, 90, of Santa Maria passed away 12/29/2020 arrangements with Dudley-Hoffman Mortuary, Crematory & Memory Gardens

MONICA OHLHAUSEN, 83, of Morro Bay passed away 12/29/2020 arrangements with Reis Family Mortuary



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The world we live in is a very different place than it was at the beginning of 2020. How we do everyday things has changed, including the way we get information about our community. Like most businesses, we've had to adjust and adapt to keep our companies alive.

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Online Poll

Did you travel this holiday season?

- 66% No. I'm staying home until COVID-19 is under control.
- 17% Only to see other low-risk friends and/or family nearby.
- 17% Yes, but my group took serious safety precautions.
- 0% Yep! And I don't feel bad about it. We have to live our lives.

18 Votes

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

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Growing perspective

County students, educators, staff share some of their 2020 silver linings and hopes for the year ahead

BY SUSAN SALCIDO

Looking back, 2020 was a year of downs, ups, backwards and sideways, to say the least. The year was full of reality that seemed unimaginable at this time last year. Far too many teachers, family members, and neighbors lost jobs and closed businesses, and a staggering number of individuals lost their lives. The daily interactions we used to have, connecting us with people outside our homes, were distorted in major ways.

The weight of these nine months has been difficult to bear, and still, we are resilient. We adapt in admirable ways, and find light and silver linings—surprising brightness inside dark circumstances.

The 2020 Santa Barbara County teacher of the year, Michele Franz of Orcutt Union School District, made this reflection on 2020:

“The silver lining of this pandemic has definitely been how our busy lives have quieted down. There has been more time to connect with my children, my husband, and to reconnect with family and friends. The quiet has also allowed me time to seek new learning in all areas of my life—teaching, self-care, relationships, and more.”

When a year ends and a new one begins, we often look back to reflect on what has passed, and look to the new year with renewed resolve and optimism. This year, we all look forward to the time when the pandemic is safely behind us.

In that spirit, we sought the help of students,

teachers, and school staff from several school districts throughout Santa Barbara County. We asked what silver linings have come from the pandemic, if any, and what they are looking forward to doing when the pandemic ends. Here are some of the responses from Carpinteria Unified School District, College School District, Guadalupe Union School District, Los Olivos Elementary School District, Santa Barbara Unified School District, and Vista Del Mar Union School District.

“I really like bouncing on my ball while working from home,” said Clara, a student at Vista Del Mar Union School District. “I really look forward to see[ing] my friends. One of my favorite things is to ride the bus.”

‘The silver lining of this pandemic has definitely been how our busy lives have quieted down. There has been more time to connect with my children, my husband, and to reconnect with family and friends.’

—2020 Santa Barbara County Teacher of the Year Michele Franz, Orcutt Union School District

College School District students also offered several silver linings and hopes for the new year:

“A silver lining for me during this pandemic has been that at school we have to wear masks and on cold days it keeps me warm,” said Mateo. “One thing I would like to do when the pandemic is over is go to every place that was closed. I would also like to rip my mask off, dig a hole, and never see it again.”

“I got a new puppy, and he always makes me

happy. When I’m sad, my puppy is always there to put me in a good mood,” Kristin shared.

“What I look forward to when the pandemic is over is getting to see my family! I miss them so much, and we haven’t seen each other in such a long time. I was supposed to go to Mexico this year to see my family, but I can’t with the pandemic going on. But it’s OK, I can see them next year when this is all over,” wrote Stephanie.

“I look forward to going back to normal school. I can’t wait to stop wearing masks and worrying about social distancing. I want to play on the playground with my friends,” said Makyla.

Carpinteria High School student Dianna said a silver lining for her has been “getting to be home to take care of my younger siblings and getting to spend lots of quality time all together as a family.”

Teachers and school staff shared similar sentiments and are looking forward to being together with their students in the classroom.

Said 2021 Santa Barbara County Teacher of the Year Frank Koroshec, from Santa Barbara Unified School District, “We now recognize more than ever how important our connection

is with each of our students. I am very much looking forward to being reunited with my students to celebrate their accomplishments in person.”

Many teachers praised the skills their students displayed during this challenging

year. “I have marveled at the problem-solving skills that students have equipped themselves with during online learning. They are often teaching me computer shortcuts and tricks. Their ability to troubleshoot issues has been encouraging,” said Jen, an instructional assistant in Carpinteria Unified School District.

“As a teacher, I look forward to having all of my students back in the classroom and engaging with them in person each day. Their positive energy and upbeat personalities are contagious, and being exposed to that every day is a big part of why I enjoy teaching so much,” shared Anthony, from College School District.

“What I am most looking forward to is welcoming my students with a big hug each day as they come in the front door. And sharing a read-aloud without a mask!” said Heather from Los Olivos Elementary School District.

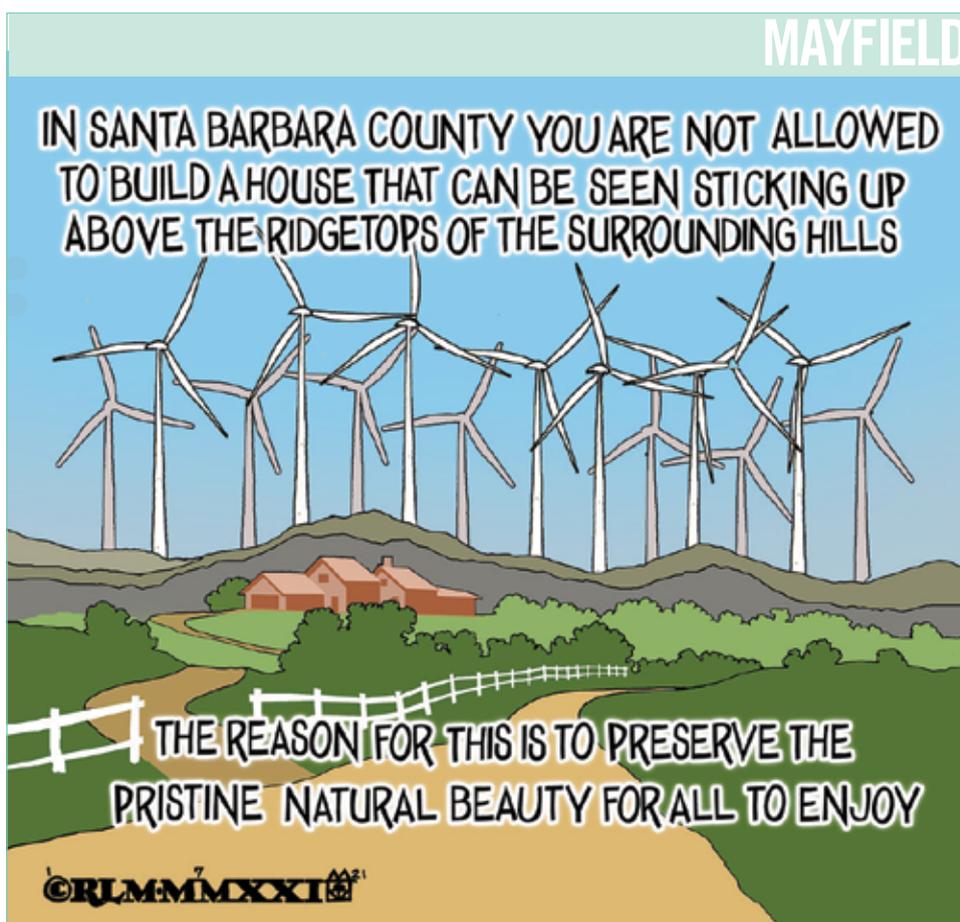
Carpinteria Unified School District teacher Amber said, “I am really looking forward to being able to give my students a real high five for all of the hard work. They have worked so hard, accomplished so much, and they have a really positive attitude about everything. I am so very proud of them all.”

“Social distancing has been very difficult because of the need for human connection. But it has also made me look for different creative ways of expressing kindness, patience, and compassion,” said Dolores, office manager for Guadalupe Union School District.

It seems that most, if not all, of us deeply miss in-person experiences with friends and extended family. However, as Dolores reminded us, it is the kindness, patience, and compassion of others that serve as a true light in this dark time.

Thank you to the students, educators, and staff for sharing examples of silver linings, and for helping to articulate our collective hope for a very happy, healthy, and fulfilling new year for all. ☺

Susan Salcido is the Santa Barbara County superintendent of schools. Send a response to letters@santamariasun.com.



Info underload

Santa Barbara County Sheriff Bill Brown dropped some jaws on Dec. 1 when he pronounced that most serious violent crimes were up by 10 percent during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since March, reports of forcible rape were up by 14 percent, robberies by 30 percent, and arson by 41 percent, he told the county Board of Supervisors.

Rural crimes? Up by 52 percent! And it gets worse, he said, when you throw in stats from Santa Maria and Santa Barbara.

Wow, Billy. This sounds bad. Tell me, what are the actual numbers? Was there, like, one rural crime in 2019 and two in 2020? Ten confirmed robberies in 2019 and 13 reports of being robbed in 2020? What's a serious crime? We need context to really understand these numbers you're just throwing at us willy-nilly, you know what I mean?

Well, we asked the Sheriff's Office for more details on the numbers he was referring to, and the public information officers told us they wouldn't be available until mid-2021. They also asked us to hold tight, as the Sheriff's Office was working on a press release about these apparently top secret crime statistics that Billy Boy had already spoken about at a public meeting but for some reason his public information people didn't have access to them.

Oh yay! We just love press releases. Not. The SLO County Sheriff's Office gave us what we were asking for lickity-split. Their public information guru Tony Cipolla, who isn't always so forthcoming with the information we ask for, just had them at his fingertips. Serious

crimes—homicides, rapes, robberies, domestic violence, burglary, aggravated assault, larceny and vehicle theft, and arson—jumped 20 percent between January to October 2019 and the same time period in 2020. The numbers that support that percentage? About 1,140 of these crimes were reported to the SLO County sheriff in those 10 months of 2019 and 1,370 in 2020.

See? Easy.

You know what's not easy? Whatever the hell is going on with the Natural Healing Center and the building that once again houses the Old Town Market. After receiving a somewhat vague and confusing press release from the marijuana company's spokesperson, Joe Armendariz—formerly of the Santa Barbara County Taxpayers Association, which is weird; I thought your people hated the devil's lettuce—about how the Old Town Market was back, we just had to ask some questions. Pesky journalists.

The Natural Healing Center purchased the building that housed the market in early 2020 because it wanted to open a dispensary, Old Town Market owners the Stellers felt they had no choice but to close, and the community erupted.

The market finally closed its doors on Dec. 3, and 20 days later, it reopened again with new building owners (no longer the pot people), new store owners, and a chance of still becoming a pot shop in the near future.

If the county approves a dispensary for that spot, the Natural Healing Center is apparently going to buy the building back from the people it just sold it to.

Confused? Yep. Us too. ☹

The Canary has a problem with muddy information. Send thoughts to canary@santamariasun.com.



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HOT STUFF

JAN. 7 – JAN. 14
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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!



SERENITY NOW

The Wildling Museum of Art and Nature in Solvang hosts a serenity stone wrapping workshop on Sunday, Jan. 24, from 1:30 to 3 p.m. via Zoom. This virtual class is led by Lompoc-based artist Kathy Badrak. Attendees will learn two methods of rock wrapping with waxed linen. Admission is \$25, which also includes all materials needed to participate. Visit wildlingmuseum.org to find out more about the workshop.

—Caleb Wiseblood

PHOTO COURTESY OF KATHY BADRAK

ARTS

SANTA YNEZ VALLEY

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

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

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

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

WINTER SALON: ANNUAL GROUP SHOW Over 50 artists display all fine art mediums hung floor to ceiling, "salon style". Features all sizes, all subjects, framed, unframed, etc. Through Jan. 31 GalleryLosOlivos.com. Gallery Los Olivos, 2920 Grand Ave., Los Olivos, 805-688-7517.

SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS

ART PACKS: SANTA MARIA PUBLIC LIBRARY Register to pick up an art pack to create your own masterpiece at home. Art packs include projects that help students learn basic principles of art. These packs are geared towards ages 6 to 12. **Jan. 9, Jan. 11, Jan. 12, Jan. 13, Jan. 14, Jan. 15 and Jan. 16** Free. 805-925-0994. engagedpatrons.org. SM Public Library, 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria.

GOALS: VISION BOARDS FOR TEENS (SANTA MARIA PUBLIC LIBRARY) Register to pick up a teen pack to create your own vision board. Participants will receive a board, instructions, and decorative items for their board. This program is open to teens grade 7 to 12 only. Registration is required. **Jan. 7, Jan. 8 and Jan. 9** Free. 805-925-0994. engagedpatrons.org. SM Public Library, 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria.

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EVENTS

MUSIC LESSONS AT COELHO Call or go online for the Academy's current offerings. The Academy offers private lessons by the hour or half hour for all age groups and ability. 805-925-0464. coelhomusic.com. Coelho Academy of Music, 325 E. Betteravia Rd., Santa Maria.

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

PCPA READS AT HOME A literacy project that uses our students' learning to serve children and parents who are learning at home. Co-hosted by Allan Hancock College and the Santa Maria-Bonita School District to bring a love of stories and language to people right in their homes. ongoing PCPA: The Pacific Conservatory Theatre, Santa Maria, 805-922-8313, pcpa.org.

PRESCHOOL CRAFT PACKS Register to pick up a Preschool Craft pack, geared towards ages 3 to 5. These packs focus on strengthening fine motor skills, identification of shapes, colors, and textures, all while encouraging creative fun at home. **Jan. 16** Free. 805-925-0994. engagedpatrons.org. SM Public Library, 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria.

TECH TALKS: LIVE ON INSTAGRAM Every Tuesday sit down with one of our technical staff and learn about the ins and outs of their craft. Get the exclusive with our host Erik Stein. Tuesdays, 3:30 p.m. PCPA: The Pacific Conservatory Theatre, Santa Maria, 805-922-8313, pcpa.org.

WINE AND DESIGN VIRTUAL CLASSES Check Wine and Design's Orcutt website for the complete list of virtual classes online, for various ages. wineanddesign.com/orcutt. Wine and Design, 3420 Orcutt Road, suite 105, Orcutt.

WORKSHOPS VIA ZOOM Sara Curran Ice, PCPA's Technical Theatre Program Coordinator/Designer, is conducting Workshops via Zoom for local high school drama students. Check site or call for more info. PCPA: The Pacific Conservatory Theatre, Santa Maria, 805-922-8313, pcpa.org.

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

SAN LUIS OBISPO

CAMBRIA CENTER FOR THE ARTS: VIRTUAL EXHIBIT WITH PLEIN AIR PAINTERS A call for artists. Contact the Gallery Director for questions (gallery@cambriacenterforthearts.org). **Jan. 9 Feb. 28** Free; entry fees vary. 805-434-7060. gallery@cambriacenterforthearts.org. Online, See website, San Luis Obispo.

THE INTERMISSION SHOW This brisk 8- to 10-minute show is set up like a socially distanced talk show with SLO Rep's Managing Artistic Director Kevin Harris at the helm, clad in a tacky suit and tie with a faux alcoholic drink nearby. Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, 3 p.m. San Luis Obispo Repertory Theatre, 888 Morro St., San Luis Obispo, 805-786-2440, slore.org/.

JANUARY ART PICK-UP PACKS Register through the Santa Maria Public Library to pick up an art pack to create your own masterpiece at home. Art packs include projects that help students learn basic principles of art. These packs are geared towards ages 6 to 12. Supplies are limited. **Jan. 12, Jan. 13, Jan. 14, Jan. 15 and Jan. 16** Free. 805-925-0994. engagedpatrons.org. Online, See website, San Luis Obispo.

SAN LUIS OBISPO JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL 2021 Stream entertaining musicals, comedies, dramas, and documentaries that explore Jewish life around the world. Also features filmmaker conversations and other free live-stream events each week. **Jan. 7, 7 p.m.** \$10-\$50. 805-426-5465. slojff.com/. Online, See website, San Luis Obispo.

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

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

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NORTH SLO COUNTY

ATELIER 708 FACEBOOK DISCUSSION SERIES Hosts and artists Kim Snyder, Janice Pluma, and David Butz have been colleagues for the last 8 years. View the show on the gallery's Facebook page. Second Saturday of every month, 10-11 a.m. through Feb. 13 Atelier 708, 708 Paso Robles St., D, Paso Robles.

DAVID SETTINO SCOTT: FEATURED ARTIST Offering personal appointments and tours of Scott's studio in San Miguel. Through March 1 805-286-4430. Park Street Gallery, 1320 Park Street, Paso Robles, parkstreetgallery.com.

RESIN ART BOWLS Create a gorgeous glass-look art bowl (or several smaller ones) using resin. These bowls are perfect for display, as a gift for your special someone or to hold trinkets. Kit includes everything to make an artistic bowl including a how-to video. Curbside kit pickup. **Jan. 11, 6-7 p.m.** \$40. 805-286-5993. creativetime.com. Centennial Park, 600 Nickerson Dr., Paso Robles.

STUDIOS ON THE PARK: ONLINE CLASSES AND WORKSHOPS Check site for a variety of virtual classes and workshops online. studiosonthepark.org. Studios on the Park, 1130 Pine St., Paso Robles, 805-238-9800.

NORTH COAST SLO COUNTY

CALL FOR ARTISTS: FLOWER POWER This exhibition will embrace the diversity of florals through two-dimensional and three-dimensional interpretations. Artists are invited to submit up to three 2-D (wall-hung) artworks in all media and 3-D: vases (up to three) and one Ikebana arrangement. Open to MBAA members and non-members. Through Feb. 9 Entry fees vary; see entry forms. 805-772-2504. artcentermorrobay.org/index.php/upcoming-exhibits/. Art Center Morro Bay, 835 Main St., Morro Bay.

ARTS continued page 13

FEATHERED FRIENDS This group fine art show will showcase paintings of birds, in all media, and photography of birds—small birds and large birds of all descriptions, in all habitats, that call the Central Coast their home. Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays-Sundays, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. through Jan. 29 Free. 805-772-1068. galleryatmarinasquare.com. Gallery at Marina Square, 601 Embarcadero suite 10, Morro Bay.

CULTURE & LIFESTYLE

LOMPOC/VANDENBERG

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

SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS

30 VOLUNTEERS NEEDED IN SANTA MARIA/ ORCUTT Community Partners in Caring is seeking volunteers to help support dependent older adults and seniors. ongoingpartnersincaring.org. Santa Maria, Citywide, Santa Maria.

BABY STORY TIME PACKS: SANTA MARIA PUBLIC LIBRARY Families with new babies (0 to 12 months), register to pick up a Baby Story Time Pack. Packs include ideas for exercise/activity movements, a booklist of titles for you and your baby, rhymes, and a book. **Jan. 9, Jan. 11, Jan. 12, Jan. 13, Jan. 14, Jan. 15 and Jan. 16** Free. 805-925-0994. engagedpatrons.org. SM Public Library, 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria.

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

LEGO PACK PROGRAM: SANTA MARIA PUBLIC LIBRARY SMPL is offering a take-home Lego program for children aged 6 to 17. Register to pick up your Lego Pack at the Sidewalk Window. All Lego Packs must be returned to the Book Drop by Jan. 19. **Jan. 7, Jan. 8 and Jan. 9** Free. 805-925-0994. engagedpatrons.org. SM Public Library, 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria.

SANTA MARIA PUBLIC LIBRARY: MOVIE TALK DISCUSSION GROUP A video conference movie discussion group; meets on the second Thursday of each month. For more information email sstarnaud@cityofsantamaria.org or call 805-925-0994. Second Thursday of every month, 3:30-4:30 p.m. Free. cityofsantamaria.org/city-government/departments/library. Santa Maria Public Library, 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria, 805-925-0994.

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. SM Public Library, 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria.

TEEN ANIME CLUB PACK: SANTA MARIA PUBLIC LIBRARY Register to pick up a Teen Anime Club Pack from the Santa Maria Public Library, which will include something bookish, crafty, and, of course, something yummy. When you register you will also be invited to a Zoom meeting on Jan. 25. **Jan. 16** Free. 805-925-0994. engagedpatrons.org. SM Public Library, 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria.

VIRTUAL WORKSHOPS OVER ZOOM Visit site or call to learn about various virtual workshop offerings. ongoing Varies. Unwind Studio, 130 N. Broadway, suite B, Santa Maria, 805-748-2539, unwindstamaria.com.

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

SOUTH COAST SLO COUNTY

DANA ADOBE ORNAMENT 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. danaadobe.org. DANA Adobe Cultural Center, 671 S. Oakglen Ave., Nipomo, 805-929-5679.

POINT SAN LUIS LIGHTHOUSE VIRTUAL HOLIDAY TOUR Join a live docent via Zoom for an interactive virtual tour of the Point San Luis Lighthouse. All online virtual tours are enhanced with traditional holiday decorations for the month of December. Wednesdays, Saturdays, 2 p.m. \$10. pointsanluislighthouse.org/. Point San Luis Lighthouse, 1 Lighthouse Rd., Avila Beach.

WEEKLY DROWNING RESCUE COURSES Facility

advertised as open and safe. Give the office a call to register over the phone. Mondays-Saturdays, 10 a.m.-6:30 p.m. Members \$130; Non-members \$160. 805-481-6399. 5 Cities Swim School, 425 Traffic Way, Arroyo Grande, 5citieswimschool.com.

SAN LUIS OBISPO

GRIEF RECOVERY AND SUPPORT PROGRAM People say you have to let go and move on in your life, but they don't tell you how to accomplish that. This Grief Recovery Program will make that possible while providing guidance. Tuesdays, 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. through Jan. 19 Total: \$49 plus \$12 book. 714-273-9014. cccsl.org/classes/. Online, See website, San Luis Obispo.

METABOLIC CONDITIONING We use primarily our own body weight in this interval training class to run through exercises and drills to raise the heart rate, condition our muscles, and stay flexible. This advanced class also incorporates hand weights and sand bags, if you have them. Mondays-Thursdays, 8:15-9:15 a.m. \$72. 415-516-5214. ae.slucsd.org. Online, See website, San Luis Obispo.

UNVEILING OUR BODY'S WISDOM: MOVEMENT CLASS SERIES An 8-week series to explore with motion, color, words, and breath. Participants dive deep into themselves, connect to their inner power, and create the language and the space for their bodies to express their wisdom, their stories. Thursdays, 5-6:30 p.m. through March 4 \$108 for series. 707-266-8945. athasomatics.org. Online, See website, San Luis Obispo.



SHRUB HUB

The San Luis Obispo Botanical Garden (SLOBG) hosts its Native Shrub ID and Propagation Workshop on Saturday, Jan. 30, and Sunday, Jan. 31, from 1 to 3 p.m. both days. Attendees will learn how to identify winter shrubs and grow their own shrubs. This two-part workshop is hosted by arborist Rodney Thurman. Call (805) 541-1400 or visit slobg.org for more info. SLOBG is located at 3450 Dairy Creek Road, San Luis Obispo.

—C.W.

UNVEILING OUR BODY'S WISDOM: MOVEMENT WORKSHOP Join us for this 8-week series where we explore art, writing, breath, and movement to dive deep into ourselves, connecting to our creativity and creating the language and the space for our bodies to express their wisdom and stories. Thursdays, 5-6:30 p.m. through March 4 \$108 for series. 707-266-8945. athasomatics.org/.

CULTURE & LIFESTYLE continued page 14

Buy Gift Cards and Support Small Businesses in Santa Barbara County!

Purchasing gift cards from our local businesses can help stimulate the economy now.

With small businesses facing an uncertain immediate future, one way locals can support their favorite businesses is by purchasing gift cards.

Whether given as a gift or kept for the future, gift cards can act as a microloan for businesses to provide much-needed immediate cash. Many businesses sell gift cards online, allowing customers to offer their support without having to leave home.

There has never been a more important time to support our local business scene. If you are in a position to buy a gift card and sit on it for a while, you'll help your local favorite get through a tough time.

Please show your support.



MENUS

The Central Coast Guide to All Things Food & Drink

Find the Fall/Winter 2020 *Menus* magazine at a *New Times* or *Sun* rack near you!



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805-546-8208 · advertising@NewTimesSLO.com

Sun

NORTHERN SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

805-347-1968 · advertising@SantaMariaSun.com

Online, See website, San Luis Obispo.

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

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID (ONLINE) Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) is a comprehensive, online training that teaches educators, family members, and caregivers (ages 18 and older) to approach, assess, and assist a young person with a mental health challenge or substance use concern. **Jan. 12**, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Free. 978-697-0629. bethedifference.org. Online, See website, San Luis Obispo.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ART CENTER MORRO BAY



REUSE AND RECYCLE

Art Center Morro Bay offers a virtual workshop, *Painting with Paper, with mixed-media artist Lisa Agaran, on Friday, Jan. 29, and Saturday, Jan. 30, from 10 to 11:30 a.m. both days. Participants of this virtual class will create their own artworks using repurposed or recycled paper materials. The workshop is open to ages 18 and over. Admission ranges from \$45 to \$50. Visit artcentermorrobay.org to find out more.*

—C.W.

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. ongoing Redwings Horse Sanctuary, Union Road, Paso Robles, 831-386-0135, RedwingsHorseSanctuary.org.

NORTH COAST SLO COUNTY

UCC/GOODWILL DONATIONS FUNDRAISER Bring your Goodwill donations to the UCC any Saturday morning, January through March. Items will be given to Goodwill and will earn money for the UCC. "It's a win-win!" Saturdays, 11 a.m.-1 p.m. through March 29 805-395-4055. Unitarian Universalist Church, 786 Arlington, Cambria.

FOOD & DRINK

SANTA YNEZ VALLEY

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

STANDING SUN: PURCHASES AND DELIVERIES Visit site for Cellar Club details and more info. Mondays-Thursday, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. 805-691-9413. standingsunwines.com. Standing Sun Wines, 92 2nd St., Unit D, Buellton, 805-691-9413.

LOMPOC/VANDENBERG

FLYING GOAT CELLARS: APPOINTMENT & PICK-UPS This winery specializes in Pinot Noir and sparkling wine. Call or check site for pick-up

appointment info. Mondays, Thursdays-Sundays, 11 a.m.-4 p.m. 805-736-9032. flyinggoatcellars.com. Flying Goat Cellars, 1520 Chestnut Court, Lompoc.

SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS

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

SOUTH COAST SLO COUNTY

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

NORTH SLO COUNTY

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

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

MUSIC

SAN LUIS OBISPO

CAL POLY ARTS VIRTUAL MUSICAL SERIES: A KILLER PARTY A collaboration between more than 50 Broadway professionals all working together remotely. A 9-part musical. Wednesdays \$12.99 for complete series. akillerpartymusical.com/cal-poly-arts. Spanos Theatre, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, 805-756-7113.

THE LADY FROM THE HOUSE IN THE TREE: A TRIBUTE TO JOAN BAEZ A

two-hour, 36-song acoustic experience celebrating the life and career of an amazing artist, peace activist, and humanitarian, from Baywood Park-based duo Linda Martin and Kevin Termunde. **Jan. 9**, 1-3 p.m. Free; donations accepted to benefit SLO Food Bank. baylove.net. Online, See website, San Luis Obispo.

NORTH SLO COUNTY

WINE DOWN WEDNESDAYS: VIRTUAL MUSIC SERIES Follow the venue's Facebook page for a virtual series of music, wine tasting, and education. Wednesdays, 5-6 p.m. Free. facebook.com/vinaroblesamphitheatre/. Vina Robles Amphitheatre, 3800 Mill Rd., Paso Robles, 805-286-3680.

NORTH COAST SLO COUNTY

VIRTUAL HAPPY HOUR: LIVE MUSIC BY RACHEL SANTA CRUZ Streamed every Wednesday from the Schooners Deck. Tune into our virtual happy to hear some great music and watch the sunset. 6-8 p.m. Schooners, Cayucos, 805-995-3883, schoonerscayucos.com. ○

PHOTO COURTESY OF CREATIVE ME TIME



BELLE OF THE BOWL

Creative Me Time hosts a pickup date for its Resin Art Bowl kit at Centennial Park in Paso Robles on Monday, Jan. 11, from 6 to 7 p.m. Buyers of this take-home art project will be able to customize their own unique glass bowls using resin and other materials. Each kit is \$40 and includes a step-by-step instructional video. Call (805) 286-5993 or visit creativemetime.com for more info.

—C.W.

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City of Santa Maria

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MY 805 TIX

Supporting local journalism, one ticket at a time.

Point San Luis Lighthouse Virtual Tour
WEDNESDAYS THRU JUNE 30
Point San Luis Lighthouse

Estate Beef Dinner Series: Short Ribs
SATURDAY, JANUARY 9
Cass Winery, Paso Robles

January Wine Seminar: Taste Like A Pro
SUNDAY JANUARY 24
Cass Winery, Paso Robles

Wednesdays Around The World: India
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 3
Cass Winery, Paso Robles

A Special Valentine Dinner Experience
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 13
Cass Winery, Paso Robles

Pecho Coast Trail Plant Life
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 21
Point San Luis Lighthouse

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

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Arts Briefs

Healing Justice SB seeks Black artists for upcoming virtual showcase, Black is Beautiful

IMAGE COURTESY OF HEALING JUSTICE SB



Healing Justice SB, a Black-led and Black-centered organizing collective based in Santa Barbara County, is preparing for an upcoming virtual showcase, Black is Beautiful, which is scheduled to debut in February in celebration of Black History Month. This visual and performing arts showcase will include acts of dance, spoken word, street art, comedy skits, music, and other media.

Black artists, both locally and nationally, are welcome to enter pre-recorded videos of their submissions to Healing Justice SB for consideration. Entries are due by Jan. 22, online at hjsb.org/bibsubmit. Participants will be notified if their submission is chosen.

There is no minimum age to participate in the showcase, but guardian waivers will be required from any artists under 18 years of age. Participation waivers will be required from all artists accepted into the showcase. Video submissions should be about 5 to 10 minutes in length and must be submitted in an MP4 format. Up to three videos may be submitted per individual or group. Participants are asked to record videos with minimal background noise and proper lighting, to the best of their ability.

Healing SB was formed in response to the destabilizing impacts of racism and “aspires to build resilient communities for the African diaspora and other marginalized people along the Central Coast.” Leticia Forney, co-organizer of Healing Justice SB and director of Black is Beautiful, and other event coordinators are aiming to “provide opportunities to share Black/African American culture and joy for collective healing,” according to the nonprofit.

Visit hjsb.org to find out more about Black is Beautiful and more updates from Healing Justice SB.

Santa Maria Public Library offers Writing Club take-home packs for students

FILE PHOTO BY ZAC EZZONE



Students through grade 12 can pre-register for a Writing Club take-home pack, which will soon be available from the Santa Maria Public Library. Pickup dates for the pack include Jan. 23, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, and 30. This workshop is designed for aspiring writers, and each pack includes a journal and a selection of activities “to both ease the pressure of writing and to inspire amateur authors,” according to press materials.

The Writing Club pack is free, but pre-registration is required at engagedpatrons.org. Call (805) 925-0994 or email libraryyouth@cityofsantamaria.org for more info. The Santa Maria Public Library is located at 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria. ○

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

PHOTO COURTESY OF BELINDA HART



COLORFUL CONJURING: “The pieces conjure up imagery of earth, sea, and sky during morning, midday, and dusk,” artist Belinda Hart said of her painted silks, currently on display at ZFolio Gallery in downtown Solvang.



ART WITH HART: Local artist Belinda Hart (pictured) is a longtime member of FiberVision, a Santa Barbara-based fiber artists collective, and first moved to the Santa Ynez Valley in 2008. She described the Central Coast as a “utopia for artists.”

COURTESY IMAGE BY BELINDA HART

Within you, without you

Mixed media artist Belinda Hart experiments with abstract painted silks in Solvang

BY CALEB WISEBLOOD

While primarily working with fabrics and textiles, contemporary artist Belinda Hart loves creating pieces that invoke “an invitation to touch,” and she described her intricate hand-dye method as a thrilling challenge. Hart’s process is an iteration of Arashi Shibori, a Japanese technique that results in shades and hues reminiscent of storm-driven rain.

“The impressionistic aspect is created with color and texture, but the pieces conjure up imagery of earth, sea, and sky during morning, midday, and dusk,” Hart said of some of her latest works, currently on display at ZFolio Gallery in downtown Solvang.

The exhibit, scheduled to run through Feb. 28, is a collection of Hart’s painted silks, which could be described as abstract impressions of “infinite and exciting imagery prevalent in nature.”

“There is a running theme, although it might be difficult to describe,” Hart said of the showcase. “I think to see it in person makes this statement all the more clear.”

But one of Hart’s greatest joys as an artist is hearing different interpretations of her work, especially when they’re vastly different from her own.

“I used color, rather than scenery, to draw the viewer in and instill a feeling of calmness. I view these pieces as being more serene than my prior work,” Hart said. “It forces the viewer to make their own interpretation of the piece.”

Hart uses thin acrylic paint to realize her vision onto her silks. She developed her painting process after attending an artists retreat in 2019 at South Lake Tahoe, where she workshoped with Santa Fe-based silk painter Betty Busby.

“I brought that knowledge home and began to experiment,” said Hart, who returned to Santa Ynez with a desire to embrace Busby’s approach without merely replicating it.

“I didn’t want to mimic another artist’s work. I think I achieved my goal,” added Hart, who described her eclectic mixing of dye colors as a

unique, personal spin on the process.

Hart is careful to pace herself with each multilayered artwork, she said, as each layer of the piece requires an ample window of time on its own.

“I am fairly methodical in the way I work. I just work on one piece at a time,” Hart said. “The textured silks that I have been producing require a multilayered paint process. Each layer has to be dry before applying the next.”

One of Hart’s favorite parts of this process results in a welcomed “element of surprise,” when one altered fabric dictates the direction she takes with the rest of the layers, regardless of earlier preconceptions of the piece as a whole.

Among Hart’s painted silks currently featured at ZFolio Gallery is *Fantasia*, which she described as one of her personal favorites of her own artworks.

“I love the variation of colors in a purple palette,” Hart said of the abstract piece. “I’ve mixed those with ochres and golds, and I find the combination particularly pleasing to the eye.”

Hart is a longtime member of FiberVision, a Santa Barbara-based fiber artists collective, and first moved to the Santa Ynez Valley in 2008. She described the Central Coast as a “utopia for artists.”

“Within just a stone’s throw there are mountains, valleys, oceans, and deserts. The inspiration is endless,” she said.

While she continues to reference aspects of nature and the outdoors in nearly all of her artworks, 2020 brought about a new wave of more inward-looking pieces than previous years, Hart explained, partly due to the COVID-19 crisis.

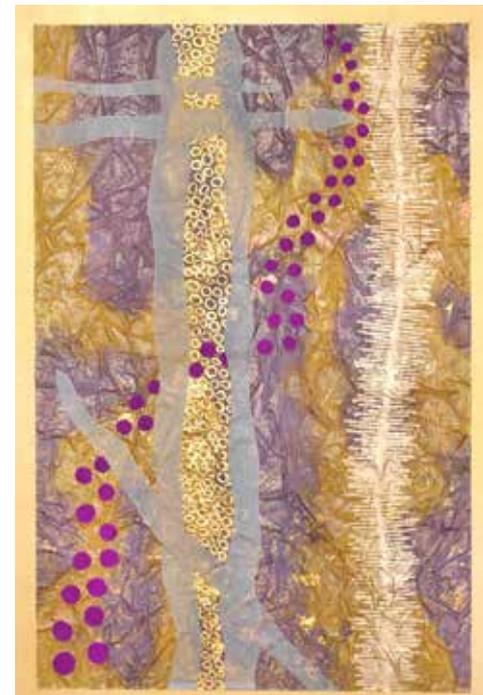
“If anything, I think the pandemic has caused me to become more introspective,” Hart said. “The minimization of outside exposure, for me, set up an environment that promoted an expression of feeling or emotion, rather than being a reflection of the physical environment.” ○

Arts Editor Caleb Wiseblood is looking inward. Send comments to cwiseblood@santamariasun.com.



DAWN TO DUSK: Belinda Hart uses acrylic paint and a unique hand-dye method to create her painted silks, including her abstract piece, *Twilight* (pictured).

COURTESY IMAGE BY BELINDA HART



GOLDEN SLUMBERS: “I love the variation of colors in a purple palette,” Belinda Hart said of her abstract piece, *Fantasia*. “I’ve mixed those with ochres and golds, and I find the combination particularly pleasing to the eye.”

Got silk?

Find out more about Santa Ynez-based artist Belinda Hart at belindahart.com. Some of Hart’s painted silks are currently on display at ZFolio Gallery, located at 1685 Copenhagen Drive, Solvang. The exhibit is scheduled to run through Feb. 28.

Apocalypse silver lining

George Clooney stars in and directs this post-apocalyptic sci-fi adventure based on Lily Brooks-Dalton's 2016 novel *Good Morning, Midnight*, about terminally ill scientist Dr. Augustine Lofthouse living in a remote research outpost in the Arctic, where in 2049 he works to discover potentially habitable planets. The facility is being evacuated amid a mysterious global catastrophe. Augustine decides to stay, hoping to contact the crew of the *Æther*, an exploratory spacecraft returning from a mission to K-23, a habitable moon of Jupiter. The crew of five—Cmdr. Adewole (David Oyelowo), Dr. Iris "Sully" Sullivan (Felicity Jones), Maya (Tiffany Boone), Sanchez (Demián Bichir), and Mitchell (Kye Chandler)—have no idea the Earth will soon be rendered lifeless. As he awaits the spacecraft to reach radio contact, he discovers a mute girl named Iris (Caoilinn Springall) has been left behind at the station. (118 min.)

Glen: Free with your Netflix subscription, this new, sci-fi adventure has been panned pretty hard. Its Rotten Tomatoes critics' score is 52 percent, and its audience score a dismal 26 percent. Frankly, that seems very unfair. Yes, some of its criticisms are accurate—it's slow-paced, takes itself too seriously, and feels atmospherically austere—but it's also emotionally potent, especially

going into the third act that features a twist I probably should have seen coming but was glad I didn't. Clooney plays Augustine as a broken man, forced to mechanically cycle his blood daily, prone to too much drink and far too much introspection. In flashback, we discover an early failed romance. He chose his work over a family, and that seems to haunt him. When he discovers Iris living in the outpost, he doesn't know what to do with her. His ability to form human connections is clearly stunted. The second act speeds up a bit when he realizes he and Iris must leave the outpost to travel to another one some distance away with a more powerful radio signal. Meanwhile, the crew of the *Æther* has problems of their own as they're forced to travel through an uncharted asteroid field. There are some gripping moments here, but apparently not enough for some viewers. I, however, was engrossed and entertained throughout.

Anna: I was really surprised with the poor reviews after watching this, as I was also really taken by it. Clooney does very little wrong in my book, and I found his performance and character both intense and interesting. While we get a bit of insight into his character through flashbacks of his younger years, the reason behind the totality of his

THE MIDNIGHT SKY

What's it rated? **PG-13**
What's it worth, Anna? **Full price**
What's it worth, Glen? **Full price**
Where's it showing? **Netflix**

brokenness is still somewhat of a mystery. He knows his life will soon be over, so the decision to be the one to stay behind proves easy. When Iris appears, he's wholly unaware of both how to deal with her and what to do with her. Without language, both her mystery and vulnerability are heightened, and despite Augustine trying to keep her at arm's length, she finds her way into his heart and gives him something else to focus on besides his impending doom. The crew of the *Æther* are close in a way that people can only be when they literally can't get away from each other, and Dr. Sullivan is gearing up to give birth to a child she and Cmdr. Adewole conceived on the ship. I found both storylines to be solid on their own and good counterparts to each other. *The Midnight Sky* was a solid piece of work and hit me emotionally. Maybe many disagree, but that's where it landed for me.

Glen: Clooney totally abandons his typical suave persona in favor of gravitas. His handsome face is covered by a bushy beard and the twinkle in his eye replaced by a weariness that's palpable. His



PHOTO COURTESY OF ANONYMOUS CONTENT

FINAL ACT: Terminally ill scientist Dr. Augustine Lofthouse (George Clooney, who also directs), works to contact a spacecraft returning to a doomed Earth while caring for Iris (Caoilinn Springall), a little girl left behind from an evacuation, in *The Midnight Sky*, streaming on Netflix.

usually spry comportment looks slowed and pained. As for newcomer Caoilinn Springall, she's utterly precious, and Clooney gets a great performance out of the 7-year-old. Though the *Æther* subplot is secondary, there's still a lot of drama going on there, especially as Earth's fate becomes clearer. The crew members have family there, after all, and options and hope are both in scant supply. This isn't as effective as, say, *Gravity* (2013), which also starred Clooney, *Interstellar* (2014), or even *Ad Astra* (2019), which was also accused of being too slow, but I found it wholly worth watching.

Anna: Clooney definitely shows his skills as an actor here, and I agree that Springall is nothing short of totally adorable. Her big blue eyes and cherubic face draw you in, and even though she only has one line as part of a dream sequence, her acting is fantastic. She's

just someone you want to care about and can see even a gruff-hearted loner like Augustine falling for. Between space and the Arctic, the landscape of this film is harsh and beautiful, from visually arresting shots of the *Æther* crew as they work to repair their ship during a spacewalk to Augustine and Iris wandering snowblind through the harshest conditions Earth has to offer. Maybe it isn't everyone's cup of tea, and perhaps I can appreciate a slow plotline more than many, but for me *The Midnight Sky* had everything needed to stay fully engaged—it's definitely worth checking out on Netflix. ○

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

Film Reviews

HONEST THIEF

What's it rated? **PG-13**
When? **2020**
Where's it showing? **Redbox**

Mark Williams (*A Family Man*) directs this crime drama about a bank robber looking for a chance at redemption. Starring Liam Neeson as Tom Dolan, an ex-military demolition expert dubbed the In-and-Out Bandit because of his meticulous efficiency, the film follows his meet-cute moment with Annie Wilkins (Kate Walsh), a psychology grad student making ends meet working at a storage facility. She inspires him to contact the FBI to turn himself in... if they'll allow him to give back the \$9 million he stole and never spent for a reduced two-year sentence and liberal visitation rights so Annie can see him as he does his time.

It's a setup crying out for corrupt agents who want to steal his loot for themselves, and what follows is predictable for the most part, not to mention farfetched. That said, Liam Neeson! Also, that said, this is surely one of his most forgettable roles in a throwaway story that feels like a direct-



PHOTO COURTESY OF ARGONAUT ENTERTAINMENT PARTNERS

GOING STRAIGHT: Bank robber Tom Dolan (Liam Neeson) wants to turn himself in to start a new life with Annie Wilkins (Kate Walsh), but some dirty FBI agents who want his loot have other ideas, in the middling but still entertaining *Honest Thief*, available at Redbox.

to-video paycheck for the star of *Schindler's List*, *Kinsey*, *Taken*, and *The Grey*. Wait for a promo code and get it at Redbox for less than a buck. (99 min.)

—Glen

THE PROFESSOR AND THE MADMAN

What's it rated? **Not rated**
When? **2019**
Where's it showing? **Netflix**

Farhad Safinia (as P.B. Shemran) directs the amazing true story of the early years of compiling the Oxford English Dictionary and the fascinating but unlikely friendship between the project leader James Murray (Mel Gibson) and murderer and asylum patient Dr. William Minor (Sean Penn).

Murray is an autodidact who convinces Oxford University he's the right man to take over the stalled project of compiling the dictionary. His idea is to enlist English speakers from around the world to submit word etymology, tracing its usage through published books. When he begins to receive thousands of entries from Broadmore Criminal Lunatic Asylum patient Dr. William Minor, an insane American who was sent to the asylum for murder, they strike up a friendship centered on their shared intellects and love of words.

It's also the story of Minor's attempts at redemption and to atone for his crime by helping the widow of his victim, Eliza Merrett (Natalie Dormer), by offering her his military pension. It's overwrought and maudlin, but it gives these powerhouse



PHOTO COURTESY OF VOLTAGE PICTURES

WORD HOUNDS: Based on the true story of the creation of the Oxford English Dictionary, project leader and autodidact James Murray (Mel Gibson, left) enlists murderer and asylum patient Dr. William Chester Minor (Sean Penn) to compile etymological entries of every word in the English language, in *The Professor and the Madman*, available on Netflix.

actors a lot of scenery to chew. I found it compelling and deeply interesting. (124 min.) ○

—Glen

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Raise a glass

After closure of Old Orcutt location, cnagy wines plans to streamline production and tasting under one roof

BY CALEB WISEBLOOD

With a new year comes a new beginning for local winemaker Clarissa Nagy, who announced a big change for cnagy wines near the end of 2020. On Dec. 26, Nagy said goodbye to her winery's original tasting room, which closed its doors for good after six years of operating on South Gray Street in Old Town Orcutt—not too far from where she lives.

"I've loved having my home and business in Orcutt. It's just around the corner from my house. I go back and forth multiple times a day," Nagy told the *Sun*.

Nagy called the decision to relocate a difficult one, but she's optimistic about streamlining the winery's production side and tasting room to one central hub. Initially, Nagy had only been seeking a new location for production and wine storage when she came across a few options with ample space for a tasting room and an office as well.

"I'm looking forward to having the case goods, reception area, and office all in one location; no more moving case goods from winery to tasting room multiple times a week," said Nagy, who is currently transitioning to a new location off of Skyway Drive in Santa Maria.

While the winery-tasting room combo is slated to open sometime this spring, cnagy wines plans to host private tastings (by appointment only, once current guidelines allow) at its current production facility, located at Miller Family Wines on Aviation Way in Santa Maria, until the new location is ready. Online orders and local deliveries will remain ongoing in the meantime as well.

During its last week, the Orcutt tasting room continued providing bottle sales and curbside pickup until the final day.

"The community and camaraderie will be what I miss the most. I love the small-town feel," Nagy said, reflecting on the former site so close to her home. "I'm hopeful that there will still be many opportunities to partner with Old Orcutt businesses and remain in my backyard."

Since its opening in 2014, the Orcutt tasting room took part in various collaborations with neighboring businesses throughout the years, including winemaker dinners and other events with Pizzeria Bella Forno, Trattoria Uliveto, Niya, and Far Western Tavern. The tasting room also hosted monthly exhibits and receptions for local artists and crafters, including Heidi Gruetzemacher, Beverly Johnson, Sheila Krausse, Kerry Donlon, and several others.

"When tasting rooms were initially closed, I kept my staff busy with projects, processing online sales, and curbside pickup," Nagy said, looking back on the turbulence of 2020. "It's been a year of constant change with many opportunities to tap into creative ways to offer products and service to my customers in the midst of the varying guidelines. Every week brought something different."

Although Nagy's motto, "choose joy" (also the name of one of her rosés) already resonated with customers prior to the pandemic, the phrase took on a new meaning in the spring of 2020, the winemaker said.

"We were all in the same storm in different ships. The only thing in control is our attitude," said Nagy, recalling the ups and downs of last year.

Shortly after the first wave of stay-at-home orders in March, Nagy began sending out a weekly email to clients and subscribers

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE SANTA MARIA VALLEY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



NEW BEGINNINGS: Local winemaker Clarissa Nagy is currently in the process of moving out of her former tasting room in Old Town Orcutt, which closed its doors on Dec. 26. A new Santa Maria tasting room is tentatively set to open sometime during this spring.

Through the grapevine

Find out more about winemaker Clarissa Nagy at nagywines.com.

"to offer some hope to battle the discouragement," she said. The letters include positive messages, discounts, and special offers, including Nagy's Spread Joy Special.

But "choose joy" originated as Nagy's mantra a few years ago, after she was diagnosed with breast cancer, she explained.

"In 2019, several winemaker friends made wine for me while I was healing and unable to do the physical work myself," Nagy said. "Through my treatments, surgery, and healing, 'choose joy' was my motto."

Among the long-standing support from a close circle of peers as well as neighboring business owners and frequent collaborators, it's apparent Nagy has a contagious passion for community. The year prior to her cancer diagnosis, Nagy received the Women Helping Women Award during the Santa Maria Women's Network's annual Women of Excellence Awards.

Former *Sun* contributor Helen Ann Thomas once described Nagy as "an all-around cheerleader for women in business."

"I like to say winemaking found me," said Nagy, who originally set out to work in food product development while studying food science at Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo. Her curriculum included several classes on fermentation.

"I love sensory science—exploring tastes and smells. Winemaking was a natural match," she said.

During the summer before her senior year at Cal Poly, Nagy and her best friend traveled to Europe for a backpacking adventure. This is when Nagy really fell in love with wine, she said.

"We were in Budapest and headed to Eger. We found ourselves in wine country, tasting in wine caves—with a violinist roaming the caves, playing. It was an incredible experience," said Nagy, who later took on her first wine-related job at a local vineyard, during the fall after graduation.

Edna Valley Vineyards, Byron Vineyard and Winery, the Bonaccors Wine Company, Curtis Winery, Firestone Vineyard, and Rancho Arroyo Grande Winery are among the venues Nagy worked for before starting her own label, cnagy wines, in 2004.

Originally, Nagy planned to leave the area after graduating from Cal Poly for a career in sensory science, but the joy she found in winemaking kept her here, she explained.

"The aromas of pinot noir free run and the combination of brand new French oak while filling were intoxicating," Nagy said, recalling the fragrances of her first winemaking experiences. "I never left the Central Coast and have been in production ever since." ○

Arts Editor Caleb Wiseblood is choosing joy. Send comments to cwiseblood@santamariasun.com.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CLARISSA NAGY



BE KIND, UNWIND: Edna Valley Vineyards, Byron Vineyard and Winery, Curtis Winery, and Firestone Vineyard are among the venues winemaker Clarissa Nagy worked for before starting her own label, cnagy wines (pictured), in 2004.

FILE PHOTO BY WENDY THIES SELL



THE GRAPE ESCAPE: "I like to say winemaking found me," said Clarissa Nagy, who originally set out to work in food product development while studying food science at Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo. "I love sensory science—exploring tastes and smells. Winemaking was a natural match."

FILE PHOTO BY HELEN ANN THOMAS



WONDER WOMEN: In 2017, Clarissa Nagy (pictured, center) was recognized during the Santa Maria Women's Network's annual Women of Excellence Awards. Here she is pictured with the network's special event chair Lisa Murray (left) and fellow award recipient Marisol Cruz (right).

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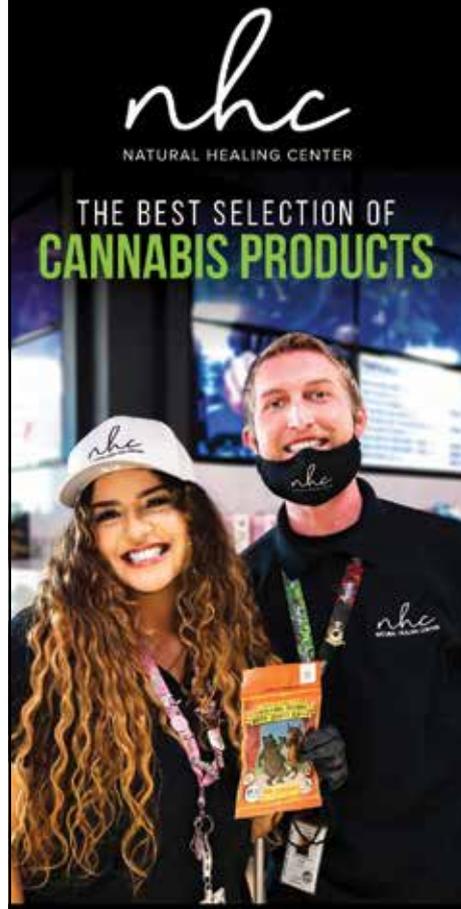
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