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# SUN



AT THE MOVIES

*Euphoria: Angsty* [22]

# Question of character

*Neighbors outside of Solvang argue over agricultural zoning and residential use* [8]

BY MALEA MARTIN

**NEWS** County supervisors talk homelessness [4]

**ARTS** Daytrip to the Santa Barbara Zoo [20]

**EATS** Uliveto's pandemic-inspired patio [23]



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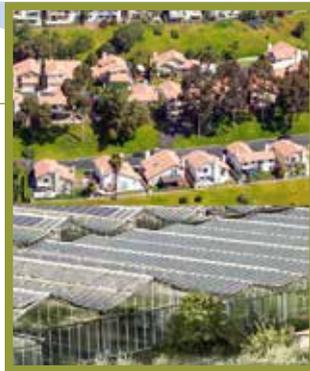
# Contents

FEBRUARY 25 - MARCH 4, 2021 VOL. 21 NO. 52

**S**teve Decker wants to build a large greenhouse on his agriculturally zoned land outside of Solvang, but his neighbors have a huge problem with his plans. Although Decker was initially successful in getting his greenhouse approved, neighbors appealed the decision, and now it's subject to California Environmental Quality Act review. Staff Writer Malea Martin talks about zoning, existing use, and the gray area between in this week's cover story [8].

You can also read about how Santa Barbara County is discussing homelessness [4]; the joy that a trip to the zoo can bring [20]; and Trattorio Uliveto's outdoor dining experience [23].

Camillia Lanham  
editor



**DIVIDE:** A greenhouse project comes under scrutiny because the neighborhood has historically been residential, even though the land it's proposed for is agriculturally zoned.

Cover file photo > Cover design by Alex Zuniga

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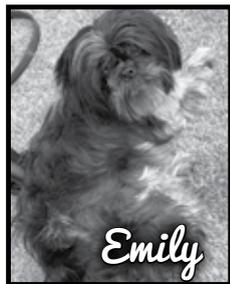
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## Political Watch

• **Gov. Gavin Newsom** announced on Feb. 17 that he along with **Senate President Pro Tempore Toni G. Atkins** (D-San Diego) and **Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon** (D-Lakewood) reached an agreement on a package of relief actions for Californians struggling from pandemic-inflicted economic hardship. "The compromise builds on the initiatives in the governor's state budget proposal to provide cash relief to lower-income Californians, increase aid to small businesses, and provide license renewal fee waivers to businesses impacted by the pandemic," according to Newsom's office. "In addition to these measures, the agreement provides tax relief for businesses, commits additional resources for critical child care services, and funds emergency financial aid for community college students." In a statement, Newsom said that he's grateful for the Legislature's partnership to provide relief. "From child care, relief for small business owners, direct cash support to individuals, financial aid for community college students, and more, these actions are critical for millions of Californians who embody the resilience of the California spirit," he said. Assembly Speaker Rendon added that the agreement "tackles the human and the economic impacts of COVID in a way that echoes President Biden's American Rescue Plan and will help those who are hurting most. We are building an economic foundation for the recovery of jobs, small businesses and, indeed, our everyday lives."

• **Assemblymember Jordan Cunningham** (R-San Luis Obispo) introduced Assembly Bill 718 on Feb. 16, the second time the legislator has submitted the bill, which would require law enforcement agencies to complete investigations into police use of force misconduct allegations, even if the officer resigns. "The bill would require the investigation to result in a finding that the allegation is either sustained, not sustained, unfounded, or exonerated, as defined," the legislation states. "The bill would also require an agency other than an officer's employing agency that conducts an investigation of these allegations to disclose its findings with the employing agency no later than the conclusion of the investigation." Cunningham wrote in a Feb. 18 Facebook post that "government officials, including police officers, should not be able to resign in order to avert responsibility and keep potential misconduct hidden from the public's view. Bad actors must be held accountable if we are to restore the public's trust in our institutions." He added that if passed, the bill would require the results of the investigation to be shared with the accused officer's new agency. "Transparency means trust," Cunningham wrote.

• **State Sen. Monique Limón** (D-Santa Barbara) announced in a Feb. 17 Facebook post that she and **state Sen. Scott Wiener** (D-San Francisco) introduced Senate Bill 467, also known as the End Fracking and Dangerous Drilling Act. The bill would prohibit the issuance or renewal of a permit to conduct hydraulic fracturing (fracking), acid well stimulation treatment, steam flooding, water flooding, and cyclic steaming for oil and gas extraction beginning on Jan. 1, 2022, according to the legislation. The bill would fully prohibit these methods beginning on Jan. 1, 2027. The legislation also requires the creation of a program to identify oil and gas workers who have lost their jobs and "to provide incentives to oil and gas well remediation companies to hire those identified workers." Limón wrote of the bill, "It is necessary to have these difficult conversations on environmental justice and public health to do better for the future of California." ○

## County approves second phase of plan to address homelessness

A recent conversation regarding Santa Barbara County's efforts to address homelessness repeatedly came back to the area's lack of affordable housing and its struggles to keep up with growing homeless encampments.

At a special meeting on Feb. 23, the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors unanimously approved the second phase of its Community Action Plan to Address Homelessness, which outlines the county's ongoing and possible future strategies aimed at improving its homeless prevention and outreach efforts. It's a complicated issue that county staff say has only been compounded by COVID-19 and the resulting economic downfall.

"COVID-19 has further limited access to food, restrooms, and shelter," Santa Barbara County Homeless Assistance Program Manager Kimberlee Albers said during a presentation at the Feb. 23 meeting. "Yet as we'll see on the next slide, the unsheltered population is increasing. The number of encampments, the amount of belongings in encampments, the risks and negative impacts of the person living in an encampment and the surrounding community are growing, and the recent increases in resources are one-time resources, often with quick expenditure deadlines and prescribed requirements. There's a critical need for reliable ongoing funding to address the housing crisis."

The county, Albers said, was able to use one-time funding related to COVID-19 response efforts to find 585 permanent housing placements for people experiencing homelessness, create 55 new permanent housing units, and provide 20,698 temporary shelter bed nights through Project Roomkey and the shelter at Santa Maria High School. Although Albers said access to more reliable funding is still uncertain, county staff learned a lot of lessons throughout the COVID-19 surge in funding for homeless services. Shelter expansions, she said, must be matched with more permanent housing solutions and support services. It often takes multiple sources and extensive trust-building efforts to be successful in a single housing placement. At the same time, she said growing service provider staffing has been challenging, and many posted jobs in that field go unfilled or have high rates of turnover.

So through the second phase of the action plan, the county hopes to increase access to affordable housing, deliver tailored support services using best practices, and strengthen systems aimed at helping people obtain and maintain housing, according to Dinah Lockhart, deputy director of the county's Housing and Community Development Division. To achieve those goals, Lockhart said the county needs to intensify its prevention efforts geared toward those at risk of becoming homeless, identify sites for additional shelter programs, find and break down barriers to the county's services, and develop a coordinated countywide response to homeless encampments.

All of that takes funding, however, and Lockhart said the Community Action Plan to Address Homelessness is at its core an effort to increase the pool of funding sources available to the county. A number of such sources require homeless data and analysis as a condition for funding, and the first phase the Community Action Plan was developed in 2018 and adopted by the Board of Supervisors in 2019 in an effort to meet those obligations.

Although not all board members agreed on how to solve the issue of homelessness, they all said the Community Action Plan is a good place to start and an even better way to ensure that the entire county is on the same page.

Supervisors Gregg Hart and Steve Lavagnino both mentioned their longtime struggles to balance



**A GROWING ISSUE:** The Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors unanimously approved the second phase of its Community Action Plan to Address Homelessness, which outlines strategies to improve homeless prevention and outreach across the county, including in Lompoc, which has large homeless encampments in the Santa Ynez riverbed.

the needs of those experiencing homelessness with the concerns of those living near homeless encampments, shelters, or affordable housing units. All supervisors said the underlying issue of a lack of housing in the area needs to be prioritized.

"We have tons of people that come and tell us that they're affected by homelessness, they want to see us address the issue," Lavagnino said at the meeting. "But then, especially in some districts, you talk about an affordable housing project and we fill the room up with people that say, 'We can't do that here, I don't want to do it here, it's going to drive down housing prices.' And so we all have to sacrifice a little bit to make this a better place."

—Kasey Bubnash

## New state guidelines allow for youth sports return

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) released new guidance on returning to competition for youth and recreational adult sports, but Assemblymember Jordan Cunningham believes it should have happened a lot sooner.

The guidelines, which take effect beginning Feb. 26, categorize sports based on the level of contact between participants. Low contact sports are those which allow 6 feet of distance and consistent mask wearing; medium contact are those with only occasional contact between players; and high contact is defined as sports with frequent or sustained close contact.

CDPH then matched these categories with the Blueprint for a Safer Economy tiered reopening system. Counties in the purple, widespread tier can bring back outdoor, low contact sports. Red tier counties can bring back outdoor, moderate tier sports. Higher contact and indoor sports are allowed in the orange and yellow tiers.

As of Feb. 23 assignments, Santa Barbara and SLO counties remain in the purple tier. The state

guidelines include a full list of sports that are allowed to compete in the widespread tier, such as cross country, track and field, tennis (singles), swimming and diving, golf, and other low contact sports.

Cunningham, who has advocated for the return of youth sports during the pandemic, doesn't agree with the state's move to link sports return to the county tier system.

"That's basically a roundabout way of tying the reopening of youth sports to positive cases in the community," Cunningham told the *Sun*. "But I've been arguing for eight or nine months to California Department of Public Health, the governor's office, and anyone who will listen, that this whole thing should be tied to hospitalization and ICU capacity, not to positive cases."

The lawmaker added that, in his opinion, the return to youth sports competition should have happened months ago.

"More than 40 other states have allowed youth sports to return," he said. "The fact that it's taken this long, and we had to build a statewide coalition of coaches and parents and young athletes, meet with the governor over and over and over again, beg for being allowed back on the field, it's just really absurd."

However, Cunningham added that allowing any sports back is a step in the right direction.

"The new guidance isn't a touchdown, but it's positive yardage," he said. "And right now, I'll take whatever we can get in terms of positive yardage. ... Because our kids need something. At least this gets some back in practice, at least they can get back on the field."

Atascadero High School Athletic Director Sam DeRose told the *Sun* that he is looking forward to having more kids back on the field, after so many months of uncertainty and "planning with a pencil."



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NEWS from page 4

“We are just absolutely ecstatic for this opportunity,” he said. “We were pending those directions. The new guidance opened up the opportunity for some other sports that had initially been postponed, so that’s wonderful.”

—Malea Martin

## Solvang approves regulations for sidewalk vendors without community input

Solvang adopted rules for future sidewalk vendors during a Feb. 22 City Council meeting, citing sidewalk accessibility and social distancing concerns, but the decision lacked public feedback.

City Manager Xenia Bradford said she proposed the regulations as an urgency ordinance because the city’s current sidewalk vendor code doesn’t comply with Senate Bill 946, which went into effect in January 2019. The bill established statewide rules for vending in public parks and rights of way, limiting cities in their regulations of sidewalk vendors unless a city adopts specific regulations “directly related to objective health, safety, and welfare concerns.”

According to City Attorney David Fleishman, the intent of the legislation was to encourage small business owners who might otherwise have barriers to entry into doing business “to allow them to set up mobile vending carts on public sidewalks.”

During the meeting, Fleishman said some of the city’s concerns include unregulated sidewalk vending, blocked sidewalks, a lack of sidewalk access for people with disabilities, and the possibility of a large number of vendors in city parks.

According to a staff report, sidewalk vendors are currently permitted to operate in locations that don’t create a safety hazard and ensure trash collection, among other provisions. Under current city code, these vendors are prohibited from operating in the central business district and in streets.

The proposed urgency ordinance enhances current rules by clarifying that sidewalk vendors are required to obtain and display a sidewalk vending permit and business license, carry adequate levels of insurance, and obtain a state tax certificate as well as any necessary Santa Barbara County health approvals and licenses.

Under this ordinance, approved permits would last up to 12 months. No more than five permit holders are allowed in the city’s parks; vendors are not permitted to operate on specific narrow sidewalks in the central business district that includes Copenhagen Drive and Mission Drive.

Bradford said the city has experienced few issues with sidewalk vendors; however, city staff

has seen an increased interest in street vending in recent weeks.

No one commented on the agenda item, which Councilmember Jim Thomas said made him feel uncomfortable voting in favor or against the ordinance without “having a feel from our business community.”

However, Councilmember Robert Clarke didn’t seem to think it was an issue.

“I would think it would be a no-brainer. You’re asking if a restaurant is OK with a cart across the street and him selling food,” Clarke said. “I think they would be in favor of what we’re doing right now.”

—Karen Garcia

## Farmworkers receive payment as part of settlement agreement

Months after a farmworker strike ended in alleged employer retaliation and an ensuing investigation by the California Agricultural Labor Relations Board (ALRB), more than 200 farmworkers received compensation on Feb. 21 as part of an informal settlement agreement with their employer, Rancho Laguna Farms.

The dispute started in May 2020, when Rancho Laguna farmworkers went on strike to seek higher wages. Workers were allegedly fired for engaging in the strike, a legally protected activity. After gathering more than 60,000 signatures on a petition, workers successfully negotiated with Rancho Laguna to secure a raise in June, but the allegations of unfair retaliation remained unresolved.

The Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy (CAUSE) filed an unfair labor practice charge with the ALRB, the agency that administers the California Agricultural Labor Relations Act, on behalf of the workers involved in the May strikes. ALRB attorneys went forward with the investigation and worked out an informal settlement agreement with Rancho Laguna in December 2020, ALRB Director of Communications Daniela Ramirez told the *Sum*.

“The remedies that were agreed upon were the compensation as well as supervisor training, posting at the job site, and a reading to some of the Rancho Laguna employees,” Ramirez said.

The monetary portion of the informal settlement agreement came to fruition Feb. 21, when 212 farmworkers received, in total, nearly \$30,000 to compensate for potential economic losses from the alleged strike retaliation.

“We worked with the ALRB,” Rancho Laguna Farms owner Larry Ferini told the *Sum*. “We thought it was better to work with them and help discover what the problems were, or the issues.”

CAUSE Policy Advocate Rebeca Garcia told the



**COMPENSATED:** A couple hundred farmworkers received checks Feb. 21 as part of an informal settlement agreement with their employer, Rancho Laguna Farms.

*Sum* that the check distribution was “a day full of excitement and relief.”

“Many of the farmworkers lost a whole day of wages [when striking], and getting that money back meant a lot to them to help pay for rent, groceries, child care,” Garcia said, adding that it was “an encouraging day to remember that when people stand up and say something they can have a positive resolution.”

In addition to the compensation, the agreement requires Rancho Laguna to provide its employees with information about the settlement as well as their rights under the Agricultural Labor Relations Act, according to an ALRB statement. Rancho Laguna also agreed to let the ALRB provide a

training to its supervisors on workers’ rights.

Ferini said he is working to improve information accessibility for his workers.

“A lot of our employees speak different dialects of the Mixtec language,” he said. “So we spent a lot of time finding interpreters so that we can really talk to all of our people and reduce, I think, what was frustration. . . . We just wanted to move forward and expend our energies on improving relations with our people, with our employees.”

Ramirez from the ALRB said her agency will ensure that all aspects of the informal settlement are implemented. ○

—Malea Martin

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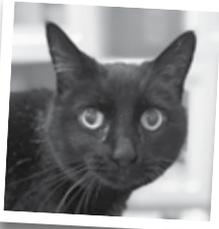
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# Neighborhood dispute

Solvang-area residents continue clashing over greenhouse project, Board of Supervisors asks for environmental review

BY MALEA MARTIN

A battle between neighbors over whether one landowner should be allowed to build a greenhouse just north of Solvang rages on, despite the project being unanimously denied by the Santa Barbara County Planning Commission in October 2020.

Steve Decker, who wants to build a nearly 16,000-square-foot greenhouse on his agriculturally zoned land, was initially successful in obtaining a land use permit for the development in June 2020. The project was exempted from California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review at the time, as county staff classified it as a small structure.

Eight days later, neighbor Stephen Jacobs filed an appeal, arguing that the proposed structure wasn't compatible with the surrounding neighborhood, which has taken on a residential use despite being zoned for agriculture. After hearing both sides of the dispute in early August, the Planning Commission ultimately voted in favor of Jacobs' appeal on Oct. 7, effectively halting Decker's project.

But Decker wasn't satisfied with the commission's vote, so he appealed it, taking the issue to the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors on Feb. 9. He made the case that the Planning Commission erred in its application of the Santa Ynez Valley Community Plan, that his offers to add conditions on the project—such as installing blackout curtains to mitigate light pollution—were not considered, and that he was not given an impartial hearing.

Decker and his neighbors live on agriculturally zoned land, which he believes gives him the right to build a greenhouse and grow vegetables. Decker told the *Sun* that the Santa Ynez Valley Community Plan “echoes everything that the county comprehensive plan says about supporting and protecting agricultural uses on agricultural lands.”

According to page 18 of the community plan, existing county policies state, “Agriculture should be preserved and protected as one of the primary economic bases of the valley.” The plan serves to augment county policies like this one in order to “provide region specific policy direction.” However, it adds, “countywide policies remain in effect.”

But Decker's neighbors who oppose his greenhouse also lean on the community plan to support their case, specifically the requirement

that structures be compatible with the existing community.

During public comment at the Feb. 9 hearing, Jacobs said that the greenhouse would “dramatically change the current makeup of the neighborhood. The size of the structure and the fact it would be the only commercial facility in and of themselves makes this project inconsistent and incompatible.”

Jacobs also voiced concern over the fact that Decker initially applied to grow cannabis in 2018, later withdrawing that application and changing the project to vegetable cultivation. Decker has repeatedly denied any present intention to grow cannabis.

“It's an irrational claim,” Decker told the *Sun*. “I'm a law-abiding citizen. I would not jeopardize my family or my capital investment in this greenhouse to being brought up on criminal charges, being brought up on land use violations. ... It's an absurd notion that that's what I would be doing.”

Jacobs declined the *Sun*'s request for comment.

Travis Seawards is the deputy director of the Planning and Development Department's Development Review Division and one of the staff members assigned to the project. He told the *Sun* that policies can be interpreted in different ways.

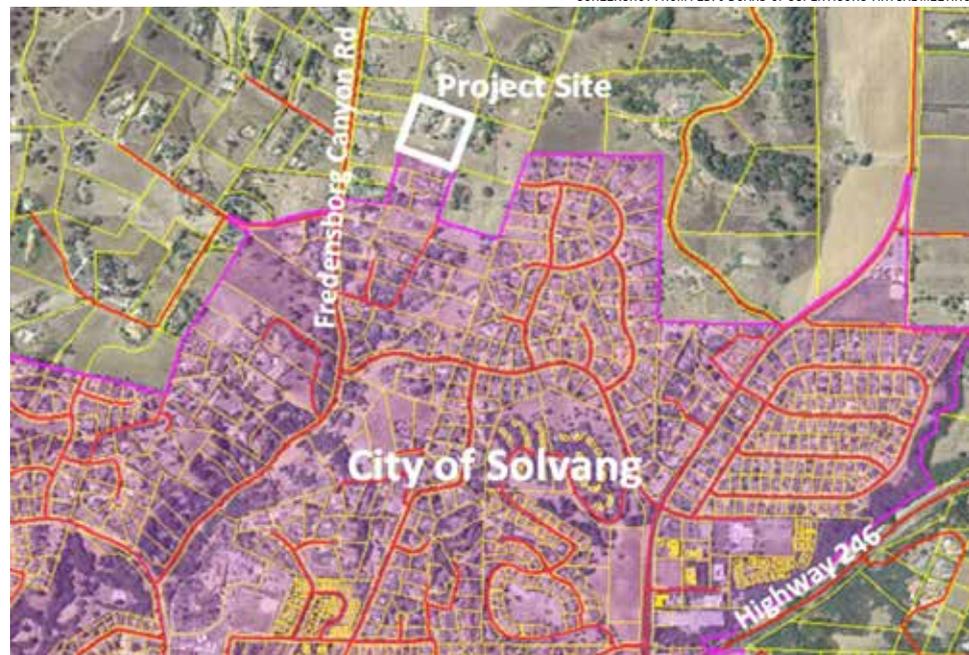
“We originally found it to be consistent with the Santa Ynez community plan and our comprehensive plan, but then the Planning Commission made a different determination,” Seawards said. “Each time it gets appealed, it's called a ‘de novo’ hearing, so they're like brand new hearings. The board has its own decision-making process, so they have discretion on how they interpret the policies as it pertains to any particular project.”

Third District Supervisor Joan Hartmann, who represents the area in question, voiced opposition to the greenhouse at the Feb. 9 meeting. The Santa Ynez Valley Community Plan, Hartmann said, “has lots of goals. But the overarching and No. 1 listed goal was to protect the rural and scenic character of the Santa Ynez Valley for residents and visitors alike.”

The plan also aims to protect and support agricultural land use, and encourage appropriate agricultural expansion, Hartmann added.

“The term ‘appropriate’ implies discretion,” she said. “Not all agricultural expansion would be appropriate.”

Fifth District Supervisor Steve Lavagnino said



**UNHAPPY NEIGHBORS:** Just outside Solvang city limits, resident Steve Decker would like to build a greenhouse to cultivate vegetables on his property, highlighted here. But his neighbors are fighting tooth and nail to have the project halted.

he didn't like the proposed greenhouse at all.

However, he continued, “We can quote community plans all day, but you can't take away somebody's personal property right on land that's zoned agriculture.”

Lavagnino said a root of the issue is the discrepancy between how it's zoned versus how it's actually used.

“It's not the neighbors' fault. I totally get it,” Lavagnino said. “But that's not what my job is to do: It's not to say what I'd like it to be. I've got to look at it and say, ‘What is he legally allowed to do?’ And unfortunately, I've got to side with Mr. Decker on this.”

Second District Supervisor Gregg Hart thought the board didn't have enough information to evaluate this project. He suggested that county staff conduct a CEQA review to bring back to a future meeting, and Lavagnino voiced support for this idea.

When Decker first proposed his greenhouse and got his land use permit approved, county staff exempted the project from CEQA review. But Seawards from the county Planning Department explained that this, too, can be contested.

“The decision-makers can decide that a project does not meet the requirement of exemption, and they can ask for more environmental review,” Seawards said.

Supervisor Hart motioned to direct staff to conduct additional review—particularly

in regard to the blackout curtain technology that Decker proposes to use to block out light pollution from the structure at night—and then return the item to the board. The motion passed 4-1, with 4th District Supervisor Bob Nelson dissenting.

“I'm going to vote against the motion because I do believe that we have enough evidence in the record to approve this project,” Nelson said. “I think if this was something that was not approvable, we should have never accepted the application.”

**‘The term “appropriate” implies discretion. Not all agricultural expansion would be appropriate.’**

—3rd District Supervisor Joan Hartmann

Seawards said the county will now work with Decker to see if he is willing to move forward with the CEQA review. Once the process is completed, which Seawards said could take a few months, the project will come back to the Board of Supervisors for another hearing.

“I have no problem with this process looking at the light deprivation technology,” Decker said. “It's new to everybody. ... I'm confident we'll be able to show that it will be effective.” ○

Reach Staff Writer Malea Martin at [mmartin@santamariasun.com](mailto:mmartin@santamariasun.com).



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# Winning combo

Painted rocks bring the community together in Nipomo

BY KASEY BUBNASH

Before the pandemic hit, Nipomo resident Lynn Borges had an abundant social and work life. Despite her age—she describes herself only as “old, old, old”—Borges kept herself busy with two part-time jobs, attended art classes through an adult education program twice a week, and she’d often spend afternoons with her grandkids after picking them up from school.

But that all pretty abruptly came to an end in March 2020. As part of California’s first COVID-19 lockdown, Borges and other seniors 65 and older were directed to stay home at all costs. She stopped going to work, her art classes were canceled, and although her grandkids continued to visit for a time, her family eventually put an end to that out of fear of unwittingly getting her sick.

“It was just depressing, you know?” she told the *Sun*. “I have friends who have just gone into a really deep decline. It’s hard on older people.”

Borges still had a lot of paint and brushes left over from her art classes so she thought she might as well fill her newfound free time with painting. It was her grandson who suggested she paint rocks, and he taught her how he’d learned to transform average gray stones into bright red and yellow ladybugs.

Borges loved it. Making them made her feel better. Just seeing them made her feel better. Borges thought maybe everyone could use a little positivity in these tumultuous times. So she started writing positive messages like “be happy” and “smile” on the backs of her finished rocks, weather-sealing them, and hiding them around town—in her neighbors’ gardens, Old Town, and near walkways in the Nipomo Native Gardens and Nipomo Park.

“So it’s like finding a smile when you’re walking along by yourself in a park and there’s a little cheery rock,” Borges said.

Soon her Facebook posts about the rocks garnered more and more attention. People started requesting different kinds of rocks. She expanded her subject matter from strictly bugs to almost anything you could think of—scary dinosaurs, little yellow minions, M&Ms with bites missing—and developed a small cult following online.

After a shooting at a Vons gas station in Nipomo in August 2020, Borges painted about 40 “Back the Blue” rocks and brought them to a rally in support of law enforcement. She thought she’d made too many and was nervous people wouldn’t like them. But as she made her way through the crowd, she was practically swarmed by fans.

“It was so exciting,” she said. “Everybody wanted them. They really make people feel good or something for some reason.”

Now people excitedly post photos on Facebook when they stumble upon Borges’ rocks. Some leave boxes of plain stones at her house, including Nipomo-based landscaping company Troesh Coleman Pacific, which donated rocks to her cause just before Halloween. She hosts holiday-themed rock hunts and donates painted rocks to events, including a thank you rally in September 2020 for Creek Fire responders and firefighters.

Just a few weeks ago she had a few dozen pink and red Valentine’s Day rocks sitting outside to



**YOU ROCK:** Nipomo resident Lynn Borges started painting rocks and leaving them around town to cheer people up during the pandemic. Now she’s a small-town icon.

dry. Some PG&E and other maintenance guys were working on something outside when one worker spotted the rocks. He shyly came over to Borges and asked if he could take one home for his wife. When she said yes, all the other workers came up and asked if they could have some rocks for their girlfriends and wives too.

They took so many she basically had to make a whole new batch, she said with a laugh, but it made her feel proud.

Now other people paint rocks, and Borges said she sees them all around town, on display in local stores, tucked away in parks and on sidewalks, outside her front door.

“I think the act of doing them is almost like therapy to the person who does them too,” she said. “When you’re doing it, you’re not thinking about how you’re alone or that you’re sad or whatever your issue is.”

When Kathy Goularte first noticed all the rock excitement on Facebook, she watched somewhat enviously as Nipomo residents living near the Trilogy development gathered up handfuls of Borges’ rocks while out and about. Goularte started commenting on the posts, but she never thought she’d find a rock all the way out at her house by the Dana Adobe.

Then one day as she was doing some landscaping work in her yard, she went to check her mailbox. Inside, she found several rocks with chickens painted on them, which is fitting because Goularte has chickens of her own.

“So I thought that was pretty special because I don’t know this person and she’s so kind to bring the community together,” she said.

In a time marred by negativity and isolation, Goularte said it’s nice to connect with fellow community members through the rocks. She hopes Borges knows how much Nipomo appreciates her work.

“It just kind of brings you together,” she said.”

## Highlight

• The Santa Maria Library’s writing club is back this month with another creative kit designed for patrons ages 6 and up. Those who register can pick up a writing club pack with projects created by the library’s Youth Services staff, which includes a journal, writing prompts, and activities. You can register by visiting the library’s events calendar at [cityofsantamaria.org/library](http://cityofsantamaria.org/library) or by calling (805) 925-0994. Registration and pickup runs through Feb. 27. ○

Staff Writer Kasey Bubnash wrote this week’s Spotlight. Send tidbits to [spotlight@santamariasun.com](mailto:spotlight@santamariasun.com).



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for responsible cannabis

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1. High Time for Conservation: Adding the Environment to the Debate on Marijuana Liberalization. *BioScience* 2015; 65 (8): 822-829. doi: 10.1093/biosci/biv083.
2. “Forget Almonds: Look at How Much Water California’s Pot Growers Use.” *Washington Post*. 26 June 2015.

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**GUADALUPE CASILLAS**, passed away 2/9/2021 arrangements with Reis Family Mortuary

**DAVID BOOKER**, passed away 2/10/2021 arrangements with Reis Family Mortuary

**MARGARET SWIGART**, passed away 2/10/2021 arrangements with Reis Family Mortuary

**MARILYN BROOKS**, 63, of Paso Robles passed away 2/11/2021 arrangements with Blue Sky Cremation Service

**DONNA HUDSON**, 82, passed away 2/11/2021 arrangements with Los Osos Valley Mortuary & Memorial Park

**ERNESTO VERDEJA JR.**, passed away 2/11/2021 arrangements with Reis Family Mortuary

**REYNALDO DEL ROSARIO ANGELES**, 76, of Grover Beach passed away 2/11/2021 arrangements with Marshall-Spoo Sunset Funeral Chapel

**MARILYN ANN SANDERS**, 77, passed away 2/11/2021 arrangements with Los Osos Valley Mortuary & Memorial Park

**ROBERT BRIENGO**, 57, of Paso Robles passed away 2/12/2021 arrangements with Blue Sky Cremation Service

**RICK ELISARRARAS**, passed away 2/12/2021 arrangements with Reis Family Mortuary

**KATHLEEN SULLIVAN**, 65, of Templeton passed away 2/12/2021 arrangements with Blue Sky Cremation Service

**FELICITACION ALMOJERA VALMORES**, 90, of Walnut Creek passed away 2/12/2021 arrangements with Dudley-Hoffman Mortuary, Crematory & Memory Gardens

**ROBERT MARK BARRON**, 85, of Arroyo Grande passed away 2/13/2021 arrangements with Marshall-Spoo Sunset Funeral Chapel

**ROBERT HEDGES JR.**, passed away 2/13/2021 arrangements with Reis Family Mortuary

**KIMBERLY HUNTER**, 56, of Atascadero passed away 2/13/2021 arrangements with Blue Sky Cremation Service

**JAMES LONNIE EDWARDS**, 73, passed away 2/13/2021 arrangements with Dudley-Hoffman Mortuary, Crematory & Memory Gardens

**DALE J OPENSHAW**, 70, of Orcutt passed away 2/13/2021 arrangements with Dudley-Hoffman Mortuary, Crematory & Memory Gardens

**KYLE VERNON LORENCZ**, 29, of Santa Maria passed away 2/14/2021 arrangements with Magner-Maloney Funeral Home & Crematory

**LOWELL ARTHUR RUST**, 92, passed away 2/14/2021 arrangements with Los Osos Valley Mortuary & Memorial Park

**GARRY JOHNSON**, passed away 2/14/2021 arrangements with Reis Family Mortuary

**RON LANDRY**, 83, of Santa Maria passed away 2/14/2021 arrangements with Dudley-Hoffman Mortuary, Crematory & Memory Gardens

**MARCOS VASQUEZ**, 58, passed away 2/14/2021 arrangements with Dudley-Hoffman Mortuary, Crematory & Memory Gardens

**ELIZABETH LINDA BREWER**, 50, of Santa Maria passed away 2/14/2021 arrangements with Dudley-Hoffman Mortuary, Crematory & Memory Gardens

**RICHARD ALBERT WINZENRIED**, 68, passed away 2/14/2021 arrangements with Los Osos Valley Mortuary & Memorial Park

**JOHN BACHMAN**, 77, of Morro Bay passed away 2/15/2021 arrangements with Blue Sky Cremation Service

**MARIA JESUS SALCEDO**, 84, passed away 2/15/2021 arrangements with Moreno Mortuary

**RICHARD MAIZE**, 88, of Los Osos passed away 2/15/2021 arrangements with Blue Sky Cremation Service

**LILLIAN DENISE LOZANO-YOUNG**, 64, of Arroyo Grande passed away 2/16/2021 arrangements with Marshall-Spoo Sunset Funeral Chapel

**RICHARD MONDEJAR**, 59, of Santa Maria passed away 2/17/2021 arrangements with Magner-Maloney Funeral Home & Crematory

**PETER MARRUFO**, 82, of Santa Maria passed away 2/17/2021 arrangements with Dudley-Hoffman Mortuary, Crematory & Memory Gardens

**BILL SIMPSON**, 92, of Lompoc passed away 2/17/2021 arrangements with Dudley-Hoffman Mortuary, Crematory & Memory Gardens

**DIANE VANFLEET**, 66, of Atascadero passed away 2/17/2021 arrangements with Blue Sky Cremation Service

**MICHAEL MCCOY**, 60, of Paso Robles passed away 2/17/2021 arrangements with Blue Sky Cremation Service

**RODOLFO TRENADO**, 65, of Santa Maria passed away 2/18/2021 arrangements with Magner-Maloney Funeral Home & Crematory

**CHRISTINE "TEENE" S. BURKE**, 60, of Santa Maria passed away 2/19/2021 arrangements with Dudley-Hoffman Mortuary, Crematory & Memory Gardens

**CORNELIO "NEIL" BUELNA**, 85, of Santa Maria passed away 2/20/2021 arrangements with Magner-Maloney Funeral Home & Crematory

**SOLEDAD ALFARO MORALES**, 93, of Santa Maria passed away 2/20/2021 arrangements with Dudley-Hoffman Mortuary, Crematory & Memory Gardens

**DEBORAH CHRISTINA PIZANO**, 65, of Santa Maria passed away 2/23/2021 arrangements with Magner-Maloney Funeral Home & Crematory

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- 18% Beach days all the way.
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- 0% The water's where it's at—fishing and boating!

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## Trickling down

Is Lompoc's water quality in danger because of homeless camps?

BY RON FINK

On Feb. 2, the Lompoc city manager tried to justify using fees collected to operate and maintain the drinking water utility to pay for homeless camp cleanups in the riverbed by saying that “funding the ongoing costs for cleanup and patrolling from the water enterprise fund would be a legitimate use” because the homeless population and all their litter “sits directly over the city’s potable water source.”

The implication was that the camps were a source of contamination to the water supply.

The staff report did not provide any supporting information for this claim, and even though a citizen had suggested that the council request a history of well water lab analysis for the last 10 years to see if there has been an increase of contaminants that could have come from the camps, not one council member asked for this vital information.

Then on Feb. 16, Mayor Jenelle Osborne appeared on a local TV news program. In the report she was saying that “the riverbed needs to be addressed once again due to concerns over possible city water contamination from hazardous waste.”

In the following days she made similar claims in the print media saying, “This is not about solving a homeless issue, it’s about dealing with the quality of water and the water impacts and the responsibility we have as council to protect that water resource.”

Well, if contamination of the water supply is a concern to city leaders, then it certainly demands some investigation. So, using the information available, I started looking into whether this was or was not a problem of concern for the community.

I started with the city website; in 2018 the water quality report on the water division’s webpage advised that several substances of concern are tested for in the water supply. They included “microbial contaminants, such as viruses and bacteria that may come from sewage treatment plants, septic systems, agricultural livestock operations, and wildlife.”

“Pesticides and herbicides that may come from a variety of sources, such as agriculture, urban stormwater runoff, and residential uses. Organic chemical contaminants, including synthetic and volatile organic chemicals that are by-products of industrial processes and petroleum production, and can also come from gas stations, urban stormwater runoff, agricultural application, and septic systems.”

“Every five years the EPA formulates a new list of possible water contaminants through the unregulated contaminants monitoring rule (UCMR). In 2018, UCMR4 began with testing for cyanotoxins.”

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) explains that cyanotoxins are “point sources (which may include discharges from municipal and industrial wastewater treatment plants, concentrated animal feeding operations, municipal separate storm sewer systems, stormwater associated with industrial activity, and other) and non-point sources (which may include diffuse runoff from agricultural fields, roads, and stormwater), may be high in nitrogen and phosphorus and can promote or cause excessive fertilization (eutrophication) of both flowing and non-flowing waters.”

More from the 2019 report: “Source water assessments for wells 1 through 9 (in the city limits) and Frick Springs (in Miguelito Canyon) were completed in 2002 and well 11 in 2012. The city’s water sources are considered most vulnerable to the following: sewer collection systems, stormwater drainage points, high density housing, gas stations, auto-body and boat repair shops, dry cleaners, agricultural runoff, agricultural wells, and low-density septic systems.”

You’ll note that none of these contaminants are attributed to homeless camps.

Were any of these contaminants a problem? The latest water quality report on the water division’s webpage is from 2019; they reported that “all of our samples were negative (non-detected) for cyanotoxins. UCMR4 continued in 2019 with testing for two metals, nine pesticides, three semi-volatile organics, three alcohols, and eight disinfection byproducts.”

So even though the camps have been prevalent in the riverbed for decades, there have been no reports of contaminants that exceed the limits established by the U.S. EPA or the California water resources board.

Homeless camps are both a nuisance and a hazard to first responders and members of the public who may stumble upon them while hiking in the riverbed or, for that matter, in the urban area. There have been several fires and assaults and three murders in these camps. The accumulation of trash has returned to the riverbed and needs to be addressed.

But let’s be clear: Based on well water supply test information that is readily available, the water supply for the city of Lompoc is not in any danger because of the camps or any other source of contamination, for that matter.

I think that the mayor and city staff need to choose their words more carefully in the future. Claiming that there is a threat to our water supply as a means of justifying the misallocation of drinking water fees without any supporting data is irresponsible. ○

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

## City business

Santa Maria’s new user fee study sheds light on city operations, expenses

BY MARY HARVEY

We believe that Santa Maria residents and customers appreciate understanding where their hard-earned money goes for city services. And we sometimes hear that government should be run more like a business. You are invited to learn more about a new city user fee analysis that ties these principles together.

The city is sharing with its constituents a new user fee study that identifies the full business cost of providing services that affect our quality of life. These range from public safety, ensuring safe development, maintaining what we have, and leisure and cultural services.

Numerous user fees—such as a business license, building plan review for a home remodel, swim lessons, or grading inspections—could be increased, introduced, or in some cases reduced.

The city works hard to continually keep costs low and services efficient. However, even at a low cost, the question is what is the proportion of who pays for these costs, the person benefitting from the service, or is it subsidized by taxpayers?

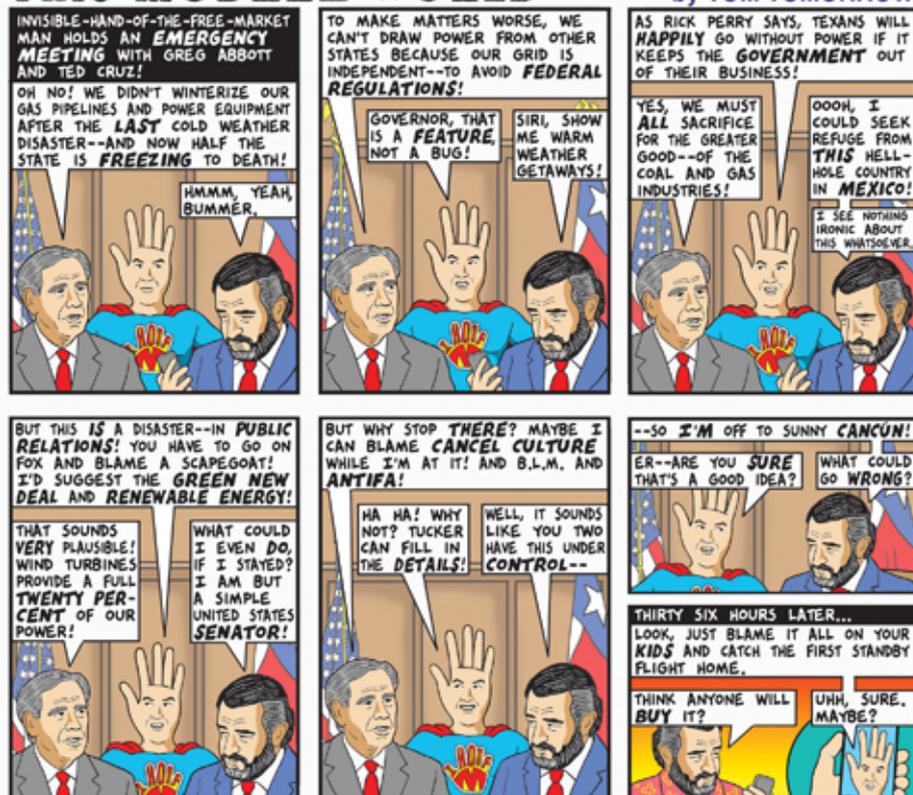
Learn more about the study and its recommendations and give us your input by attending a virtual public workshop via Zoom video conferencing on March 11. You also may read the study online at [cityofsantamaria.org/proposeduserfees](http://cityofsantamaria.org/proposeduserfees).

The motivation for this study is the need of both the City Council and city staff to maintain service levels. The city faces severe financial challenges to maintain services and on July 1 will begin its 13th consecutive fiscal year of costs exceeding revenues. We are balancing the budget using one-time reserves, keeping vacant

CITY BUSINESS continued page 12

## THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



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## OPINION

### Greenhouse politics

Who knew building a greenhouse on agriculturally zoned land could be so controversial?

Ooh, pick me! Pick me!

It's definitely not surprising that the same county that brought you years of discussion over whether or not hoop houses should be allowed over a nice view from Highway 101 is the same county in which a group of neighbors can hold up development on a property—even when the development in question seems to be in line with what the property was zoned for.

I guess **Steve Decker**, who wants to build a 16,000-square-foot greenhouse on his property outside of **Solvang**, didn't realize how loud the voices of opposition would chime when he received a land use permit last June.

Or how loud they would be when he changed the application from a greenhouse growing cannabis to one growing vegetables. He had two strikes against him from the start: His property is in **Santa Barbara County** and it's also in the **Santa Ynez Valley**, where nosy neighbors are definitely a thing, the NIMBY spirit is strong, private property rights only apply to them (not their neighbors), and he mentioned cannabis one time.

Led by a very un-neighborly **Stephen Jacobs**, the appellants claimed the greenhouse was incompatible with surrounding residences, that Decker still intended to run a cannabis farm, and the project would use too much water.

The crew of greenhouse grippers succeeded in swaying the **Santa Barbara County Planning Commission** in September 2020. The commission upheld the appeal, denying his project and ignoring staff's take on the project: Decker's property is zoned for "maximum agricultural productivity," and the county has to weigh the merits of the actual application—not the project applicant's intent.

Decker appealed the decision to the **Board of Supervisors**, stating that he felt the commission didn't give him a fair shake.

For one, they didn't listen to his offer to add conditions to the project. Aren't conditions a thing with the Planning Commission? If a project is going to decimate gophers on 1 square meter of open space, the commission conditions the project to create a gopher playground somewhere else as mitigation. For two, the hearing wasn't impartial. Yep. There was a lot of cannabis talk thrown in there for a project to grow veggies!

In a February hearing, Jacobs argued that the greenhouse would "dramatically change the current makeup of the neighborhood."

Well, maybe you shouldn't have bought or built a house on ag land, man! Decker is hanging his project on the Santa Ynez

Valley Community Plan, which is all about "protecting agricultural uses on agricultural lands."

Jacobs again voiced cannabis concerns, which Decker called "irrational." I second that. All of

his neighbors have their binoculars out looking for telltale signs, so Decker would be tempting fate to grow something like that illegally. And he told the *Sun* as much: "It's an absurd notion."

**Third District Supervisor Joan Hartmann** said she opposed the greenhouse because she was concerned about protecting the "rural and scenic character" of the area. It's a rural, agricultural area where *greenhouses are a thing*. Joan!

**Fifth District Supervisor Steve Lavagnino** couched his response in typical Steve fashion, saying he didn't like the greenhouse project (why?) but legally, he'd have to side with Decker.

Wow, greenhouse politics are so tense!

Now, Decker has to get a California Environmental Quality Act review. For a greenhouse. ☪

*The Canary is for greenhouses on ag land. Send comments to canary@santamariasun.com.*



## the Habit BURGER GRILL

PROUDLY SERVING  
SANTA BARBARA COUNTY  
FOR OVER 40 YEARS

*There's no substitute for quality!*

### LOCATIONS

<b>Santa Maria</b> 985 E. Betteravia	<b>Buellton</b> 205 East Hwy 246	<b>Lompoc</b> 1413 North H Street	<b>Downtown SB</b> 628 State Street
<b>Milpas</b> 216 South Milpas	<b>La Cumbre Plaza</b> 3890 La Cumbre Ln Norte	<b>Goleta (The Original)</b> 5735 Hollister	<b>Isla Vista</b> 888 Embarcadero Del

### CITY BUSINESS from page 11

positions unfilled, and reducing expenses where possible.

It has been 15 years since the last user fee study. In May 2005, the City Council adopted user fees based on a 2005 user fee study. Except for July 2020 (because the fee study was underway), those fees were increased annually since then based on the Consumer Price Index. In the 15 years since that 2005 study, many city costs to provide services have far outpaced inflation.

This analysis provides the city with a systematic and documented approach to understand, control, and recapture the costs placed on it by normal service demands, growth, and general economic inflation.

Whether residents pay for a given service through taxes or user fees is determined through a process of assessing the individual and societal benefits of that service. Following that benefit assessment, each city service is funded either: 1) fully tax-supported with no user fees, 2) partially tax-supported with reduced user fees, 3) no-tax supported with full user fees, or paid for by 4) licenses, permits, and approvals.

This user fee study recommends establishing a cost control structure that follows business principles, to achieve more equity between taxpayers and user fee payers, and to improve the city's financial position.

One of the City Council's main job duties is to adopt the city's annual budget. The council sets fiscal policies to guide expenditures and revenue. This includes approving fees and charges.

The consultant is recommending

**WRITE NOW!** We want to know everything. Send your 250-word letter to Sun Letters, 2450 Skyway Drive, suite A, Santa Maria, CA 93455. You can also fax it (1-805-347-9889) or e-mail it (letters@santamariasun.com). All letters must include a name, address, and phone number for verification purposes; may be edited for space or clarity; and will be posted to santamariasun.com.

most fees be increased and the taxpayer subsidies be eliminated. They state that the recommendations, if implemented, would establish a cost control system following the business principles that are generally espoused for government but are often ignored in application.

The council has in the past decided to subsidize certain fees because there is a public benefit to do so. An example is the establishment of swimming fees at less than full cost recovery to promote exercise, water safety, and good health.

The council could choose to phase in fee adjustments. Just like any business, if the city does not continually raise revenues to cover its expenses, it will fall behind, and that is the city's present situation.

As is the Santa Maria way, we are again being transparent about our situation as we continue to work hard to continue maintaining a range of municipal services that support our quality of life. ☪

*Mary Harvey is the director of finance for the city of Santa Maria. Send responses for publication to letters@santamariasun.com.*

## What's Your Take?

We know you've got an opinion.  
Everybody's got one!

This week's online poll  
2/25 - 3/4

Where do you stand on youth sports during the pandemic?

- Getting any kids back on the field is a step in the right direction.
- They should have been allowed back months ago; our youth need sports.
- It's too soon—we're still living in a pandemic.
- Low-contact sports are one thing, football and basketball are another.

Enter your choice online at:  
SantaMariaSun.com

Sun



# Lifting the Spirits of Cancer Patients on the Central Coast



For more information about Hats For Hope:

 (805) 489-4161

 [info@hatsforhope.com](mailto:info@hatsforhope.com)

 [www.hatsforhope.com](http://www.hatsforhope.com)



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# Hopeful in 2021

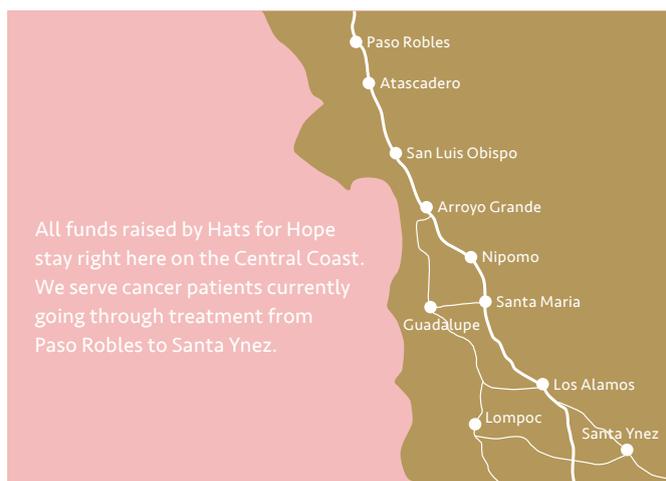
## THE HATS FOR HOPE ANNUAL BENEFIT & AUCTION MARCH 20TH, 2021

**WE'RE GOING VIRTUAL! LIVE EVENT STARTS AT 7:30 PM**

To "attend" our virtual event and sign up to bid on some amazing auction items, go to:

<https://hatsforhope.givesmart.com>

Once you've signed up you can preview live auction items and begin bidding on silent auction items.



The Hats For Hope Annual Benefit & Auction sustains the cost of the Hats For Hope Wig and Gifting Programs. The Hats For Hope program is run by a board of volunteers and **100% of the funds raised** go to help Central Coast residents battling cancer.

### Thanks to donations made in 2020:

- Hats For Hope was able to continue giving **wig certificates** to Central Coast residents who lost their hair due to cancer treatment.
- Hats For Hope granted over **\$65,000 in cash gifts** to Central Coast cancer patients struggling financially due to their diagnosis.

## THANK YOU TO OUR EVENT SPONSORS!

### MAIN EVENT SPONSORS:

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Home Motors  
Innovative Produce  
Jerry & Stephanie Schmidt

Mechanics Bank  
Ogden Wealth Management  
Papich Construction  
Prافل & Sangita Patel  
Primus Labs  
Santa Maria Breakfast Rotary  
Tetra Tech  
Vernon Edwards Construction  
Cathy Teixeira - In Memory of Darlene Stowasser  
Hutchinson Family Trust - In Memory of Diane Vollum



**Because YOU care there IS HOPE!**



# HOT STUFF

FEB. 25 – MARCH 4  
2021

**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!

## PLAYWRIGHT MAKES RIGHT

As part of its InterPlay series, the Pacific Conservatory Theatre (PCPA) will stream two live readings of *The Mountaintop*, via Zoom on Friday, Feb. 26, at 7 p.m. and Saturday, Feb. 27, at 1:30 p.m. Yusef Seevers (pictured, right) will read as Martin Luther King Jr. in *The Mountaintop*, while Emily Trask (left) will read as Maggie Dalton in the program's following readings of *Into the Breches!* on Friday, March 5, at 7 p.m. and Saturday, March 6, at 1:30 p.m. Visit [pcpa.org/interplay](http://pcpa.org/interplay) for more details.

—Caleb Wiseblood

FILE PHOTO COURTESY OF LUIS ESCOBAR REFLECTIONS PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIO

[artcentralslo.wordpress.com/blog/](http://artcentralslo.wordpress.com/blog/). San Luis Obispo.

**CAMBRIA CENTER FOR THE ARTS VIRTUAL GALLERY: VINEYARD CHURCH PAINTERS** A new virtual group show titled 'It's About Time.' If interested in submitting work, view site for requirements (deadline to submit is March 4). **March 6** and **March 6-April 25** Free. 805-434-7060. [galleries@cambriacenterforthearts.org](mailto:galleries@cambriacenterforthearts.org). Online, See website, San Luis Obispo.

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

**PANEL DISCUSSION: GREASE, WATER, AND STONE** Join SLOMA for a lively panel discussion with printmakers Steve Andrews, Conrad Schwable, and Jeff Sipple to discuss his Gray Wing exhibition, "Grease, Water, and Stone: An Ocean Works Retrospective." The exhibition features lithographs created by Ocean Works Press between 1979 and 1983. Through Feb. 28, noon Free. 805-543-8562. [slo.ma.org/panel-discussion-ocean-works/](http://slo.ma.org/panel-discussion-ocean-works/). Online, See website, San Luis Obispo.

**ROSEY 'N' BARB: STILL AT IT AFTER ALL THESE YEARS** Barbara and Robert "Rosey" Rosenthal, award-winning printmakers, have been art partners since 1980. For this unique show, Barbara is showing her rich, landscape paintings and Rosey his colorful, gouache paintings. Mondays-Saturdays, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. through March 29 Free. 805-747-4200. [artcentralartsupply.com](http://artcentralartsupply.com). Art Central, 1329 Monterey St., San Luis Obispo.

**SLOPE PAINTS THE SERENE MAGIC OF SANTA RITA RANCH: A VIRTUAL ART EXHIBIT** SLOPE painters celebrate with The Land Conservancy of SLO their acquisition of the incredible Santa Rita Ranch, a 1715-acre jewel at the top of Highway 46 West between the Pacific Ocean and Templeton. The Land Conservancy will receive a portion of art sale proceeds. Through Feb. 28, 6-midnight Free. 805-544-9096. [slope-painters.com](http://slope-painters.com). Online, See website, San Luis Obispo.

**VIRTUAL ART GALLERY** Every Friday, we publish our Virtual Art Gallery to our blog and newsletter. Featuring artworks from customers and the community. Fridays, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Free. 805-747-4200. [artcentralslo.wordpress.com/category/gallery-exhibits/virtual-gallery/](http://artcentralslo.wordpress.com/category/gallery-exhibits/virtual-gallery/). Art Central, 1329 Monterey St., San Luis Obispo.

**VIRTUAL OPEN STUDIOS ART TOUR** Visit ARTS Obispo's Facebook page to view works from several local artists and artisans. Free. [facebook.com/artsobispo](https://www.facebook.com/artsobispo). Downtown SLO, Higuera Street, San Luis Obispo.

ARTS continued page 18



## ARTS

### SANTA YNEZ VALLEY

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

**COLOR AND LIGHT** Artists Neil Andersson and Vicki Andersen display their oil and acrylic paintings in this exhibit at Gallery Los Olivos. Open Mondays & Thursdays, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays, Thursdays-Sundays, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. through March 29 805-688-7517. [GalleryLosOlivos.com](http://GalleryLosOlivos.com). Gallery Los Olivos, 2920 Grand Ave., Los Olivos.

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

**NEW PERSPECTIVES** A collection of paintings by the gallery's newest artists. Through March 1 Gallery Los Olivos, 2920 Grand Ave., Los Olivos, 805-688-7517, [gallerylosolivos.com](http://gallerylosolivos.com).

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

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

### SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS

**INTERPLAY (VIRTUAL): THE MOUNTAINTOP** This drama, set in Memphis, Tennessee, on April 3, 1968, reimagines the final night of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s life. PCPA Resident Artist Yusef Seevers will read as King during this livestream. **Feb. 26**, 7 p.m. and **Feb. 27**, 1:30 p.m. \$10. [pcpa.org](http://pcpa.org). PCPA: The Pacific Conservatory Theatre, Santa Maria, 805-922-8313.

**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. ongoing 805-925-0464. [coelhomusic.com](http://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](http://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](http://pcpa.org).

**RAINBOW MACRAME FOR TEENS: SANTA MARIA PUBLIC LIBRARY** Brighten up your space with a neon macramé rainbow wall decoration. Packs include everything they need to make their own macramé project. This program is open to teens in junior high and high school only. Registration is required. **Feb. 25, Feb. 26** and **Feb. 27** Free. 805-925-0994. [engagedpatrons.org](http://engagedpatrons.org). SM Public Library, 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria.

**SANTA MARIA PUBLIC LIBRARY: BOOK CLUB OVER THE PHONE** A teleconference book discussion group. For more information email [jgaytan@cityofsantamaria.org](mailto:jgaytan@cityofsantamaria.org) First Tuesday of every month, 2-3 p.m. 805-925-0994. [cityofsantamaria.org/city-government/departments/library](http://cityofsantamaria.org/city-government/departments/library). 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](http://pcpa.org).

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

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

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

**WRITING CLUB TO GO: SANTA MARIA PUBLIC LIBRARY** The writing club is designed for students up through grade 12. The writing packs include a journal, and a variety of activities to inspire amateur authors. Each month the kits will feature new and exciting projects that will help strengthen writing skills. Registration required. **Feb. 25, Feb. 26** and **Feb. 27** Free. 805-925-0994. [engagedpatrons.org](http://engagedpatrons.org). SM Public Library, 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria.

### SAN LUIS OBISPO

**ART CENTRAL ON INSTAGRAM: LIVE DEMONSTRATIONS** Follow @artcentralslo on Instagram for free live streamed art demos with talented artists using supplies from the store to celebrate its 10th anniversary. You can also find exclusive sales and deals during the month of February. Mondays-Sundays. through Feb. 28. 805-747-4200. [instagram.com/artcentralslo/](http://instagram.com/artcentralslo/). San Luis Obispo.

**ART CENTRAL'S 10TH ANNIVERSARY** Enjoy three weeks of special sales, live demos, giveaways, and more. Follow Art Central on social media for updates. Mondays-Saturdays, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. through Feb. 27 Free. 805-747-4200. [artcentralslo.wordpress.com](http://artcentralslo.wordpress.com). Art Central, 1329 Monterey St., San Luis Obispo.

**CALL FOR ARTISTS: ART CENTRAL'S VIRTUAL GALLERY** Most Fridays, Art Central publishes a "Virtual Gallery" and is looking for more artwork to include. Please email us your artwork so we can continue to encourage, support, and inspire the local art community. Attach your image, name, title, medium, size and any inspiring words you would like to share. Fridays, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. through May 28 Free. 805-747-4200.

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- Food & Drink..... [19]
- Music ..... [19]

## NORTH SLO COUNTY

**FUSED GLASS SQUARE PLATE OR BOWL** Learn the basics of fusing and slumping in this 2-hour beginner class. You may use pre-cut glass pieces, or learn how to cut glass shapes to create your own unique design. All materials included. Limited to 6 people. **March 7**, 11 a.m.-1 p.m. \$100. 805-464-2633. glassheadstudio.com. Glasshead Studio, 8793 Plata Lane, Suite H, Atascadero.

**SLOPE PAINTS TO PRESERVE** Please stop by to see this exhibit of stunning originals and prints by San Luis Outdoor Painters for the Environment (SLOPE), featuring some of our region's top landscape artists, who use their art to raise awareness, funding, and education for the Central Coast's treasured open spaces. Wednesdays-Sundays, 12-8:45 p.m. through Feb. 28 Free. 805-238-9800. slope-painters.com/. Studios on the Park, 1130 Pine St., Paso Robles.

**STAINED GLASS SUNCATCHER CLASS** Create a unique stained glass suncatcher in this four-hour class. You will learn how to cut glass to a pattern, copper foil the edges, and solder. All materials included. Bring a bag lunch, as we will take a 30-minute break. Limited to 4 people **Feb. 27**, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. \$125. 805-464-2633. glassheadstudio.com. Glasshead Studio, 8793 Plata Lane, Suite H, Atascadero.

**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

**BIG DREAMS, LITTLE WORKS** Features small paintings and drawings, no bigger than 8 inches square, in all media (showcased in the Upper Gallery). Featured Artists: Tyler Priest, Carole McDonald, Stevie Chun, Suzanne Leon, and Lisa Kanofsky. Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays-Sundays, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. through Feb. 27 Free. 805-772-1068. galleryatmarinasquare.com. Gallery at Marina Square, 601 Embarcadero suite 10, Morro Bay.

**GALLERY AT MARINA SQUARE: CHINESE BRUSH PAINTINGS BY JARI DE HAM** Jari de Ham began Chinese brush painting in 2002. Includes landscapes and figure paintings. Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays-Sundays, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. through March 29 Free. 805-772-1068. galleryatmarinasquare.com. Gallery at Marina Square, 601 Embarcadero suite 10, Morro Bay.

**PAPER AND FIBER** This show bursts with color and texture in all media and sizes. Artworks of felted wool, fiber,

and paper collages, to quilted cloth, and more. Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays-Sundays, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. through Feb. 27 Free. 805-772-1068. galleryatmarinasquare.com. Gallery at Marina Square, 601 Embarcadero suite 10, Morro Bay.

**SKYE WRIGHT: GALLERY AT MARINA SQUARE** Digital artist Skye Wright has had a love affair with art since early childhood. As an adult, she began a 3-year intensive education in Adobe Illustrator ("love at first

IMAGE COURTESY OF JIM GREGORY



## AVIATION AND INNOVATION

*Cuesta College presents a virtual program on the history of local aviation, Central Coast Aviators in World War II, which will become available online starting on Monday, March 1. This three-part course will examine the roles that local schools, including Allan Hancock College and Cal Poly, played in training fliers. Admission is \$30. Call (805) 305-3375 or visit [cuesta.edu/communityprograms](http://cuesta.edu/communityprograms) to find out more.*

—C.W.

click"). Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays-Sundays, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. through March 29 Free. 805-772-1068. galleryatmarinasquare.com. Gallery at Marina Square, 601 Embarcadero suite 10, Morro Bay.

## CULTURE &amp; 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. [partnersincaring.org](http://partnersincaring.org). Santa Maria, Citywide

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

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

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

**YOUTH 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. Registration begins Feb. 6. **March 3** Free. 805-925-0994. [engagedpatrons.org](http://engagedpatrons.org). SM Public Library, 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria.



**LEARN TO SURF: BEGINNER SURF LESSONS** Beginner surf lessons for you, your zoomers, and your homeschoolers. All equipment provided with the \$70 charge. Every other Monday-Sunday, 8:45-11 a.m. through April 30 \$70. 805-489-8823. [surfpismo.com](http://surfpismo.com). Pismo Beach Pier, West end of Pomeroy, Pismo Beach.

## POINT SAN LUIS LIGHTHOUSE VIRTUAL TOUR

Join a live docent via Zoom for an interactive virtual tour of the Point San Luis Lighthouse. Wednesdays, Saturdays, 2 p.m. \$10. [pointsanluislighthouse.org/](http://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, [5citysswimschool.com](http://5citysswimschool.com).

## SAN LUIS OBISPO

**CARNEGIE LECTURE: THE QUICK AND THE DEAD** In 1858, the Committee of Vigilance hanged seven Californio men in Mission Plaza. A posse pursued Pio Linares, the alleged ringleader, to the Los Osos Valley and killed him in an extended shootout. Pete Kelley, noted local author and historian, has studied the record intensively. **March 5**, 5:30 p.m. Free. 805-543-0638. [historycenterslo.org/lecture](http://historycenterslo.org/lecture). Online, See website, San Luis Obispo.

**THE ECONOMIC VITALITY CORPORATION: SLO COUNTY BROADBAND SUMMIT** Featured speakers, include Karen Ross, Secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture, and Sunne McPeak, President and CEO of the California Emerging Technology Fund. **Feb. 25**, 10 a.m. [sloevc.org](http://sloevc.org). Online, See website, San Luis Obispo.

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CULTURE &amp; LIFESTYLE continued page 19

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**THE NONVIOLENT LIFE: A CONVERSATION ABOUT NON-VIOLENT LIVING** Join us for a conversation about non-violent living based on "The Nonviolent Life", which explores the powerful journey of nonviolence rooted in the Christian vision of love. The conversation will be led by Rev. Caroline Hall on Zoom. Tuesdays, 10:15 a.m.-noon through April 6 Free. 805-528-0654. stbensososos.org. Zoom, Online, Inquire for Zoom ID.

**PARENT PARTICIPATION AND PARENT EDUCATION CLASSES ONLINE (THROUGH SAN LUIS COASTAL ADULT SCHOOL)** Find support and connect with others in weekly online parenting classes. Learn about the developmental stage of your child, participate in teacher-facilitated discussions on parenting topics, explore local resources, and safely enjoy the company of other parents. Mondays-Thursdays. through May 28 \$10-\$30. 805-549-1253. slcsud.org. Online, See website, San Luis Obispo.

**PARENTING THE INFANT, BABY AND ME YOGA, AND PREPARING FOR THE POSTPARTUM PERIOD (ONLINE)** Meet other parents and form connections that last a lifetime in Parent Participation's infant classes (ages 0 to 12 months). Learn from the comfort and safety of your own home. Expecting parents welcome. Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays. through May 28 \$10-\$46. 805-549-1253. slcsud.org. Online, See website, San Luis Obispo.

**SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION (SEO): FREE WEBINAR** This webinar focuses on content creation for SEO. Find out how Google works on the inside. **March 3**, 12-1:30 p.m. 805-595-1357. mcscorp.ecenterdirect.com. Online, See website, San Luis Obispo.

**SLO COUNTY MEDICAL RESERVE CORPS: VOLUNTEERS NEEDED** The SLO County Medical Reserve Corps is looking for volunteers to help with vaccine distribution and contact tracing. Apply online. ongoing.emergencyslo.org. SLO County, Countywide, San Luis Obispo.

**SLO NOONTIME TOASTMASTERS CLUB MEETINGS** Want to improve speaking and leadership skills in a supportive and positive environment? During COVID, we are meeting virtually. Contact us to get a meeting link for info. Tuesdays, 12-1 p.m. Free. slonoontime.toastmastersclubs.org. Zoom, Online, Inquire for Zoom ID.

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**PRESQU'ILE WINERY: RESERVATIONS ONLY** Call or go online to make a reservation (reservations open to the public starting June 6). ongoing Presqu'ile Winery, 5391 Presqu'ile Dr., Santa Maria, 805-937-8110, presquilewine.com.

### SOUTH COAST SLO COUNTY

**ARROYO GRANDE FARMERS MARKET** Saturdays, 12-2:25 p.m. Arroyo Grande Farmers Market, Olohan Alley.

## MUSIC

### SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS

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

### SAN LUIS OBISPO

**CAL POLY WIND BANDS WINTER CONCERT: 'COMMUNITY'** Music has the ability to bring together minds and souls. For this concert, the members of the Cal Poly Wind Bands explore the connections between individuals that make us part of a larger whole, whether they are performing in person or remotely. **March 6**, 7:30 p.m. \$5. 805-756-4849. music.calpoly.edu/calendar/winds. Online, See website, San Luis Obispo.

**GINO AND THE LONE GUNMEN: BASIN STREET REGULARS LIVESTREAM** Gino and the Lone Gunmen is a three-piece band that performs a rockin' mix of jazz, rockabilly, swing, blues, country, and more. **Feb. 28**, 2 p.m. 805-937-8402. pismojazz.com. Online, See website, San Luis Obispo.

**KRISTEN BLACK BAND: ALBUM DEBUT AND LIVE CONCERT (VIRTUAL)** Kristen Black, formerly of SLO, now of Nashville, will be debuting her new album, *The Healing*. **Feb. 27**, 6-7 p.m. Starts at \$5. stageit.com. Online, See website, San Luis Obispo.

**SLO SYMPHONY POP-UP DRIVE-IN CONCERT: ROMANTIC CLASSICS** Enjoy Romantic-period compositions from Beethoven, Ysaÿe, and de Sarasate, and more. Will also be available as a virtual concert to enjoy from home. Come early for the best parking spot. **March 6**, 7:30 p.m. slo-symphony.com. Madonna Meadows, 100 Madonna Road, San Luis Obispo.



## BIG BLUE

*The city of Santa Maria Recreation and Parks Department is seeking local artists to beautify five different utility boxes located throughout town. Artist applications are due no later than Wednesday, March 17, by 5 p.m. Each chosen artist will receive a stipend of \$500 and up to \$250 as reimbursement for material costs. Call (805) 925-0951, Ext. 2260, or visit cityofsantamaria.org/recreation for application templates and more info.*

—C.W.

### NORTH SLO COUNTY

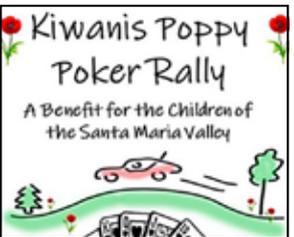
**3 SONGWRITERS SHARE THE STAGE** Songwriters at Play host Steve Key is joined by Ken McMeans and John Nowel of the band Stereo Chickens. Steve, Ken, and John are all writers, so they'll swap songs and jam on some favorite tunes as well. **March 6**, 12:30-3:30 p.m. Free. 805-204-6821. stevekey.com/events. Sculpterra Winery, 5015 Linne Rd., Paso Robles. ○

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FRIDAY, MAY 14  
Hartley Farms, San Miguel



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SUNDAY, MAY 23  
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**Movie in the Gardens at Hartley Farms**  
TUESDAY, MAY 25  
Hartley Farms, San Miguel



**Yoga at the Lighthouse**  
SATURDAY, MAY 29  
Point San Luis Lighthouse, Avila Beach

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### Arts Briefs

## Sojourner Kincaid Rolle to judge the Wildling Museum's Earth Day Poetry Contest

The Wildling Museum of Art and Nature in Solvang is inviting residents of Santa Barbara County to enter its Earth Day Poetry Contest. Submissions are due no later than Monday, March 22, by 5 p.m. Under the contest's theme of Why Earth Day Matters, participants of the competition are asked to interpret the importance of Earth Day through their poems.

COURTESY PHOTO BY DOROTHY LITTLEJOHN



The contest is intended to highlight "the importance of standing up to protect the planet's dwindling natural resources and working against the threats of climate change," according to the Wildling Museum. Poetry entries will be judged by poet and environmental activist Sojourner Kincaid Rolle (pictured above), former poet laureate of Santa Barbara (2015 to 2017) and former associate editor for *Sage Trail Poetry Magazine*.

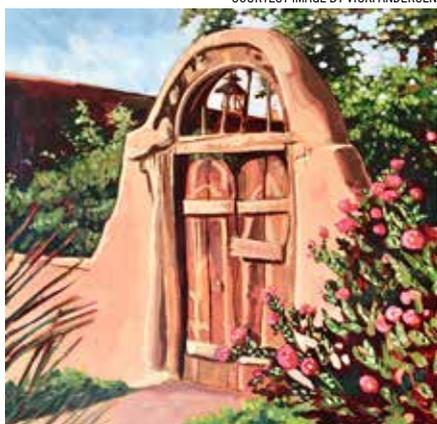
Throughout her career, Rolle has authored three collections of poetry: *The Mellow Yellow Global Umbrella*, *Common Ancestry*, and *Black Street*. She is currently working on a new book, *Where The Hum Begins*, which will be a compilation of "place" poems inspired by the Central Coast and other areas. Her environmental activism work includes collaborations with the Watershed Resource Center, the Sierra Club, and other organizations.

For the Earth Day Poetry Contest, Rolle will review entries and select which poems make it to the top three, which will be announced and read during the Community Environmental Council's virtual Santa Barbara Earth Day Celebration on Thursday, April 22.

Local poets of all ages are welcome to enter up to three different poems to the contest. For guidelines, requirements, a link to entry forms, and additional info, visit [wildlingmuseum.org](http://wildlingmuseum.org). The Wildling Museum of Art and Nature is located at 1511 Mission Drive, unit B, Solvang.

## Gallery Los Olivos holds new duo show, Color and Light, with Vicki Andersen and Neil Andersson

COURTESY IMAGE BY VICKI ANDERSEN



Gallery Los Olivos presents *Color and Light*, a new duo exhibition showcasing oil and acrylic paintings by local artists Vicki Andersen (whose work is pictured above) and Neil Andersson. The show is scheduled to premiere on Thursday, March 4, and remain on display through Monday, March 29.

For more info on the exhibit and other updates from Gallery Los Olivos, call the gallery directly at (805) 688-7517 or visit [gallerylosolivos.com](http://gallerylosolivos.com). The gallery is open every day except Tuesdays and Wednesdays, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and is located at 2920 Grand Ave., Los Olivos. ○

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

# Animal crossing

*Cupid's arrow points to the recently reopened Santa Barbara Zoo for a Valentine's Day adventure*

BY CALEB WISEBLOOD

A few clicks and a debit card number hold my online reservation for two at the Santa Barbara Zoo, which officially reopened to the public on Jan. 30. But today happens to be Feb. 14. I'm taking my valentine out on a daring day trip to said zoo, and we're not going home until we see some flamingos.

We're both wearing sunglasses that rest upon the tips of our masked noses, a minute detail to the unadventurous but I have to admit, I'm enjoying the notion of such accessories concealing our true identities. For all anyone knows, we could very well be a celebrity couple.

My delusions of incognito grandeur might become reality if we were the only masked party, but the zoo's rightfully strict face-covering policy makes that an impossibility. Following both state and county guidelines, the zoo also implemented safety enhancements, modifications, and protocols to allow guests back into the park with ample space for social distancing—including capacity limits and reserved entry time slots.

In other words, even if I kept the celebrity couple daydream going, there aren't many other zoo attendees around for me and my famous girlfriend to impress. But that's what made us comfortable enough to be here in the first place. I'm thankful for the chance to enjoy visiting the zoo's animals and outdoor exhibits without worrying about bumping into other parties or getting stuck in a crowd.

There are so many animal destinations to choose from as we trot down the park's yellow brick road of sorts—lions, and tigers, and bears, oh my! (Minus the tigers and bears). There are leopards though—a beautiful snow leopard, Kisa (Russian for "kitty"), and two Amur leopards, Ajax and Kasha.

We later share an intimate gaze with one of the zoo's two western lowland gorillas—Nzinga and Bangori. It's hard to tell for sure, but if I had to guess between the two, I'd say our eyes were locked with Bangori's, who the zoo's website describes as "laid back" and not mindful of strangers, while



**IT TAKES TWO TO FLAMINGO:** No trip to the Santa Barbara Zoo, which officially reopened to the public at the end of January, is complete without seeing the flamingos.

Nzinga is described as a "strong silent type."

Land dwellers aren't the only animal inhabitants we meet. Enter Avalon and Betsy, two majestic bald eagles who came to call the zoo their home while recovering from injuries that rendered them unable to return to the wild. Avalon sustained an injury to her left wing after colliding with a car in 2011. Although she has limited mobility, she can still make short flights and perch in trees. Betsy was found being held illegally and with significant wing injuries that left her unable to fly completely. She's resided at the zoo since 2000.

From wings to flippers, we later make—or should I say, march—our way to the Humboldt penguins' habitat. If you're wondering how these little fellows are able to live somewhere as snowless as the Central Coast, the zoo's website explains it all—and in excellent, punny fashion I might add.

"These penguins from the coast of South America like it 'Chile,' not chilly. In fact, their native South American climate is much like

Santa Barbara's," the site explains.

I can't help but notice the zoo is promoting a new children's book based on one of its very own Humboldt penguins, Monty. Written by Dori Edwards and illustrated by Ryan Carr, *Monty's Marvelous Adventures* follows the titular penguin as he wanders through the zoo, meeting other animals he's never before laid his eyes on along the way. The book was inspired by Monty's real-life supervised walks outside his penguin habitat, during the zoo's first pandemic closure last year.

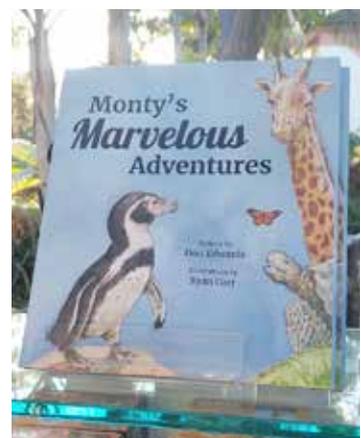
Although I personally don't grab a copy of the book on our way out, while passing the tempting outdoor gift displays near the zoo's exit, I refuse to walk away empty-handed. There's a penguin fridge magnet with my name on it, and it's less than \$5—quite a *steel* (get it?).

For the record, I also buy my girlfriend a giraffe keychain! ○

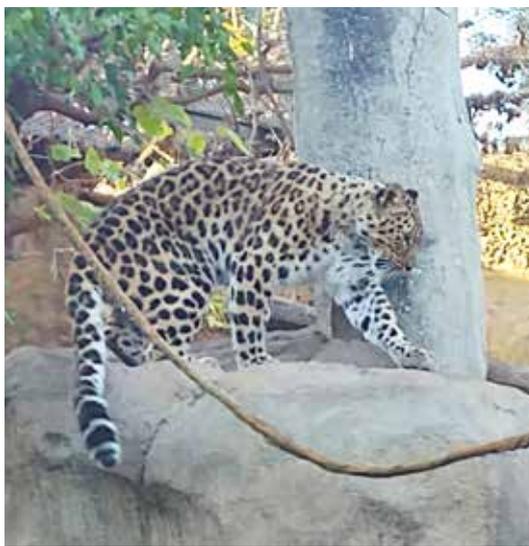
*Arts Editor Caleb Wiseblood has the Zoboomafo theme song stuck in his head. Send remedies to [cwiseblood@santamariasun.com](mailto:cwiseblood@santamariasun.com).*

### Walk the wild side

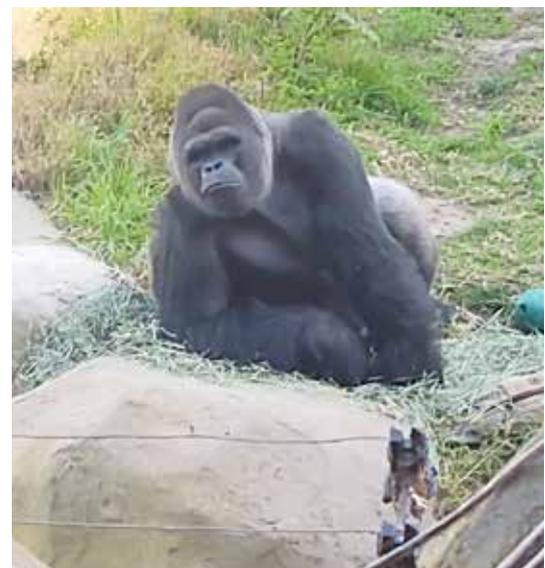
To find out more about the Santa Barbara Zoo, call (805) 962-5339 or visit [sbzoo.org](http://sbzoo.org). The zoo is located at 500 Ninos Drive, Santa Barbara.



**THE FULL MONTY:** Written by Dori Edwards and illustrated by Ryan Carr, *Monty's Marvelous Adventures* follows the titular Humboldt penguin as he wanders outside his habitat and through the zoo, meeting other animals he's never laid his eyes on before along the way.



**PURRFECTION:** The Santa Barbara Zoo houses three leopards, a beautiful snow leopard, Kisa (Russian for "kitty"), and two amur leopards, Ajax and Kasha.



**RETURN TO MONKE:** We share an intimate gaze with one of the Santa Barbara Zoo's two western lowland gorillas.



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## Teen angst

**C**reated by Sam Levinson (*Assassination Nation*, *The Wizard of Lies*), *Euphoria* follows the lives of a group of high school students as they deal with friendship, love, identity, drugs, sex, and trauma. It's loosely based on an Israeli TV series of the same name. (10 55-min. episodes)

**Glen:** File this one under the "hard to watch, hard to turn away from" department. If you've seen *Kids* (1995) or *Thirteen* (2003), you know how disturbing it is to see children make terrible choices, and that's essentially what *Euphoria* is all about, starting with Rue Bennett (Zendaya), a troubled young woman grappling with depression and self-medicating with whatever she can get her hands on. When she meets Jules Vaughn (Hunter Schafer), a transgender student new to Rue's school, they find they're kindred spirits and are fast friends. There's also Nate Jacobs (Jacob Elordi), the school quarterback who has a toxic relationship with cheerleader Maddy Perez (Alexa Demie); hanger-on Kat Hernandez (Barbie Ferreira), who finds her power as a cam girl; "easy" girl Cassie Howard (Sydney Sweeney); and a host of others. In an ironic twist, one of the most sympathetic characters is Fezco (Angus Cloud), Rue's drug supplier. One of the series' clear villains is Cal Jacobs (Eric Dane), quarterback Nate's father, who's into sex with underage trans females. I found it really hard to watch at first, but I was soon invested in these kids' lives,

desperately wanting them to be OK. It's difficult subject matter, but this series handles it with a lot of nuance.

**Anna:** These characters are seriously complicated, and the series aims to show that whatever your life looks like on the outside doesn't reveal what's really going on inside. Nate Jacobs is a really unlikeable guy—he's got the ego of a douchebag quarterback who has had life easily handed to him. You could look at him with his opulent lifestyle, his hot girlfriend, his status with his peers, and think he's got everything he could want and more. How could someone like that be miserable? Nate has been holding on to secrets galore for most of his life, and they've slowly eaten away at him and turned him into this self-loathing jerk who would rather burn down the world than admit his vulnerability. This show embodies that tortured teenage experience so well throughout all of its characters, and reminds those of us well out of our teen years how incredibly hard that time of building your identity can be. Complicated characters along with a visually stunning aesthetic make *Euphoria* one of a kind. I'm hooked.

**Glen:** Visually stunning indeed! The cinematography is incredible, as is the costuming and makeup, and the acting is sublime, especially Zendaya and Schafer, the latter of whom is making her acting debut in this series. You may have heard of her. Her father is a pastor, and when he moved his family to North Carolina to a new church, Schafer, a trans teenager, protested North Carolina's Public Facilities Privacy & Security Act, which made it

### EUPHORIA

What's it rated? **TV-MA**  
What's it worth, Anna? **Full price**  
What's it worth, Glen? **Full price**  
Where's it showing? **HBO Max**

illegal for trans people to use a public bathroom that didn't conform to the sex listed on their birth certificate.

The law was eventually repealed. She's a powerful performer, and she and Zendaya have compelling chemistry. Zendaya got her start as a child model and backup dancer, eventually landing the role of Rocky Blue on Disney's *Shake It Up*. She gets a chance to show off her singing talents in the final episode of the season in a fantasy sequence that's really interesting. *Euphoria* may be hard to watch, but it's worth the discomfort.

**Anna:** Zendaya and Schafer are both heavy-hitters, and there's a whole lot of talent and a whole lot of chemistry between them. I really like how the series is laid out: Individual characters or relationships may get focused on in an episode, but there is also a whole world of things going on around that particular storyline. It's pretty genius television-making, and the over-



**BESTIES:** Trans teenager Jules (Hunter Schafer, left) and her high school best friend, Rue (Zendaya), navigate the perils of sex, drugs, identity, and teen drama, in *Euphoria*, screening on HBO Max.

the-top perfection of the makeup and costuming paired with gritty and difficult storylines is a great juxtaposition. Even the awful, difficult, heartbreaking moments glow with a dark beauty. It's dramatic but doesn't even brush against becoming soap-opera-like. There are secrets and darkness and a bunch of young people experiencing the greatness and the terribleness of life for the first time. I can't wait for more of this, more of Rue and Jules, and more of that magnetic energy they give off. This one is worth every difficult moment. It's fantastic television. ○

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

## TV & Film Reviews

### THE NEW YORK TIMES PRESENTS FRAMING BRITNEY SPEARS (EPISODE 6)

What's it rated? **TV-MA**  
Where's it showing? **Hulu**

If you aren't already aware of the #FreeBritney movement, you are in for a wild ride! If you are familiar with the pop star at all, you probably remember that time when Spears went off the rails, shaved her head, and beat down a paparazzi's SUV with an umbrella. What you might not know is that Spears has been embroiled in a custodianship battle with her father, Jamie, for the last 12 years.

This *New York Times* profile deep-dives into Britney's beginnings as a tiny star with a big voice, her career jump-starting, and the insane sensation she became so quickly. The media was determined to undermine her from the start. From getting asked if she was a virgin on late-night television to getting blamed for her infamous split with Justin Timberlake, to having her mental fitness and ability to raise her children splashed across every grocery store tabloid aisle, that woman has been through the ringer.

*Framing Britney* follows her supporters and the ongoing saga



PHOTO COURTESY OF LEFT/RIGHT

**#FREEBRITNEY:** In *The New York Times Presents Framing Britney Spears*, the docuseries explores how pop star Britney Spears (right) has been under the conservatorship of her father, Jamie (left), for 12 years, currently available on Hulu.

as they stand in support of her outside of the courtroom as she pleads her case that she can manage her own life and her own money. At its heart, this portrait is trying to show what a hardworking, competent, and talented person Britney Spears is and that those few rough patches she went through shouldn't be her legacy. (74 min.)

—Anna

### JUDAS AND THE BLACK MESSIAH

What's it rated? **R**  
When? **2021**  
Where's it showing? **HBO Max**

Shaka King (*Newlyweds*) directs this biopic set in the late '60s about Fred Hampton (Daniel Kaluuya), chairman of the Illinois chapter of the Black Panther Party, who comes under the scrutiny of J. Edgar Hoover (Martin Sheen) and the FBI. It's also the story of informant Bill O'Neal (LaKeith Stanfield), who's coerced by FBI agent Roy Mitchell (Jesse Plemons) to infiltrate the Black Panthers and spy on Hampton and his operation. Finally, it's also the story of Hampton's relationship with fellow revolutionary Deborah Johnson (Dominique Fishback), who was with Hampton the night he was assassinated in bed by law enforcement.

It's always good to be reminded of our faults, and the sad case of Fred Hampton and Bill O'Neal is yet another black mark on U.S. history. You may not realize it watching this film, since Kaluuya is 31 and Stanfield is 29, but Hampton was murdered when he was just 21 years old, and O'Neal was a 17-year-old when he was forced by the FBI to infiltrate the Black Panthers. The episode shows how fearful the powers that be were of Panthers, who thanks to government



PHOTO COURTESY OF BRON CREATIVE

**A DANGEROUS MAN:** In *Judas and the Black Messiah* screening on HBO Max, Daniel Kaluuya stars as Black Panther Fred Hampton, who was considered so dangerous by the FBI and Chicago police that he was murdered in his bed by law enforcement.

propaganda were horribly maligned.

Both Kaluuya and Stanfield deliver remarkable performances. Kaluuya embodies Hampton's undeniable charisma, and Stanfield communicates O'Neal's inner torment as he awakens to the Panthers' powerful message of unity. (126 min.) ○

—Glen

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**BEHIND THE CUISINE:** Trattoria Uliveto chef and co-owner Alfonso Curti's (pictured) culinary career began when he was a teenager working at his family's bakery. A native of Calabria, a region in southern Italy, Curti moved to the U.S. in the 1990s, and brought a plethora of his family's unique Italian recipes with him.



**SCHOOL FUNDRAISER:** During December of last year, Trattoria Uliveto collaborated with Pacific Christian School in Santa Maria on a family meal fundraiser. On pickup day, families picked up their takeout dinners from a large tent in the school's parking lot.

### Chic Parmesan

To find out more about Trattoria Uliveto, call (805) 934-4546 or visit [trattoriauliveto.com](http://trattoriauliveto.com). The restaurant is located at 285 Broadway St., Orcutt.



**FAMILY MATTERS:** Each family meal package includes bread, salad, and different options for the main dish, including chicken parmigiana, lasagna, penne bolognese, rigatoni with meatballs, and more. Designed to feed a family of four, the package is usually offered on a daily basis for \$45.

## Pasta on the patio

February marked the debut of Trattoria Uliveto's new spacious patio setting in Old Town Orcutt

BY CALEB WISEBLOOD

"I'm going to be honest with you, even when they let us back inside, we might just stay outside," said Alfonso Curti, chef and co-owner of Trattoria Uliveto, which recently unveiled its new patio space for outdoor dining.

Following a steady lunch rush, and a successful dinner service the night prior, Curti sounded enthusiastic during an afternoon phone call with the *Sun* on Feb. 17.

It was Ash Wednesday, which prompted the Italian eatery to promote its various seafood offerings, from linguini crostacei (linguini with mussels, clams, shrimp, and calamari) to zuppa di pesce (seafood broth with mussels, clams, calamari, and the fish of the day). One of Curti's personal faves on this side of the menu is the sole piccata.

"It might be too early to tell, but things are looking great," the seasoned chef said in regard to the spacious patio's positive feedback so far.

While the new outdoor setting comes complete with patio heaters to warm diners during brisk evenings, Curti predicts the patio will attract more patrons with each passing week, as winter comes to an end and spring approaches.

"The weather is only going to get better from here," Curti said.

Like nearly all restaurateurs, Curti was obliged to embrace new business tactics in order to adapt to the pandemic, starting with the first shutdowns back in March of last year. He can remember that eerie weekend like it was yesterday.

The morning after Trattoria Uliveto's last regular evening service before to the statewide shelter-in-place order, Curti was brainstorming

how to proceed.

"I remember waking up and telling my wife that we had to start making 'family meals,'" Curti said.

Trattoria Uliveto began offering special family takeout dinners, with each package including bread, salad, and different options for the main

dish, including chicken parmigiana, lasagna, penne bolognese, rigatoni with meatballs, and more. The restaurant continues to offer its family meals, designed to feed a family of four, usually on a daily basis for \$45 (early pre-orders are required with occasional exceptions).

During December of last year, Trattoria Uliveto collaborated with Pacific Christian School in Santa Maria on a family meal fundraiser. Curti jumped at the chance to help raise funds for the school after he was approached by a friend with children enrolled at Pacific Christian. On Dec. 16, a large tent inhabited the school's parking lot for the fundraiser's pickup day. Inside the tent were several tables, all lined with row after row of takeout family dinners.

"It's a win-win concept—we win and the school wins," said Curti, who continued the dinner fundraiser trend the following month to benefit another local school.

At the end of January, Trattoria Uliveto hosted a family meal pickup night to benefit St. Louis De Montfort School in Santa Maria. For each customer who mentioned the school throughout the evening, 15 percent of their total cost was donated. The event raised about \$7,000 in sales, said Curti, who hopes to benefit more schools and other organizations with future fundraiser events.

While the takeout family meal option has been a constant for Trattoria Uliveto since it was first introduced in March, its onsite dining has fluctuated throughout the course of the COVID-19 crisis, depending on what the current local and state mandates allowed.

For Curti, one silver lining to come out of

the past several months is the increased amount of restaurants striving to make their establishments compatible with outdoor dining, especially locally and in areas you wouldn't expect to find such options.

"It took a pandemic for Santa Maria to discover outdoor dining," said Curti, who co-founded Trattoria Uliveto in 2008 with fellow restaurateur Jim Spallino.

Curti's culinary career began when he was a teenager while working at his family's bakery, according to Trattoria Uliveto's website. A native of Calabria, a region in southern Italy, Curti moved to the U.S. in the 1990s, and brought a plethora of his family's unique Italian recipes with him.

Spallino, a longtime Central Coast resident and business owner, first met Curti while he was working as the executive chef of Grappolo in the Santa Ynez Valley, a restaurant Spallino often frequented. After meeting, Spallino and Curti soon sought to collaborate on an eatery of their own, one that would transport guests to a traditional trattoria in the heart of Italy, through both its cuisine and inviting atmosphere.

More than a decade later, Trattoria Uliveto is widely known as one of Old Town Orcutt's most popular restaurants, earning several accolades throughout the years. Last year, the restaurant scored both Best Orcutt Restaurant and Best Italian Food in the *Sun's* Best of Northern Santa Barbara County Readers' Poll.

"Overall, I'm a pretty positive person," said Curti, looking back on the past several months and realizing it's been nearly an entire year since the first pandemic-induced shutdown.

Curti said he feels grateful for the community's support toward Trattoria Uliveto, especially during this surreal time period. He also feels for businesses and individuals that have had to face severely worse complications than his own.

"Everyone likes to say, 'We're all in this together,'



**DYNAMIC DUO:** Alfonso Curti (pictured, right) co-founded Trattoria Uliveto in 2008 with fellow restaurateur and longtime business owner Jim Spallino (left).

but really everyone is in their own situation—some people have it worse than others," Curti said. "Everyone has their own challenges to overcome."

Arts Editor Caleb Wiseblood is Garfield when it comes to lasagna. Send comments to [cwiseblood@santamariasun.com](mailto:cwiseblood@santamariasun.com).

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