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# SUN



AT THE MOVIES

John Wick 4 is non-stop fun [20]



# Pushing for change

*Some Solvang residents claim there's no discrimination in town, but LGBTQ-plus advocates point to the hate they've experienced [6]*

BY TAYLOR O'CONNOR

**NEWS** Parents rights in Ballard schools [4]

**ARTS** Flowers have power for one artist [18]

**EATS** Peasants FEAST has a new chef [21]

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MARCH 30 - APRIL 6, 2023 VOL. 24 NO. 5

The debate over whether to hang Pride banners from Solvang's light poles during June included a discussion about discrimination in the Santa Ynez Valley. While some Solvang City Council members and local residents were adamant about the area's welcoming atmosphere, LGBTQ-plus community members said they've experienced otherwise. Staff Writer Taylor O'Connor gets into the issue in the second installment of her series on the debate and hate in the valley [6].

You can also read about why parents in Ballard want more say over what goes on in classrooms [4]; an artist who takes inspiration from still life [18]; and how peasants FEAST in Solvang is growing and changing [21].

Camillia Lanham  
editor



**MORE THAN A FLAG:** Kiel and Matt Cavalli (left to right) want to expand their Pride banner proposal to more Santa Ynez Valley cities to promote inclusion and acceptance, especially after two individuals were charged for stealing and burning a Pride flag from St. Mark's In-The-Valley Church.

Cover photo by Jayson Mellom > Cover design by Alex Zuniga

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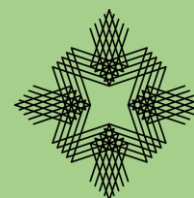
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## POLITICAL WATCH

U.S. Rep. **Salud Carbajal** (D-Santa Barbara) announced that his work securing a boost in funding for federal Head Start programs delivered more than \$19 million in grants for Central Coast early learning programs in Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties, according to a March 22 statement from the congressman's office. Carbajal, who worked as a Head Start parent involvement coordinator and family services advocate, has advocated for increased funding for early learning programs like Head Start and Early Head Start. "I saw firsthand the huge impacts that their programming can have in giving every child on the Central Coast the chance to receive a high-quality education," Carbajal said in a statement. "That's why I've pushed every year that I've been in Congress to increase the funding for these programs, and to ensure the Central Coast has the resources it needs to help our local Head Start providers maintain this critical community service. After delivering nearly a billion-dollar increase in last year's funding package, I'm proud to see the Central Coast benefit from this robust increase this year." The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which last December received a \$960 million boost in Head Start funding, approved more than \$12.9 million for the **Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo County** and \$6.2 million for **CommUnity**—formerly the Community Action Commission of Santa Barbara County.

U.S. Sen. **Alex Padilla** (D-California) and U.S. Rep. **Doug LaMalfa** (R-Oroville) wrote a letter to the U.S. **Bureau of Land Management** (BLM), urging it to conduct extensive outreach to tribal governments as the lawmakers implement their Recreation and Public Purposes Tribal Parity Act, which President **Joe Biden** signed into law earlier this year, according to a March 23 statement from Padilla's office. The Recreation and Public Purposes Tribal Parity Act ensures that tribal governments have parity with state and local governments in participating in the Recreation and Public Purposes Act (R&PP). This existing program previously only allowed BLM to sell and lease certain public lands to state and local governments and qualifying nonprofits, often significantly below market value, if those lands were used for recreation or other public purposes. But unlike state and local governments, tribal governments were omitted when the act first became law in 1926. "This law can have a much more widespread impact for tribal governments in California and across the nation, which is why we write to ask that the BLM conduct extensive outreach to tribal governments about the opportunities for land acquisition and conveyance under the R&PP," the lawmakers wrote. "While state and local governments have been leasing and purchasing public lands for recreational or public purposes for over a century, it is unlikely that tribal governments across the country are aware of the opportunities under R&PP following enactment of our legislation. Conducting this outreach would also help BLM fulfill its trust responsibility to tribal governments."

Gov. **Gavin Newsom** rolled back some drought emergency provisions that are no longer needed due to current water conditions, while maintaining other measures that support regions and communities still facing water supply challenges and that continue building up long-term water resilience, according to a March 24 statement from the governor's office. Specifically, the state ended the voluntary 15 percent water conservation target and the requirement that local water agencies implement level 2 of their drought contingency plans; maintained the ban on wasteful water uses like watering ornamental grass on commercial properties and orders on specific watersheds like the Klamath River and Colorado River basins; preserved all current emergency orders on groundwater supplies; and retained a state of emergency in all 58 counties to allow for drought response and recovery efforts to continue. "We're all in this together, and this state has taken extraordinary actions to get us to this point. The weather whiplash we've experienced in the past few months makes it crystal clear that Californians and our water system have to adapt to increasingly extreme swings between drought and flood," Newsom said in a statement. "As we welcome this relief from the drought, we must remain focused on continuing our all-of-the-above approach to future-proofing California's water supply." ○



**MORE HOUSING:** A new bill in the state Senate proposed that units built on vacant land, primarily used as interim housing for those experiencing homelessness, could include low-income or farmworker housing.

## New state bill could open up vacant land for housing construction

Housing projects like Santa Maria's Hope Village and Santa Barbara's Dignity Moves could expand across the state and offer rental opportunities after a new bill got introduced in the state Senate.

Currently the states planning and zoning laws require each jurisdiction to adopt housing plans and use proper zoning where multifamily and mixed uses are permitted. This bill, known as SB 634, would define "opportunity housing projects," which would allow relocatable housing to be developed on vacant lots regardless of zoning and may not require a conditional use permit, according to the bill's full text.

"Because the bill would impose new requirements on local governments in the review and approval of opportunity housing projects, the bill would impose a state-mandated local program," the bill stated.

SB 634 was authored by state Sen. Josh Becker (D-San Mateo) and introduced to the Senate on Feb. 16. It still has to go through various committees before the Senate and Assembly can vote on it. State Sen. Monique Limón (D-Santa Barbara) told the *Sun* in a statement that she appreciated the communities starting to have more conversations about people getting housed.

"This bill would facilitate housing projects like Hope Village in Santa Maria. We have seen success stories locally, and I hope we can continue to have needed conversations both at a local level and on the statewide," Limón said in the statement.

The bill is sponsored by Dignity Moves—an organization that develops interim supportive housing for individuals experiencing homelessness. The organization has worked on several housing projects throughout the state, including the two in Santa Barbara County.

Currently, Dignity Moves only develops its non-congregate housing units for individuals experiencing homelessness, but CEO and Founder Elizabeth Funk said she'd like to see this model expanded to low-income or farmworker housing.

"When you're in a sheltered system, you're still considered homeless. The cities don't have the incentive to spend money on interim housing because their homeless numbers don't go down, but if they pay rent they are housed," Funk said. "In this model, the resident could pay rent, get a housing voucher, and the [city] doesn't need to worry about it."

Dignity Moves follows an emergency building appendix already in place in the California Building Code, which allows the organization to construct the moveable structures on public vacant land, bypassing local building codes. The appendix is modified in this bill so Dignity

Moves and other organizations could also build on private land.

"In the California Tax Code, if a private land owner uses their land for nonprofit uses—including low-income housing—they get their property taxes exempt," Funk said. "If they lease it to the nonprofit for a dollar, that's a donation to the nonprofit and that's a tax benefit. Private landowners could have a real incentive to donate their land."

Expanding this type of housing to rental units could also help local jurisdictions meet their state-required Regional Housing Need Allocation (RHNA) numbers, Funk said.

According to the California Department of Housing and Community Development, as long as it's non-congregate housing and it's the person's habitual place of residence, it counts toward RHNA, Funk said, comparing this model to dorm room facilities or mobile home units.

"This housing does count toward RHNA, we're not changing that in this law," she said. "Cities should be super excited because they're getting a lot of pressure from the state, and this is going to be super helpful to get that."

The bill wouldn't require local jurisdictions to comply, but "strongly suggest that they agree," she said.

"If there's a public agency that has land not being used and not a demonstrable use in five years, they need to respond with a justifiable reason for saying no," Funk said. "If they don't want to, we're not going to force them, but the state is sending a strong signal to make their land available."

Although Santa Maria Mayor Alice Patino was not available for comment, she has often expressed frustration with the state mandates, including during the discussion of the Dignity Moves project Hope Village.

"We're seeing more and more local control being taken away from us. Not just the city, but the county," she said during a community meeting about Hope Village. "And Sacramento is doing nothing; they're making it worse for us."

—Taylor O'Connor

## Lompoc swears in new Police Chief Kevin Martin

A recent badge pinning formalized Kevin Martin's new title as Lompoc's Police Chief. Martin has held the position in the interim since his predecessor Joseph Mariani's retirement at the end of 2022.

During the Lompoc City Council's last meeting of March, Martin's wife, Gina Martin, pinned her husband's new badge onto his chest. Following his swearing-in ceremony, Martin—who first joined the Lompoc Police Department as an officer in 1994—gave a brief speech.

"Twenty-nine years ago this month I stood

in what is now my office, when Bob Hebert was chief of police. He swore me in as a young officer—much younger than I am today," Martin said at the March 21 meeting. "What I take from all this is my goal as your chief is to create an environment where a young officer starting their career today can be mentored and developed into the future chief of police."

Another objective Martin wants to prioritize in his new role is to help increase "the public's trust and engagement with the police department" by bringing back a handful of in-person community programs that were discontinued at the start of the pandemic and haven't resurfaced since, he told the *Sun*.

"A few years ago, we created a self-defense course for the public where officers who are trained in weaponless defense teach citizens basic self-defense techniques," Martin said of one of the programs the department plans to resurrect over the next few months. "I really wanted to get that one back up and running as soon as possible."

Past iterations of the four-day program were open to adult residents of Lompoc, while this year the department will host a session at Lompoc High School for graduating seniors.

Martin also plans to bring back the Lompoc Police Department's Community Academy—a 14-week program where the public can learn about different sections of the department and their respective operations, firsthand from officers—sometime this summer.

"It's just another way for us to engage with the community and build the trust. I have a saying that we are continuously depositing into the bank of trust," Martin said. "The littlest thing you do could be a deposit into the bank of trust. Just spending 15 more minutes on a call for somebody—who, maybe it's their first time engaging with a police officer—can really change that person's opinion and make them feel more comfortable."

In 1991, Martin kicked off his law enforcement career with the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department and later went on to hold positions with both the Lompoc Police Department and the Santa Maria Police Department.

In 2007, he took on a teaching job in which he led forensics courses for law enforcement personnel in various states and outside the U.S. He returned to the Lompoc Police Department in 2009, and was promoted to police captain in 2019.

In a statement from the city of Lompoc, City Manager Dean Albro said that Martin's "wealth of experience and deep commitment to public service will serve him well in this new role, and that he will continue to be an outstanding leader for the police department and in the community."

—Caleb Wiseblood

## Ballard transgender student's announcement leads to district policy discussions

The Ballard Elementary School District decided it will look into parents rights policies after outcry against the school's procedures when a child came out as transgender.

The fourth grader gave her preferred name and pronouns to her peers with both parents present in the classroom earlier in 2023. During a special board meeting on March 22, Superintendent and Principal Pam Rennick said that fellow parents weren't notified because of child privacy laws and the child's parents—one of whom is board member Sean Conroy—were allowed in the classroom to protect the child in accordance with the law.

"It was a big announcement and my goals were to protect the child, but have it be a nonissue for the rest of the kids, and I feel like those goals were accomplished," Rennick said.

The school had follow-up conversations with its legal counsel, which said that the school would have encroached on student privacy laws

NEWS continued page 5

NEWS from page 4

if it had proceeded differently, Rennick said. She added that the kids have been "awesome" and there haven't been any issues but allowing students to ask the child's parents questions after the announcement was a "sticking point" for many parents.

Parents and grandparents have poured in to the past three board meetings to advocate for a parents rights policy that would allow them to be notified of guest speakers and opt their students out of certain conversations a parent deems inappropriate for their child.

Parent Blair Storms told the board during the special meeting that her child was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder, and she would opt out of the conversation if it were to happen in her son's classroom so she could have the conversation with him when she felt it was appropriate.

"Is one child's happiness worth more than a delayed child's ability to comprehend this type of situation?" she asked. "Consider the impact of special needs children as to avoid potential litigation exposure. Parents have the duty to protect their children's rights until they are old enough to make their own way in the world."

She added that parents' rights were stripped away when the two parents—specifically with one in a "position of power"—the principal, and the superintendent "barged" into a classroom without parent consent to convey a "controversial" message.

Fellow parent Rebecca Smith suggested that an ad-hoc committee look at modifying current parents rights policies, which haven't been updated since 2010.

"The extreme lack of judgment shown in the fourth-grade classroom needs to be addressed and amendments

need to be made in our policies," Smith said. "Let's foster a school that's inclusive and respectful of all people and their ideas. These are our children, and as parents we deserve transparency."

The school board voted later during the meeting to update all of its policies through the California School Boards Association and form an ad-hoc committee to specifically address parents rights at its next meeting, which is scheduled for April 19.

Although board President Tracey Cassidy agreed that policies needed to be revamped to meet current state laws, she said that the school district already has extensive parents rights policies in place already—allowing parents to opt out of sex education, HIV protection education, family life surveys, and state testing—and is worried that one moment in time will result in an overcorrection of policies.

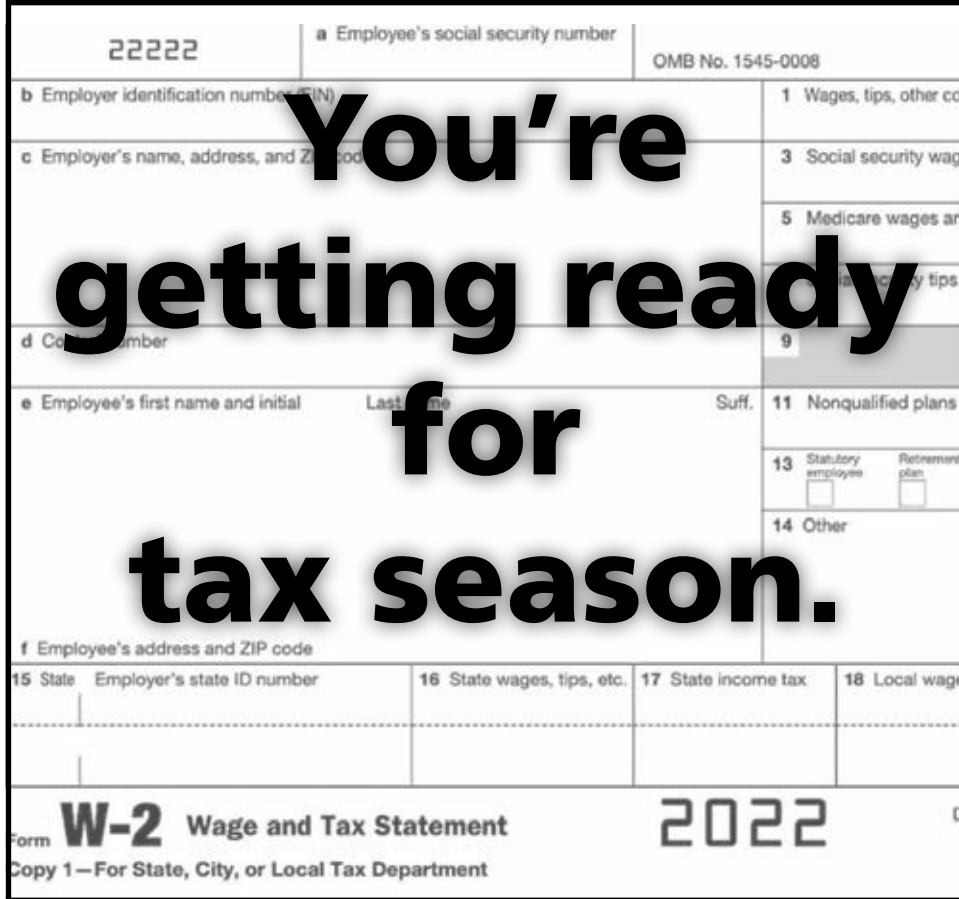
"The impetus for this policy, based on conversation and based on previous meetings is rooted, I think, in bias, and there have been some unkind things said and some sentiments brought forth that are disheartening to me," Cassidy said.

She added that no one can control the date, time, or manner a person decides to tell their peers information they wish to share, and that the parents do not "abdicate" their roles for their children, regardless of their positions at school.

"As I showed up earlier to support my daughter completing her DARE program, it is not inappropriate [for] a board member [to] show up to support their child," Cassidy said. "There was no agenda put forth, there was the simplicity of a statement made and parents in place to support that statement at the knowledge of both the teacher and superintendent."   
—Taylor O'Connor

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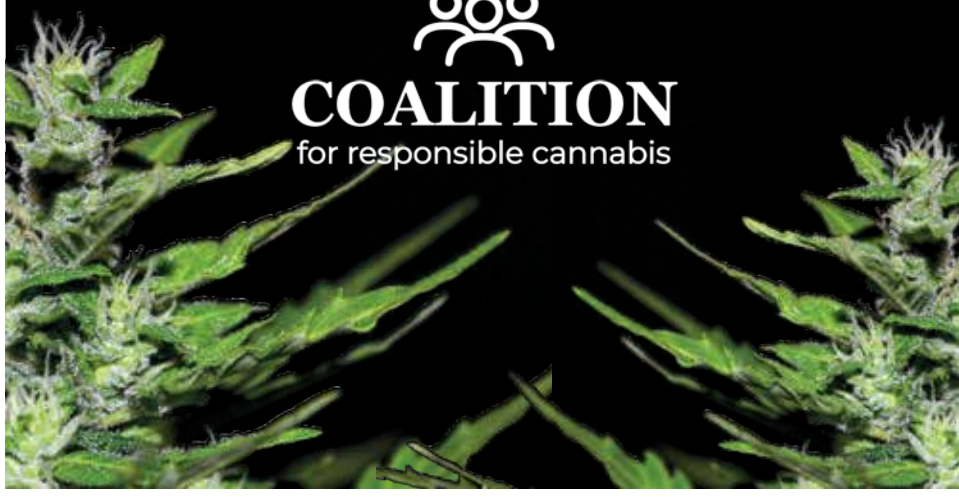
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# A politicized existence

*Solvang residents say Pride banners promote politics and exclusivity, while LGBTQ-plus community members say they promote acceptance and inclusion*

BY TAYLOR O'CONNOR

**Editor's note:** This is the second installment of a two-part series on the conversation surrounding a proposal to hang Pride banners and paint crosswalks with rainbow colors in Solvang during Pride Month in June.

Pride flags were a source of comfort for Addisyn before she came out to her parents as bisexual about four months ago. “Now that I’m out and seeing more flags, I feel represented, loved, and safe,” she said. “Seeing queer representation is a calming and reassuring aspect a town should have.”

The 15-year-old Santa Ynez resident shared this with Solvang City Council members during a recent hearing about hanging Pride-themed banners from city light poles during Pride Month in June. She told the *Sun* that she feels supported by her family, but didn’t see that support mirrored by members of the community and its elected officials. She called the City Council’s decision to deny the proposal “heartbreaking.”

“It was upsetting, tears were shed, but we did everything we could. We’ll do more,” said Addisyn, whose mother requested her last name be withheld.

Addisyn told the *Sun* that the applicants and their supporters made very good points and there was nothing wrong with the proposal, but other residents and City Council members said that Pride banners promoted political views, divided the community, and veered away from Solvang’s “welcoming” brand.

City Council rejected the proposal 3-2 (with Councilmembers Claudia Orona and Elizabeth Orona dissenting) on Feb. 27, saying that the banners didn’t comply with the city’s policies. The proposal also asked to temporarily repaint two crosswalks in downtown Solvang with a rainbow pattern, which was also rejected due to traffic safety concerns.

The Rainbow House Inc.’s reapplication was recently denied and will not go before Solvang City Council again.

Although the vote upset her, Addisyn told the *Sun* that speaking as a representative of the LGBTQ-plus youth in the community during public comment took a weight off her shoulders.

“Our opinions matter,” she said. “We’re also affected by the decisions that are made like this because it sticks around ... and we grow up with it.”

## Acceptance, not activism

Santa Ynez resident Kevin Keating sent a 13-page public comment letter to the city of Solvang about the proposal. He’s one of more than 20 residents who opposed the project by writing a letter to the city or speaking during public comment at the Feb. 27 meeting.

In Keating’s letter, he said that the rainbow banners and painted crosswalks would promote “radical gender ideology” and push the city into a “new socio-political movement.”

“Pride and especially transgender flags are overtly political, being gay, lesbian, transgender, etc., is not,” Keating wrote. “Pride flags are part of a left-wing political ideology called intersectionality, which seeks to divide every person by their race, nationality, religion, and sexuality among other things. Conservatives such as myself are strongly against this division.”

Keating submitted screenshots from the White House website discussing the Biden administration’s National Strategy to Gender Equity and Equality as “evidence” to demonstrate “the political nature of the combination of LGBT, gender, and intersectionality.”

“If visitors show up to Solvang for their traditional expectations and see it marinating in Pride and transgender paraphernalia, they will not be back. (The trans flag in particular is controversial and often is bootstrapped to the Pride flag, yet it is associated with the grooming of young children to undergo gender transitions while they’re very young),” he wrote.

He added that he isn’t against LGBTQ-plus people or their right to live as they please, adding that he has friends and family within the gay community and has zero problems with it, but the flags bring “politically fraught, big-city, adult themes” to the quaint town.

“Solvang doesn’t need a makeover. Everyone is welcome of course, but straight or gay visitors are coming in droves for the hotels, the food, the traditional crafts, the wine, the museums, the arts, the [D]anish architecture, but not for in-your-face, divisive, and political flags/crosswalks,” Keating said.

Santa Ynez resident Jason Stone told the *Sun* that it’s not political to include Pride banners within a community, rather it’s a symbol of acceptance and safety.

“Passively implied acceptance is not enough,” Stone said. “If historically, a disenfranchised community has been actively silenced, we need to do more and be active. We need to be sure we

**‘If putting up a flag makes one person or 10 people feel more supported or honored, we should put up the flags. If we always focus on [the] majority needs, we’ll never meet the minority.’**

—Jason Stone, Santa Ynez resident

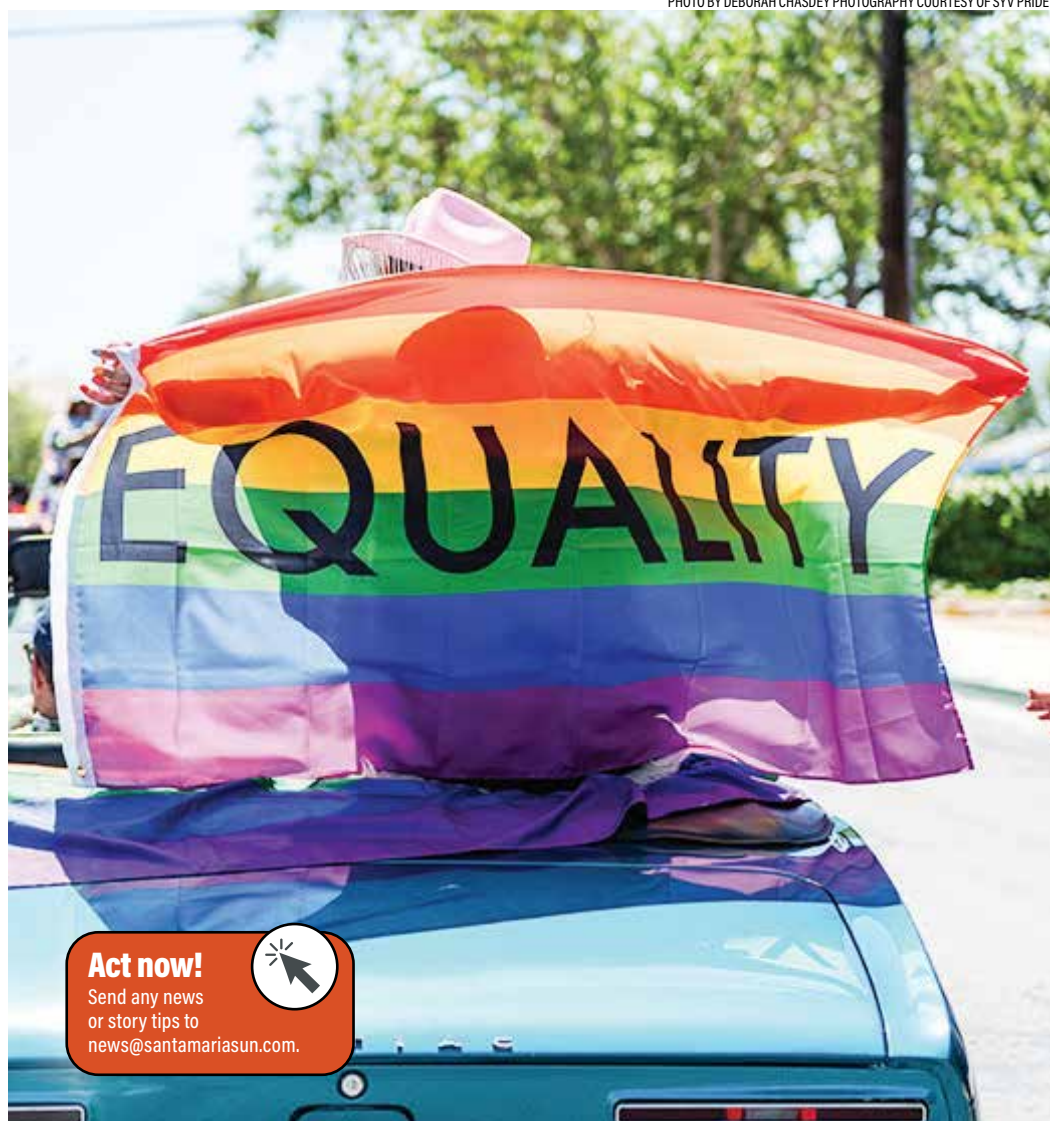
are saying that we accept you, we recognize you, and you are supported.”

Stone works in sexual health and education at UC Santa Barbara and has a background in well-being, health promotion, and public health. He noted that he is not speaking on behalf of the university but pulling from his own experiences.

“Studies show that when we have more visibility, more conversations, more education, and more representation, and when cities take a progressive approach, then we see a reduction in harm,” he said, “and it also changes the attitude of people that are not a part of this community, and thereby reduces the harm they are doing.”

According to the Trevor Project’s 2022 national survey on LGBTQ youth mental health, about 45 percent of LGBTQ youth seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year, 73 percent reported they’ve experienced discrimination, and 36 percent reported they have been physically threatened due to their identity.

The study continued by saying those who live



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**REPRESENTATION MATTERS:** Having Pride banners displayed in Solvang’s downtown would promote inclusion and show support for those in the LGBTQ-plus community, advocates said.

in a community that is accepting of LGBTQ-plus people reported significantly lower rates of attempting suicide than those who do not.

“If putting up a flag makes one person or 10 people feel more supported or honored, we should put up the flags,” Stone said. “If we always focus on [the] majority needs, we’ll never meet the minority.”

## A ‘welcoming’ town

Mayor Mark Infanti told the *Sun* that Solvang is already welcoming to everyone.

“How does a flag that represents one group of people make it open for all people?” he asked. “Any one particular flag representing one particular organization doesn’t make it sound like it’s welcoming to all.”

During the Feb. 27 council meeting, Infanti said that he doesn’t think the Pride banners will make anybody more accepting and hasn’t seen “the prejudice that seems to be being expressed.”

David Silva, Stone’s husband and fellow resident, said during public comment at that meeting that he’s been “called a fag in this community in the last two years more than I can count.” When his husband went through cancer treatment, the couple didn’t receive condolences at first because people thought Stone had AIDS.

“It’s uncomfortable to be told that homophobia doesn’t exist in this area—that we’re just like everybody else—and not have it be told from people who have that lived experience. Who knows what it’s like to be scared to hold hands; to be asked if we’re splitting bills because we must be roommates,” Silva said.

Councilmember Robert Clarke said that Solvang is “the friendliest goddamn town” he’s ever lived in after living in other cities like Chicago, New York, and San Francisco, and he took offense to people saying otherwise.

“The people here are welcoming, they’re warm, they embrace everybody, and I just feel so welcome in this town. It’s a wonderful

wonderful place, and everybody is open to everybody,” Clarke said.

However, the Santa Ynez Valley is not without prejudice and even violence against the LGBTQ-plus community.

On March 23, the Santa Barbara County District Attorney’s Office announced that Santa Ynez Valley residents Avi Williams and Joshua Eligino were charged with two misdemeanors of violating civil rights and committing petty crimes after stealing two Pride flags in Los Olivos, burning one, and posting the video on social media in July 2022.

“The amount of emotion the community went through because of these acts was unmeasurable,” LGBTQ-plus nonprofit The Rainbow House Inc. said in a statement. “There was a tremendous amount of anger, worry, and concern of LGBTQIA[-plus] community.”

Kiel Cavalli, The Rainbow House Inc.’s co-founder, said he’s always felt like an outsider and heard negative comments about his sexual identity growing up in the Santa Ynez Valley.

“I’ve always been aware of what kind of underbelly, of what the Valley really is and how people really feel,” Cavalli said. “Once you wipe the lens a little bit, you get a clearer picture of what’s going on here and the suppression people are feeling.”

Cavalli and his husband, Matt, have been called pedophiles and received online threats from community members saying they’d call the Department of Social Services to remove the couple’s adopted children from their custody, he said.

“It was very shocking at first, but it really highlights the work that still needs to happen, and that’s why we can’t back down,” Cavalli said. “It’s not personal gain other than [for] us being able to hold hands walking down the street.” ○

Reach Staff Writer Taylor O’Connor at [toconnor@santamariasun.com](mailto:toconnor@santamariasun.com).

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## Hands on

*DANA Adobe & Cultural Center to tap into nature and history at upcoming NatureFest event*

BY THOMAS RODDA

**N**ow standing for almost 200 years, the DANA Adobe & Cultural Center in Nipomo plans to host an opportunity for families to learn more about local history and the wonders of nature.

The DANA Adobe's annual NatureFest event is taking place Saturday, April 15, and nonprofit Executive Director Lexi Carreño said that one of its goals is to help connect community members with Nipomo's culture and environment.

"Just talking about the [recent] rain alone, and the Nipomo creek, you can see that demonstration here. We actually have guided hikes during the day, and so hopefully you'll be able to go over there and see the effects of the rain that comes through," Carreño said.

Held annually since 2016, except when COVID-19 put the event on hiatus, NatureFest offers a variety of hands-on activities designed to help kids learn in action. Carreño noted that when a child is hands-on with a subject, they're able to care for and think more about it.

PHOTO COURTESY OF DANA ADOBE CULTURAL CENTER



**ARTS AND CRAFTS:** Face painting is one of the many activities that will be offered as part of 2023 NatureFest at the DANA Adobe & Cultural Center in Nipomo.

Some of the activities or booths on display during the all-day event include: an owl pellet dissection, a leaf rubbing station, nature walks, exploring the Chumash gardens, face painting, bird feeder making, house tours, planting booths, doll making stations, and a solar oven station to cook s'mores or cookies.

"As we see COVID numbers die down, we're allowed to do more in schools, and see those schools come back. We're definitely fortunate to see all those little faces this springtime," Carreño said. "Because that's definitely important, being able to teach those kids."

Other NatureFest attractions include live music by the Decomposing Brass Quintet, food vendors from many different small businesses and nonprofits (DANA Adobe is accepting food vendor applications until April 1), and presentations from Pacific Wildlife Care.

The adobe's rich history will also be part of the event.

The Dana adobe ranch land grant was originally awarded to Captain William G. Dana in 1837, and he built the adobe as a house for his family.

"The adobe they lived in is still standing today, and we've restored it to circa 1850—really the height of when the family would've been here," Carreño said.

The Dana Adobe Nipomo Amigos nonprofit acquired the 130 acres that the Dana Adobe stands on in 1999. Today, it's home to many learning-based events, including the 2023 NatureFest.

NatureFest attendees pay at the gate, with prices of \$10 for adults, \$3 for kids ages 6 to 17, and free for kid ages five and under. For more information on what to expect, visit the official DANA Adobe NatureFest website at [danaadobe.org](http://danaadobe.org).

"Anyone and everyone is welcome to come on through and learn a little bit about where the town of Nipomo started," Carreño said.

### Highlights:

- Although Los Flores Ranch Park near Santa Maria will be partially closed in April due to storm repairs, the city is holding two community events there on April 1. Participate in a family hike and yoga session from 10 a.m. to noon: "Participants will be surrounded by the beauty of Los Flores Ranch during a short hike with many yoga breaks to help relieve stress," a press release read. Then, from 1:30 to

3 p.m., the city will kick off its B.A.R.K. Ranger Program. "Join other dog owners and walkers as they learn the rules of B.A.R.K. [Bag your pet's waste. Always leash your pet. Respect wildlife. Know where you can go]," the city said in the release. For questions, call (805) 925-0951, Ext. 2263.

- Santa Barbara County nonprofit CommUnify announced that Natalia Alacron is the new director of Family and Youth Services with the organization, according to a March 21 statement. She's a licensed marriage and family therapist with more than 10 years of experience in program development, operations, and administration, as well as experience in providing direct services to children, youth, and

families with the Family Service Agency and Domestic Violence Solutions. Alacron started with CommUnify in February 2019 as a family self-sufficiency program manager where she led the implementation of the program by providing intensive case management and support services to those seeking to improve their job skills, education, and training with the goal of becoming economically secure.

- The city of Lompoc recently released a draft of its 2023-31 Housing Element. The housing element plans for existing and projected housing needs to accommodate 2,248 new housing units with the city of Lompoc by the year 2031. Visit [envisonlompoc.com](http://envisonlompoc.com) to read

the plan, and the public can provide comments on the draft through April 17. ○

*New Times intern Thomas Rodda wrote this week's Spotlight. Reach him at [spotlight@santamariasun.com](mailto:spotlight@santamariasun.com).*

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# DEATH NOTICES

For Obituary info call (805) 347-1968 or email [obituaries@newtimeslo.com](mailto:obituaries@newtimeslo.com)

**AUGHTMAN, FRANCES A.**, 81, of Santa Maria passed away 3/21/2023 arrangements with Dudley-Hoffman Mortuary, Crematory & Memory Gardens

**BARRAGAN, ROBERT LEE**, 36, of Santa Maria passed away 3/20/2023 arrangements with Dudley-Hoffman Mortuary, Crematory & Memory Gardens

**CAPELL, VALERIA**, 102, of Lompoc passed away 1/17/2023 arrangements with Starbuck-Lind Mortuary & Crematory

**CAPPER, CHARLES WAYNE**, 100, of Atascadero passed away 3/06/2023 arrangements with Chapel of the Roses

**GEORGE, CHARMAINE H.**, 88, of Santa Maria passed away 3/20/2023 arrangements with Dudley-Hoffman Mortuary, Crematory & Memory Gardens

**GERBI, RAYMOND JOHN**, 85, of Arroyo Grande passed away 3/20/2023 arrangements with Marshall-Spoo Sunset Funeral Chapel

**GROSSI, MARVIN EDWIN**, 86, of Santa Maria passed away 3/18/2023 arrangements with Dudley-Hoffman Mortuary, Crematory & Memory Gardens

**HILTON, FRANKLIN**, 83, of Arroyo Grande passed away 3/22/2023 arrangements with Marshall-Spoo Sunset Funeral Chapel

**JANSSEN, EUGENE S.**, 89, of San Luis Obispo passed away 2/25/2023 arrangements with Reis Family Mortuary & Crematory

**JENSEN, MARY S.**, 87, of Santa Maria passed away 3/18/2023 arrangements with Dudley-Hoffman Mortuary, Crematory & Memory Gardens

**LEWIS, WALLACE "WALLY"**, 95, of Grover Beach passed away 3/19/2023 arrangements with Marshall-Spoo Sunset Funeral Chapel

**MAAS, DAVID**, 64, of Grover Beach passed away 3/22/2023 arrangements with Marshall-Spoo Sunset Funeral Chapel

**MALONE, KATHLEEN**, 66, of Morro Bay passed away 3/19/2023 arrangements with Blue Sky Cremation Service

**MARKS, MARILYN GRACE**, 93, of Lompoc passed away 3/17/2023 arrangements with Starbuck-Lind Mortuary & Crematory

**MCQUEEN, DUNCAN WOODROW**, 85, of Baywood -Los Osos passed away 3/04/2023 arrangements with Los Osos Valley Mortuary & Memorial Park

**MILLER, ERNEST**, 94, of Morro Bay passed away 3/18/2023 arrangements with Blue Sky Cremation Service

**MILLER, SHARON**, 89, of Morro Bay passed away 3/20/2023 arrangements with Blue Sky Cremation Service

**MOTYKA, WILLIAM WALTER**, 77, of Santa Maria passed away 3/22/2023 arrangements with Dudley-Hoffman Mortuary, Crematory & Memory Gardens

**NATEN, MARY ANN**, 87, of Santa Maria passed away 3/25/2023 arrangements with Dudley-Hoffman Mortuary, Crematory & Memory Gardens

**NEWBY, TERRY W.**, 70, of Santa Maria passed away 3/25/2023 arrangements with Dudley-Hoffman Mortuary, Crematory & Memory Gardens

**OLDS, ROBERT "BOBBY" FRANCIS EDWARD**, 21, of Los Osos passed away 3/04/2023 arrangements with Los Osos Valley Mortuary & Memorial Park

**PETRIK, DAVE J.**, 69, of Santa Maria passed away 3/21/2023 arrangements with Magner-Maloney Funeral Home & Crematory

**PORTE, GREGORY LEROY**, 82, of San Luis Obispo passed away 3/09/2023 arrangements with Reis Family Mortuary & Crematory

**PRZYBYLA, BABY**, 0, of Paso Robles passed away 3/14/2023 arrangements with Chapel of the Roses

**ROMINE, EDWARDS K.**, 74, of Lompoc, passed away 3/18/2023 arrangements with Starbuck-Lind Mortuary & Crematory

**ROSS, DAVID**, 56, of Arroyo Grande passed away 3/18/2023 arrangements with Marshall-Spoo Sunset Funeral Chapel

**ROUSH, ISABEL**, 98, of San Luis Obispo passed away 3/16/2023 arrangements with Marshall-Spoo Sunset Funeral Chapel

**RUFFEL, RICHARD P.**, 71, of Nipomo passed away 3/24/2023 arrangements with Dudley-Hoffman Mortuary, Crematory & Memory Gardens

**SCARBROUGH, TERRY**, 74, of Arroyo Grande passed away 3/17/2023 arrangements with Marshall-Spoo Sunset Funeral Chapel

**SMITH, DELBERT ROCYE**, 79, of Lompoc, passed away 3/06/2023 arrangements with Starbuck-Lind Mortuary & Crematory

**STONE, L. JANE**, 94, of Santa Maria passed away 3/17/2023 arrangements with Dudley-Hoffman Mortuary, Crematory & Memory Gardens

**STRAUSBURG, JEFFREY "JEFF"**, 63, of Nipomo passed away 3/21/2023 arrangements with Marshall-Spoo Sunset Funeral Chapel

**VANORMAN, C THERINE MARY**, 82, of Atascadero passed away 3/14/2023 arrangements with Chapel of the Roses

**VILLALPANDO, PABLO OJEDA**, 87, of Santa Maria passed away 3/18/2023 arrangements with Dudley-Hoffman Mortuary, Crematory & Memory Gardens

**WOODS, BONNIE**, 83, of Santa Maria passed away 3/20/2023 arrangements with Dudley-Hoffman Mortuary, Crematory & Memory Gardens

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### ONLINE POLL

## What do you think of the Solvang City Council decision to reject hanging pride banners during June?

- 41% The decision further harms people in the LGBTQ-plus communities.
- 34% The city council made the right decision following its policies.
- 20% It was an informed decision in the best interest of all community members.
- 5% The city council should look at changing its streetlight banner policy.

29 Votes

Vote online at [www.santamariasun.com](http://www.santamariasun.com).



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# Mainstream vs. extreme

*It's too easy to forget that we're all swimming in the same stream*

BY JOHN ASHBAUGH

I've been paddling in the turbulent waters of "extremist" ideology lately, from both sides of the political continuum. If our nation's democratic spectrum can be described as a bell curve, these would be the "long tails" of that curve. Those are the places inhabited by the fanatics, the conspiracy theorists, the QAnon cultists on the far right—and on the far left, what's the equivalent—AOC? Bernie Sanders? No—these folks are far too tame. Maybe Antifa?

The Dictionary.com definition of "extremism" is "a tendency or disposition to go to extremes or an instance of going to extremes especially in political matters ...," though for most of us, it's easier to castigate our political enemies as "extremist" while trying to occupy as much of that "vital center" as possible by seeming to be "mainstream." It's a delicate dance.

Let's consider what we mean by "mainstream"—that widest part of the bell curve where most voters would place themselves. Unfortunately, the word has taken on the character of an epithet lately, especially with reference to the "mainstream" media. It's that vast territory of major metropolitan newspapers like *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and publishing networks like McClatchy. It's the airwaves where major "legacy broadcasters" like CBS, ABC, and NBC try to speak to that broad "center." The best of them, a shrinking professional group of serious journalists, seek a national consensus that will forge the destiny of our democracy. Unfortunately, in their zeal to achieve "balance," they often flood the airwaves with "what-aboutism," giving equal time to extremist arguments that defy common sense.

On television, where most Americans turn for "breaking news," CNN strives to be a center-left cable news outlet, while MSNBC is more openly Democratic in its hosted programs: Their talk show hosts regularly feature liberal interest groups—

though "extremists"? Doubtful at best.

And then there is Fox "News"—Rupert Murdoch's right-wing bastion that offers an increasingly volatile mix of shrill chest-thumping nationalism and occasional overt racism. Its leading prime-time hypocrite is Tucker Carlson, who tells his Fox colleagues privately that he "passionately hates" Donald Trump while simultaneously coddling the former president and his fanatical followers with a steady diet of election denialism, "white replacement theory," and scathing attacks on all things "woke."

Murdoch has confessed that he personally leaked advance copies of Biden-Harris campaign ads to the Trump campaign in the midst of the 2020 election. That gift was a valuable contribution that required, at the very least, a disclosure to the Federal Election Commission.

Here are just a few samples of far-right extremism gathered from *just the last month*:

1. Donald Trump, in a campaign video released over the weekend: "The greatest threat to Western civilization today is not Russia, it's the collapse of the nuclear family and fertility rates, like nobody can believe is happening ... it's the Marxists who would have us become a godless nation worshipping at the altar of race, and gender, and environment." And in an earlier tweet, he bemoans "the socialists, globalists, Marxists, and communists who are attacking our civilization; [they] have no idea of the sleeping giant they have awoken. On November 2024 they will find out like never before. We did it twice and we'll do it again."
2. Marjorie Taylor Greene chose the most recent President's Day to tweet: "We need a national divorce."

**It's a small step from these inflammatory expressions to violent attacks targeting liberals, Democrats, LGBTQ-plus people, Jews, and racial minorities for extinction.**

preposterous ideology, at every level."

It's a small step from these inflammatory expressions to violent attacks targeting liberals,

Democrats, LGBTQ-plus people, Jews, and racial minorities for extinction. Extremists from *both* sides must remember that their opponents are fellow Americans, fellow human beings.

We might take inspiration from James Baldwin's observation that, "We can disagree and still love each other—unless your disagreement is rooted in my oppression and denial of my humanity and right to exist."

We're all swimming in the same stream—and the best way to avoid the riptides and rocky shoals is in the mainstream, not the extremes. ○

*John Ashbaugh has been engaged in local politics since arriving on the Central Coast in 1977. Write a response for publication by emailing [letters@santamariasun.com](mailto:letters@santamariasun.com).*

**Speak up!** Send us your views and opinion to [letters@santamariasun.com](mailto:letters@santamariasun.com).




### LETTERS

## Solvang didn't show Pride prejudice

I hope our little yellow dicky fluffer didn't injure her spine bending over backwards trying to demonstrate that there's no prejudice here ("Policy prattlers," March 23).

I don't think the Solvang City Council demonstrated prejudice concerning overt displays of Pride colors and banners. I think it was a feeling of caution, as more permissive displays sometimes devolve into more immodest demonstrations. Much like Canary's opening vulgar language. Often Pride celebrations turn into a Caligula-like Roman circus with immodest costumes and overt sexual behavior. Cole Porter's 1934 song cautions. "Anything Goes" may be a leap too progressive. Family-friendly still means conservative modesty.

Not to broad-brush the local community; one never knows what uninvited elements may pollute the intended action of the well-meaning local citizens. Yes! I said it. Not in so many words. Pride hoopla is feared. An assurance behavior that is offensive to community standards will be policed by the promoters. I think that was the concern of the elders.

Canary should keep a civil tongue in her beak.  
Jan Lipski  
Vandenberg Village

# Relax, people

This little bird ruffled some feathers last week. Sweet! Write to us. Tell us how you *really* feel, so we can share it with our readers!

The *Sun* also received some angry responses to the first installment in a two-part series on the **Solvang City Council's** decision on a proposal to put Pride flag banners up on the city's light poles during **Pride Month** in June.

**Jan Lipski** (who's uneducated banter can be read on p. 10 this week) and a few others whose rants didn't make the *Sun's* opinion section seem to be under the impression that Solvang isn't have a Pride parade this year. The city *is* in fact having a Pride parade this year, it's second annual.



If you actually read the *Sun*—and not just hate-read the headlines—you would know that the city decided against hanging rainbow banners around the city and painting two crosswalks with rainbow colors. What those flags have to do with lewd behavior and what one person called “genital mutilation” and “a bunch of people running around half naked with a rainbow thong up their rear-end,” I'm not sure (this person, bravely, signed their rant with only their initials). They're just flags, people (and they're not even red). Calm down.

The interesting thing is the amount of anger this fairly benign proposal has pulled out of residents of the **Santa Ynez Valley**. It makes one thing clear: the hate against LGBTQ-plus community members is real.

And ironically enough, the **Santa Barbara County District Attorney's Office** finally announced it was charging the two dumbasses who stole a couple of Pride flags in the Santa Ynez Valley last year, burned one of them on video, and posted it to their favorite social media pages. And guess what? It's a hate crime! Duh. Why it took almost a year to file charges, I have no idea.

At the same time this hot-button issue of hanging flags around Solvang is pushing its way through town, **Ballard Elementary School District** is facing controversy over a fourth grader who came out to her class as transgender. Parents and grandparents have been showing up to the school district's board meetings to complain that their parental rights were violated.

Grandparent rights!

While I can understand the consternation some parents might have about being forced into having a conversation with their child that they really don't want to have—if you don't want your child exposed to the real world and the things their peers are facing, it's your parental right to homeschool.

These parents want the district to adopt a heftier parents rights policy, because being able to opt out of sex education, HIV/AIDS protection education, family life surveys, and state testing isn't enough. Now, they want to know about every single discussion that could possibly come up, so they can pull their kids out if they don't like it.

Maybe parents can stand in the corner of the classroom during the school day and object to topics they don't like or understand. Sounds like a great education!

A fourth grader has every right to come out to her classmates, and would have whether it was in the classroom or on the playground. These parents would have been upset either way, and they seem to be having a way harder time dealing with reality than their children do. ○

*The canary advocates for a parent's right to be dumb. Send messages to canary@santamariasun.com.*

# YOUR STORY MATTERS



*“I am glad I was assigned to be Ashley's CASA. I immediately saw her potential and committed to making sure that she would have the support she needed to build a new life for herself. Watching her overcome her struggles has been so rewarding, and I'm excited to see what she does with her future.”*

Ashley is a 16-year-old young woman who came to the foster care system due to self-harm and suicidal tendencies triggered by her mother's mental health crisis.

Over the course of her time in foster care, Ashley had been put on 12 safety holds to protect her from harming herself. She was struggling with anxiety and was unable to be around many people without having an episode of debilitating anxiety. That's when a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) was assigned to her case.

The CASA, a compassionate and supportive individual, quickly established a rapport with Ashley. She listened to Ashley's concerns and provided emotional support to her during such a difficult time.

Ashley's CASA was able to help her regain control of her life and overcome her struggles. With the help of her CASA, Ashley was able to move on from her situation and begin a new chapter in her life.

The CASA took Ashley out on outings and encouraged her to be

around people, which helped her regain her confidence. She was able to trust her CASA and confide in her when she was feeling overwhelmed. The CASA provided Ashley with a sense of stability and support that she had never experienced before.

As a result of her work with her CASA, Ashley was no longer self-harming, and her anxiety was much lower. She was able to be around many people without having an episode of anxiety. The CASA was a huge support to her, and Ashley knew that she could

always reach out to her CASA when she was feeling like she needed help.



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## STRAWBERRY FEELS FOREVER

The Santa Maria Valley Strawberry Festival is seeking artists to participate in its upcoming chalk displays and annual coloring contest (for elementary and middle school students), with deadlines to apply on Friday, March 31, and Friday, April 14, respectively. For more info on both opportunities, visit [santamariafairpark.com](http://santamariafairpark.com). This year's festival will be held between Friday, April 28, and Sunday, April 30.

—Caleb Wiseblood

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## ARTS

### SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS

**ARTISTIC SELF ART STUDIO** For adults ages 50 and over. Bring your art projects and supplies and work on them in a comfortable and relaxing atmosphere with other artists. This is a drop-in program. Wednesdays, 9-10 a.m. through Dec. 27 Free. 805-925-0951. Elwin Mussell Senior Center, 510 Park Ave., Santa Maria.

**BALLROOM, LATIN, AND SWING DANCE CLASSES** Social ballroom, Latin, and swing lessons for all ages on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Beginner and advance classes. Tuesdays, Wednesdays, 7-9 p.m. \$45-\$55. 805-928-7799. Kleindancesarts.com. KleinDance Arts, 3558 Skyway Drive, suite A, Santa Maria.

**COOKIES AND CHAPTERS BOOK CLUB** Each month will feature a new chapter book. Free copies of the book will be provided on a first come, first served basis. For ages 9-14. **April 8**, 11 a.m. 805-925-0994. [engagedpatrons.org](http://engagedpatrons.org). Santa Maria Public Library (Altrusa Theater), 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria.

**DANCE CLASSES: EVERYBODY CAN DANCE** Classes available for all skill levels. Class sizes limited. ongoing Everybody Can Dance, 628 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria, 805-937-6753. [everybodycandance.webs.com/](http://everybodycandance.webs.com/).

**FAMILY CRAFT TIME** Families, get creative with an afternoon of Arts and Crafts. Try out a new medium, make something amazing together, and take home a piece of art. All skillsets are welcome. **April 4**, 4 p.m. 805-925-0994. [engagedpatrons.org](http://engagedpatrons.org). Families, get creative with an afternoon of arts and crafts. Try out a new medium, make something

amazing together, and take home a piece of art. All skillsets are welcome. **April 4**, 4 p.m. 805-925-0994. Santa Maria Public Library (Altrusa Theater), 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria.

**JOURNALING FOR TEENS AND TWEENS** Learn about the many ways in which people journal. Create, customize, and build a personal journal to keep. **April 6**, 4 p.m. 805-925-0994. Santa Maria Public Library (Altrusa Theater), 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria.

**LEARN CALIFORNIA'S OFFICIAL DANCE: WEST COAST SWING** Learn west coast swing in a casual, friendly environment, taught by Texas state swing champion, Gina Sigman. No partner needed. Tuesdays, 6:30-8:15 p.m. Beginning class is free; \$10 for advanced. 805-344-1630. Cubanissimo Cuban Coffee House, 4869 S. Bradley Rd., #118, Orcutt.

**MONSTERS AND MYTHS PACK FOR YOUTH** Explore monsters and myths from around the world through crafts and activities in this fun and educational pack. Program funded in part or whole by California State Library. **April 8** 805-925-0994. [engagedpatrons.org](http://engagedpatrons.org). Santa Maria Public Library, 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria.

**MUSIC LESSONS AT COELHO ACADEMY** Learn to play piano, drums, guitar, base, ukulele, or violin, or take vocal lessons. ongoing 805-925-0464. [coelhoacademic.com/Lessons/lessons.html](http://coelhoacademic.com/Lessons/lessons.html). Coelho Academy of Music, 325 E. Betteravia Rd., Santa Maria.

**SPRING READING PROGRAM IN-N-OUT COVER TO COVER** The popular In-N-Out Reading Program returns. Sign up at any SMPL location, track books, read, and receive rewards for every five books completed. Final date to redeem is April 29, while supplies last. For ages 4-12.

Sponsored and provided by In-N-Out. Through April 15 805-925-0994. [engagedpatrons.org](http://engagedpatrons.org). Santa Maria Public Library (Altrusa Theater), 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria.

**THE STUDIO PRESENTS: E(ART)H** For ages 12 to 18 in grades 7 to 12. Free environmental and sustainability-themed art projects for teens. Wednesdays, 5-6:30 p.m. through April 26 Free. 805-925-0951. Abel Maldonado Community Youth Center, 600 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria.

**THEODORE ROOSEVELT'S WILD AMERICA** This one-man show features Theodore Roosevelt's outdoor adventures over several decades, from hunting in the woods of Maine to his ranching days on the Dakota frontier. This special fundraiser features Alan Sutterfield, who has toured as TR in Yosemite National Park and across the country. **April 7**, 8-9:30 p.m. and **April 8**, 8-9:30 p.m. \$20. 805-268-2993. [orcuttcommunitytheater.org](http://orcuttcommunitytheater.org). KDA Studios, 3558 Skyway Dr., Santa Maria.

**VALLEY READS BOOK CLUB** Second Saturday of every month, 2 p.m. Free. 805-925-0994. [cityofsantamaria.org/city-government/departments/library](http://cityofsantamaria.org/city-government/departments/library). Santa Maria Public Library, 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria.

**YOUTH NEXT CHAPTER BOOK CLUB** Talk about last season's book and read the first chapter of the new book together. Copies will be provided on a first come, first served basis. For ages 8-13. Supported in whole or in part by the Central Coast Literacy Council. **April 5**, 4 p.m. 805-925-0994. [engagedpatrons.org](http://engagedpatrons.org). Orcutt Library, 175 S. Broadway, Orcutt.

### SANTA YNEZ VALLEY

**BECAUSE WE PAINT: DUO EXHIBITION** Garrett and Ginny Speirs, an artist couple, will be showing their oil paintings in

Gallery Los Olivos in March. Garrett's work will feature distant water and landscape scenes from California, Italy, and Croatia. Ginny's work shows the close-up details of local plant life. Mondays-Sundays, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. through March 31 805-688-7517. [GalleryLosOlivos.com](http://GalleryLosOlivos.com). Gallery Los Olivos, 2920 Grand Ave., Los Olivos.

**LEARN CALIFORNIA'S OFFICIAL DANCE: WEST COAST SWING** Learn to dance west coast swing in a casual, friendly environment. No partner needed. Taught by Gina Sigman. Thursdays, 6:30-8:15 p.m. Beginning class is free; \$10 for advanced. 805-344-1630. High Roller Tiki Lounge, 433 Alisal Road, Solvang.

**SEDGWICK RESERVE: A CONSERVATION STORY April 8-Oct. 16** Wildling Museum of Art and Nature, 1511-B Mission Dr., Solvang, 805-688-1082. [wildlingmuseum.org](http://wildlingmuseum.org).

**VOICES AND VISTAS** Award-winning artist Jim Tyler will exhibit a collection of landscape, figurative, and portrait pastel paintings at Gallery Los Olivos during the month of April. **April 1**, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. and Mondays-Sundays, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. through April. 805-688-7517. [GalleryLosOlivos.com](http://GalleryLosOlivos.com). Gallery Los Olivos, 2920 Grand Ave., Los Olivos.

### LOMPOC/VANDENBERG

**BRENDA FRENCH MEMORIAL ART AUCTION AND SALE** The Lompoc Valley Arts Council is sponsoring a Silent Auction and Sale of fine art from the collection of Brenda French; work by local and county art professionals; and treasured collectibles. **April 1**, 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Free. 805-735-6896. [facebook.com/LompocValleyArtsCouncil](http://facebook.com/LompocValleyArtsCouncil). Stone Pine Hall, 210 South H St., Lompoc.

**COLOR ME DRAG** A colorful celebrating the art of drag. Guests are encouraged to dress head-to-toe in their favorite color.

Hosted by Angel D'Mon and Vivian Storm. **April 1**, 6 & 9 p.m. [my805tix.com](http://my805tix.com). Flower City Ballroom, 110 W. Ocean Ave., Lompoc.

**WATER AND WOOD** Featured artists: Neal Andersson and Chuck Klein. Opening reception held on Apr. 2, from 1 to 3 p.m. Thursdays-Sundays, 11 a.m.-4 p.m. through April 23 Free admission. 805-737-1129. Cypress Gallery, 119 E Cypress Ave., Lompoc, [lompcart.org](http://lompcart.org).

### SOUTH COAST SLO COUNTY

**BEST OF THE SAN FRANCISCO COMEDY COMPETITION** The San Francisco Stand-Up Comedy competition has been a major springboard for the most talented comics in the country for more than 40 years.

Back by popular demand, a new group of competition finalists takes the stage in Arroyo Grande. **April 1**, 7:30-10 p.m. \$32-\$45. 805-489-9444. [clarkcenter.org](http://clarkcenter.org). Clark Center for the Performing Arts, 487 Fair Oaks Ave., Arroyo Grande.

**BIG BOOK SALE: FIRST OF THE YEAR** Features tons of children's books, biographies, popular fiction, crafts, self-help, or coffee table and collectible books. Books are sold by the inch. Bag sale starts at 1 p.m. In case of rain, check website for latest updates. **April 1**, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Free to attend. 805-481-4131. [GroverBeachLibrary.org](http://GroverBeachLibrary.org). Grover Beach Community Library, 240 N 9th St., Grover Beach.

**HEARTS FOR ART** The "Hearts for Art" Fundraiser will offer over 125 pieces of curated artwork. Most of the artwork will be original pieces created by local Central Coast artists. Guests will have the opportunity to purchase these unique creations. **April 1**, 2-5 p.m. Free. 805-929-5679. [danaadobe.org](http://danaadobe.org). DANA Adobe Cultural Center, 671 S. Oakglen Ave., Nipomo.

**INSPIRATIONS: THE GENESIS OF A MYSTERY NOVEL** Coastal Dunes CWC will feature local author Tony Piazza at its April meeting. Crime/mystery writer, film historian, and former actor/stand-in for multiple movies and TV shows, Piazza will be giving a presentation on how his experiences in the film industry have influenced his mystery novels. **April 1**, 10:15 a.m.-noon Free. 805-929-3394. [slolibrary.org](http://slolibrary.org). Nipomo Library, 918 W. Tefft, Nipomo.

**MIXED MEDIA (ADULTS)** Each week, attendees will combine two or more media in several pieces, while working with watercolor, acrylic, ink, pastels, charcoal as well as various printmaking techniques in the course of a month. Enjoy discovering new ways to work with traditional and nontraditional materials. Mondays, 1-3 p.m. \$35. 805-668-2125. [lila.community](http://lila.community). LiLA Creative Community, 1147 East Grand Ave. suite 101, Arroyo Grande.

**MIXED MEDIA FOR AGES 5-6 AND 7-12** For ages 5-6 (Mondays) and 7-12 (Tuesdays). Mondays, Tuesdays, 3:15-4:15 p.m. 805-668-2125. [lila.community](http://lila.community). LiLA Creative Community, 1147 East Grand Ave. suite 101, Arroyo Grande.

**MIXED MEDIA FOR AGES 5-7** Each week students will have the opportunity to explore and combine various mediums like pastels with tempera, watercolors and collage, or clay and wood and so much more. Mondays, 3:30-4:45 p.m. \$25. 805-668-2125. [lila.community](http://lila.community). LiLA Creative Community, 1147 East Grand Ave. suite 101, Arroyo Grande.

**MIXED MEDIA WORKSHOP (AGES 7-12)** Come explore mixed media with an emphasis on the Elements of Art and the Principles of Design. Each week, students will have the opportunity to use various media. Tuesdays, 3:30-4:45 p.m. \$25. 805-668-2125. [lila.community](http://lila.community). LiLA Creative Community, 1147 East Grand Ave. suite 101, Arroyo Grande.

**OPEN STUDIO (AGES 7-12)** Guests can explore a variety of media and techniques while focusing on their own subject matter. Whether they come with a project in mind, or find their way as they play, this class offers a chance for independent learning in a supportive environment. Thursdays, 3:45-4:45 p.m. \$25. 805-668-2125. [lila.community](http://lila.community). LiLA Creative Community, 1147 East Grand Ave. suite 101, Arroyo Grande.

**OPEN STUDIO FOR ADULTS** Guests can come in and decide what materials they would like to work with and create freely. Share your creative process with others and see how your work will flourish. Tuesdays, 6-9 p.m. and Wednesdays,

ARTS continued page 13

**SUBMIT YOUR EVENTS**

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).

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PHOTO COURTESY OF THE LOMPOC VALLEY ARTS COUNCIL



**PLEXIGLAS POP-UP**  
*The Lompoc Valley Arts Council presents the Brenda French Memorial Auction and Sale at Stone Pine Hall on Saturday, April 1, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. The event will feature several artworks by French, who passed away in 2019, and pieces by various artists, including Pop Woman (pictured) by Michael Monahan. Proceeds raised will benefit the Lompoc Valley Arts Council. Visit the group's Facebook page for more info. Stone Pine Hall is located at 210 S. H St., Lompoc.*  
 —C.W.

**BALLET THEATRE SLO: THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME** The world premiere of Ballet Theatre San Luis Obispo's epic full-length three act adaptation of Victor Hugo's classic tale, described as a whirlwind of love, cruelty, and betrayal. **April 1, 7-9:15 p.m.** and **April 2, 2-4:15 p.m.** \$20-\$56. 805-756-4849. [bt-slo.org/nextproduction](http://bt-slo.org/nextproduction). Performing Arts Center, 1 Grand Ave., San Luis Obispo.

**BEACON ART SHOW** A juried show held annually. The community is invited to enter up to five pieces of art. The show's opening night will be March 3. This year's theme is Artistic Spectrum. Fridays-Sundays. through April 2 Free. 805-544-4608. San Luis Obispo United Methodist Church, 1515 Fredericks Street, San Luis Obispo.

**CERAMIC LESSONS AND MORE** Now offering private one-on-one and group lessons in the ceramic arts. Both hand building and wheel throwing options. Beginners welcomed. ongoing 805-835-5893. [hmcruceceramics.com/](http://hmcruceceramics.com/). Online, See website, San Luis Obispo.

**COMEDY NIGHT** Professional comedy show featuring local and touring comics. Hosted by Aidan Candelario. First Thursday of every month, 7-9 p.m. \$5. 805-540-8300. Bang the Drum Brewery, 1150 Laurel Lane, suite 130, San Luis Obispo, [bangthedrumbrewery.com](http://bangthedrumbrewery.com).

**CRITICAL ENCOUNTERS** Beginning with monoprints and photography from the 1980s, this exhibition follows the lineage of Nixon Borah's practice towards his recent digital composites. Through April 3, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Free. 805-543-8562. [sloma.org/exhibits/current/](http://sloma.org/exhibits/current/). San Luis Obispo Museum of Art, 1010 Broad St., San Luis Obispo.

**DATE NIGHT POTTERY** Looking for a fun date night? Head to Anam Cre Pottery

Studio and play with clay. Couples will learn how to throw a pot on the wheel and make a cheeseboard. Fridays, Saturdays, 6-8 p.m. \$140. Anam Cre Pottery Studio, 1243 Monterey St., San Luis Obispo, [anamcre.com](http://anamcre.com).

**FREE DOCENT TOURS** Gain a deeper understanding of the artwork on view with SLOMA's new docent tours. Every Saturday, join trained guides for interactive and engaging tours of SLOMA's current exhibitions. ongoing, 11-11:30 a.m. Free. 805-543-8562. [sloma.org/visit/tours/](http://sloma.org/visit/tours/). San Luis Obispo Museum of Art, 1010 Broad St., San Luis Obispo.

**INTERMEDIATE OIL PAINTING: ADULT ART CLASS** This class is for students who may have tried oil painting in the past but are looking to advance their skill levels. Color theory and proportion study will be a focus in the class. Mondays, 2-5 p.m. \$30 per student or \$75 for 3 classes. 805-747-4200. [artcentralslo.com/workshops-events/](http://artcentralslo.com/workshops-events/). Art Central, 1329 Monterey St., San Luis Obispo.

**INTRO TO OIL PAINTING WITH SPENCER COLLINS** The perfect class for those wanting to try oil painting for the first time. Discuss color theory, layering paint, and how to use various media. Each student will create a dynamic landscape using a reference image provided by the teacher. Thursdays, 10:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. through March 30 \$35 per class. 559-250-3081. The perfect class for those wanting to try oil painting for the first time. Guests discuss color theory, layering paint, and how to use various media. For ages 16 and over. Thursdays, 10 a.m.-1 p.m. \$30 per class or \$100 for 4 classes. 805-747-4200. [artcentralslo.com/workshops-events/](http://artcentralslo.com/workshops-events/). Art Central, 1329 Monterey St., San Luis Obispo.

**LEARN TO WEAVE MONDAYS** An opportunity to learn how a four-shaft loom works. You will get acquainted as a new weaver or as a refresher with lots of tips and tricks. This class includes getting to know a loom, how to prepare/dress a loom, and much much more. Mondays, 1-4 p.m. \$75 monthly. 805-441-8257. Patricia Martin: [WhisperingVistaStudios.com](http://WhisperingVistaStudios.com), 224 Squire Canyon Rd, San Luis Obispo, [patriciamartinartist.com](http://patriciamartinartist.com).

**LIZ MARUSKA'S ART: ENJOYING BIG SUR** Wander through Maruska's spellbinding impressions of this iconic seashore in a euphoric and inspiring display of art rendered in a luminous palette of colors that glows with vitality. Through March 31 Free. 805-550-3308. [SLOProvisions.com](http://SLOProvisions.com). SLO Provisions, 1255 Monterey St., San Luis Obispo.

**MARELA ZACARIAS: STORYTELLING** Through July 7 San Luis Obispo Museum of Art, 1010 Broad St., San Luis Obispo, 543-8562, [sloma.org/](http://sloma.org/).

**OPEN MIC COMEDY** Sign-ups at 6:30 p.m. Hosted by Aidan Candelario. Mondays, 7-9 p.m. Free. 805-540-8300. [saintsbarrel.com/event-calendar](http://saintsbarrel.com/event-calendar). Saints Barrel Wine Bar, 1021 Higuera St., San Luis Obispo.

**PAINT SOCIAL** Please join ArtSocial805 at ArtCentral SLO for a step-by-step painting experience. **April 2, 1-3 p.m.** \$40. 805-747-4200. [artsocial805.com](http://artsocial805.com). Art Central, 1329 Monterey St., San Luis Obispo.

**PARENT-CHILD POTTERY CLASS** Make lasting memories with clay together as a family. For ages 6 and over. Thursdays, 10:30 a.m.-noon \$70. Anam Cre Pottery Studio, 1243 Monterey St., San Luis Obispo, [anamcre.com](http://anamcre.com).

**PICKET PAINTING PARTY** Decorative picket purchasing opportunities are available to show your support and help fund maintenance and educational programs in the Children's Garden. Second Saturday of every month, 1-4 p.m. \$75 per picket or 2 for \$100. 805-541-1400. [slobg.org](http://slobg.org). San Luis Obispo Botanical Garden, 3450 Dairy Creek Rd, San Luis Obispo.

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## EARTH DAY 2023

### Saturday, April 22nd 11am-4pm (Rain Cancels)

**FREE EVENT**  
 Fun for the Whole Family



- Santa Maria River Watershed Exhibit featuring Steelhead & Rainbow Trout
- Central Coast Aquarium Tide Pools Touch Tank 11-2pm
- Fly fishing information & casting demo
- Recycling, composting & conservation information
  - Crafts for Kids
  - Food, Music
  - Local Strawberries
- Native Garden Milkweed seeds & tours
- English & Spanish hourly Museum Tours
- Ukulele Band 2pm

Sponsored by



**The Natural History Museum**  
 412 S. McClelland Street, Santa Maria  
 (805) 614-0806 · [smnaturalhistory.org](http://smnaturalhistory.org)



The FRIENDS of the SANTA MARIA PUBLIC LIBRARY Present

The 12th ANNUAL  
**PAINTED CHAIR RAFFLE**  
 April 1 - 14, 2023  
 12:00 noon to 6:00 p.m.  
**SANTA MARIA TOWN CENTER MALL EAST**  
 Second Level, Across from Macy's

Raffle Tickets are 1 for \$1 or 6 for \$5  
 Drawing will take place April 14 at 4:00 p.m.  
 Winner need not be present!



Features book-themed items decorated by local artists.

Proceeds from the Raffle will help support the Friends' Mission to Promote Libraries and Reading, and fund general programs and administrative purposes.



For more information, please contact the Friends at (805) 925-7116, or visit us at our Library Shop on the Second Level of the Mall.



**KCBX fm**  
 Central Coast Public Radio



NPR. Local News. Great Music.

90.1 FM SAN LUIS OBISPO & SANTA MARIA  
 89.5 FM SANTA BARBARA • 90.9 FM SANTA YNEZ  
 95.1 FM LOMPOC • 91.7 FM SO MONTEREY CO.

Celebrating 45 years on the Central Coast

**Hot Stuff**

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**PLEIN AIR PAINTERS OF THE CENTRAL COAST** A self-directed fun group of dynamic artists who enjoy painting and sketching outdoors. Artists meet on site at various locations. Weekly plein air destinations are provided by Kirsti Wothe via email (mrswothe@yahoo.com). Wednesdays, 9 a.m.-noon SLO County, Various locations, San Luis Obispo.

**POTTERY: BEGINNING WHEEL CLASS** This series is a great intro to the pottery wheel. Students learn to throw various shapes, surface decorate, and glaze. Clay and firing included with admission. Thursdays, 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. \$180. anamcre.com. Anam Cre Pottery Studio, 1243 Monterey St., San Luis Obispo.

**SCULPTURE CLASS WITH ROD PEREZ** This weekly sculpture drop-in class gives an opportunity for potters to take on new projects and learn new techniques relating to sculptural work. Additionally, every first Friday of the month, a new project will be taught by Rod Perez for beginners. Fridays, 10 a.m.-noon \$40. anamcre.com. Anam Cre Pottery Studio, 1243 Monterey St., San Luis Obispo.

**SECOND SATURDAYS AT SLOMA** Intergenerational learning and creative expression for children of all ages. Families are invited to SLOMA's lawn to learn about the visual arts together using our unique activity kits and create an art project inspired by our exhibitions. Second Saturday of every month, 11 a.m.-1 p.m. Free. 805-543-8562. sloma.org/events/second-saturdays/. San Luis Obispo Museum of Art, 1010 Broad St., San Luis Obispo.

**SENIOR CLAY CLASS** Offered to the senior community as an outlet to explore the beauty of clay. For ages 60 and over. Caretakers welcome for an additional \$20. Fridays, 10 a.m.-noon \$40. anamcre.com. Anam Cre Pottery Studio, 1243 Monterey St., San Luis Obispo.

**SLO COMEDY UNDERGROUND OPEN MIC NIGHT** Enjoy a night of laughs provided by the local SLO Comedy Community. It's open mic night, so anyone can perform and "you never know what you'll see." Tuesdays, 8 p.m. Libertine Brewing Company, 1234 Broad St., San Luis Obispo, 805-548-2337, libertinebrewing.com.

**SLO DRAWZ: OPEN FIGURE DRAWING GROUP** Improve your drawing skills while also building a community of supportive creatives with live models. This is not a guided class, please bring your own materials. To sign up, email chantellegoldthwaite@gmail.com. Every other Monday, 5-7 p.m. and Every other Thursday, 5-7 p.m. through Dec. 31 \$20 per session; or \$60 for a month pass. 805-747-4200. instagram.com/slodrawz/. Art Central, 1329 Monterey St., San Luis Obispo.

**SLO LIBRARY: 40TH ANNUAL SAN LUIS OBISPO POETRY FESTIVAL** Language of the Soul returns with its 40th SLO Poetry Festival at the SLO Library Community Room with SLO County Poet Laureate Kevin Clark and Poets Emeritus Jeanie Greensfelder and Dian Sousa. Open reading follows. Hosted by Kevin Patrick Sullivan. Donations always welcome. **April 8**, 1:30-3:30 p.m. Free. 805-903-3595. San Luis Obispo Library, 995 Palm St., San Luis Obispo.

**TINY POTTERS: WISE ONES AND WEE ONES PAINT** For ages 4 to 6. Kids have the option to paint animals and other subjects. Tuesdays, 10:30-11:30 a.m. \$30. anamcre.com/booking. Anam Cre Pottery Studio, 1243 Monterey St., San Luis Obispo.

**VIRGINIA MACK: BEGINNING WATERCOLOR** This is a watercolor class designed to let you jump in and try out this engaging medium through experimentation. It's designed for beginners and those with watercolor experience who wish to expand their knowledge of painting in watercolors. To enroll please contact Mack via email: vbmack@charter.net Wednesdays, 1:30-3:30 p.m. \$35. 805-747-4200. artcentralslo.com/workshops-events/. Art Central, 1329 Monterey St., San Luis Obispo.

**CULTURE & LIFESTYLE**

**SANTA MARIA VALLEY/LOS ALAMOS**

**10TH ANNUAL EVERYTHING EDIBLE: SPRING PLANT SALE** Find a huge selection of heirloom and hybrid tomato varieties, peppers, eggplant, basil, herbs, veggies, berries, fruit trees, flowers. **April 1**, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Free admission. 805-934-2182. Growing Grounds Farm, 820 W. Foster Rd., Santa Maria, t-mha.org.

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

**ANDROID PHONE CLASS** First Thursday of every month Oasis Center, 420 Soares Ave., Orcutt, 805-937-9750.

**BOUNCING BABY STORY TIME** Explore pre-literacy skills through music, movement, and visual stimulation, and promote a healthy bond between baby and caregiver. Learn, connect, and grow with other babies and their caregivers. For 0-12 months. Wednesdays, 10 a.m. through April 12 805-925-0994. engagedpatrons.org. Explore pre-literacy skills through music, movement, and visual stimulation, and promote a healthy bond between baby and caregiver. Learn, connect, and grow with other babies and their caregivers. For ages 0-12 months. **April 5**, 10 a.m. 805-925-0994. engagedpatrons.org. Santa Maria Public Library (Altrusa Theater), 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria.

**CENTRAL COAST CORVETTE CLUB** Open to Corvette owners and enthusiasts. First Thursday of every month, 7 p.m. Free. 805-934-3948. Home Motors, 1313 E. Main St., Santa Maria.

**EARTH EGGS-PLORERS** Free, supervised arts & crafts programs for youth ages 6-12. Registration required. Tuesdays, 4-6:30 p.m. through April 25. 805-925-0951. Minami Community Center, 600 W. Enos Drive, Santa Maria.

**FAMILY STEAM NIGHT** Bring the family for a night of science, technology, engineering, art, and math fun. Activities are designed for elementary school aged children to complete with other family members. Program funded in part or whole by California State Library. **March 30**, 4-5:30 p.m. 805-925-0994. engagedpatrons.org. Santa Maria Public Library (Altrusa Theater), 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria.

**FEEL GOOD YOGA** Tuesdays, Thursdays, 8:30-9:30 a.m. 805-937-9750. oasisorcutt.org. Oasis Center, 420 Soares Ave., Orcutt.

**FIRST FRIDAY** First Friday of every month facebook.com/firstfridayoldtownorcutt/. Historic Old Town Orcutt, S. Broadway and Union Ave., Orcutt.

**GROUP WALKS AND HIKES** Check website for the remainder of this year's group hike dates and private hike offerings. ongoing 805-343-2455. dunescenter.org. Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes Center, 1065 Guadalupe St., Guadalupe.

**HAUNTED PLACES AROUND THE WORLD PACK FOR TEENS** Pack pick-up begins Saturday, April 1, at all SMV library locations. Read tales of haunted places throughout the globe, create a map of haunted destinations, and create your own haunted house story in a customizable journal. Program funded in part or whole by California State Library. **April 1** 805-925-0994. engagedpatrons.org. Santa Maria Public Library, 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria.

**HOMEWORK HELP: SANTA MARIA PUBLIC LIBRARY** Volunteer tutors are available to help with assignments and work on skills. For children in grades K-6. First come, first served; no sign-ups are required. No events scheduled between April 10 and 13. Mondays-Thursdays, through May 25 Free. 805-925-0994. engagedpatrons.org. Santa Maria Public Library, 421 S. McClelland St., Santa Maria.

**LET'S BLOW OFF SOME STEAM** Come to a special story time filled with exploration and discovery. Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math themes will be explored through stories and discovered through hands-on activities. Come dressed for mess. For ages 3-5. Program funded in part or whole by California



**CHAPTER FUN**

The Grover Beach Community Library will host its Big Book Sale event on Saturday, April 1, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. The outdoor sale will be held in the library's parking lot, and will include books of various categories, including children's books, self-help books, crafting books, and more. For more details, visit groverbeachlibrary.org. The library is located at 240 N. 9th St., Grover Beach.

—C.W.

**SOUTH COAST SLO COUNTY**

**BEGINNER GROUP SURF LESSONS AND SURF CAMPS** Lessons and camp packages available daily. All equipment included. ongoing Starts at \$70. 805-835-7873. sandbarsurf.com/. Sandbar Surf School Meetup Spot, 110 Park Ave., Pismo Beach.

**DONATION-BASED YOGA FOR FIRST RESPONDERS, EMTS, AND CARETAKERS** Class schedule varies. Contact empoweryoga805@gmail for details and reservations. ongoing 805-619-0989. empoweryoga805.com. Empower Yoga Studio and Community Boutique, 775 W. Grand Ave., Grover Beach.

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**CULTURE & LIFESTYLE** continued page 16

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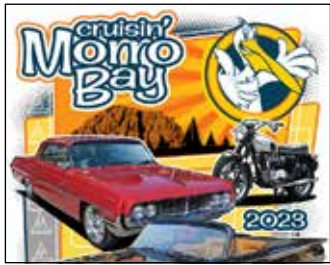
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COURTESY IMAGE BY SUSAN KOUNANIS

ARTS BRIEFS

## Four authors team up for local group book signing

FILE PHOTO COURTESY OF LIDA SIDERIS



On Sunday, April 16, the Coalesce Bookstore in Morro Bay will hold a book signing and dramatic reading event with four novelists.

The program starts at 1 p.m. and will feature appearances from Santa Ynez author Lida Sideris (pictured), Santa Maria author Tony Piazza, Los Osos author Anne R. Allen, and Los Angeles author Mara Purl. Scenes from each of the four author's books will be performed during the dramatic reading segment of the event.

All four of the authors featured at the event are known for penning ongoing book series, including Allen, whose series of novels follows one protagonist—Camilla Randal, a fictional socialite—and is described as a combination of romantic comedy, crime fiction, and satire.

Before kicking off her writing career, Sideris worked as an entertainment attorney for a film studio in Los Angeles. Some of her experiences at the studio inspired her to create the protagonist of her ongoing mystery novel series, Corrie Locke, a lawyer by day and sleuth by night. Sideris currently lives in Santa Ynez with her family.

Piazza also has a Hollywood-related background, as he previously worked as a stand-in and stunt double for various actors in the 1970s. The Santa Maria resident is widely known for his book series that follows private investigator Tom Logan.

Purl is a prolific actress, audiobook performer, and novelist, who has written several novels and novellas with a shared continuity in the fictional town of Milford-Haven. The series has received more than 60 book awards over the years.

For more info on the upcoming book signing, visit [coalescebookstore.com](http://coalescebookstore.com).

## Elverhoj Museum executive director announces retirement

COURTESY PHOTO BY INGRID BOSTROM PHOTOGRAPHY



In a recent statement from the Elverhoj Museum of History and Art in Solvang, board president Dennis Bales commended longtime Executive Director Esther Jacobsen Bates' dedication to the venue over the years, while announcing his colleague's plans to retire this summer.

"On behalf of the board of directors, we want to recognize and thank Esther for her extraordinary personal commitment and passion," Bales said. "By far the longest tenured of our past directors, Esther has guided Elverhoj to new levels of accomplishment and recognition."

Bates (pictured) was appointed to the role in 2003 and described the position as "a great honor" in press materials.

"I take pride in the museum's role in the community, and I feel it is positioned for a successful future," Bates said. ○

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

# Spring forward

## SLO painter Susan Kounanis showcases colorful florals in Santa Maria

BY CALEB WISEBLOOD

During the spring of 2022, local artist Susan Kounanis got a phone call that made her year.

"I almost cried when I got that call," said Kounanis, recalling a call from the *Sun's* sister paper, *New Times*, to congratulate her for winning Best Visual Artist in the Best of SLO County 2022 poll. "I was shocked. At first, I thought it was spam or something."

Colorful oil paintings by Kounanis, who lives in San Luis Obispo, have been displayed at multiple venues—including the Clark Center for the Performing Arts, the SLO Botanical Garden, and Art Central—along the Central Coast over the years, while the artist's latest solo exhibit marks her debut showcase in Santa Maria.

In early March, Kounanis hung more than a dozen of her floral still life pieces at the Ameriprise Financial Office, which will remain on display inside the office's gallery space—where solo art displays by local artists rotate every few months—through the end of June.

Kounanis' three-month residency at Ameriprise is timely, as her floral artworks make a great fit for a spring-themed show.

"I love peonies, I love hydrangeas, I love sunflowers—you know, I love them all," said Kounanis, whose admiration for flowers has always been tied to her passion to paint.

"I got into flowers when I started painting," said the self-taught artist, who was drawn to books about floral paintings before creating them herself. "I pretty much taught myself through books, videos, and online courses."

As the category's name suggests, Kounanis paints her floral still life pieces from life, with her floral subjects in front of her rather than, relying on reference photos. She has a studio space at her home where she meticulously sets up her scenes to paint from.

"I always paint from life. I have a still life stand where I set my flowers up," Kounanis said. "Sometimes it takes five minutes, sometimes it takes a couple hours."

The reason some projects take a while is all due to getting the lighting just right, Kounanis explained. The artist's motto on her website is "forever chasing the light."

FILE COURTESY PHOTO BY KRISTEN BATES



Showtime!

Send gallery, stage, and cultural festivities to [cwiseblood@santamariasun.com](mailto:cwiseblood@santamariasun.com).

**MEET THE ARTIST:** Susan Kounanis recently hung a collection of her oil paintings, including *Scrumptious Sunflowers*, at Ameriprise Financial in Santa Maria, where her still life display will remain up through the end of June.



**RED AND RECENT:** San Luis Obispo-based artist Susan Kounanis specializes in floral still life paintings. One of her personal favorites and most recent of her oil pieces is *Red Beauties*.

### Life finds a way

Still life oil paintings by local artist Susan Kounanis are currently on display at Ameriprise Financial—located at 2605 S. Miller St., suite 104, Santa Maria—as part of Kounanis' ongoing solo show, which debuted in early March and will remain on display through the end of June.

An artist reception for the exhibit will be held on Thursday, May 11, from 4 to 6 p.m. Visit [susankounanis.com](http://susankounanis.com) for more info on the artist's work.

"You can really capture the light in an oil painting," Kounanis said. "That's kind of what I'm all about—keeping the viewer's eye on the painting through the light, to follow the light and capture the light throughout the painting"

One of her favorite props she likes to add to some of her paintings is a glass of whiskey or a cocktail, simply because of how well these kinds of drinks can play off of light, visually.

"Those are really fun," Kounanis said of pieces like *Whiskey Dahlias*, *Warm Embrace*, *Whiskey Neat*, and *Whiskey Sour*—all available to purchase in greeting card form on her website, along with several of her various artworks.

"The reason I like those is because once you put a glass of whiskey under the spotlight, it glows beautifully through the glass, especially at the bottom right-hand corner," Kounanis said. "It's so pretty, that's why I like to do those. I don't drink whiskey. I don't even know much about it, but I do know it glows pretty."

Before embarking on a new painting, Kounanis is usually able to get her flowers from local grocery stores, although she has occasionally grown her own blooms on her property—but not without difficulty.

"I try to grow them myself, but we have a lot of deer in our backyard. I used to love deer, not so much anymore," Kounanis said with a laugh. "I'll get mine from Trader Joe's and other stores, and luckily my husband knows what I like, so he's always bringing me home flowers." ○

Send Arts Editor Caleb Wiseblood some "Dear Caleb" letters to [cwiseblood@santamariasun.com](mailto:cwiseblood@santamariasun.com).

COURTESY IMAGE BY SUSAN KOUNANIS



**GALLERY-WORTHY GREETINGS:** Many of painter Susan Kounanis' still life pieces are available to buy in greeting card form, including this piece, *Whiskey Dahlias*, for \$5.



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# Dead reckoning

Former stuntman-turned-director Chad Stahelski helms this fourth installment of his John Wick franchise, about a retired assassin who was drawn out of retirement in the first film, leading to his reinvolvement with crime syndicate The High Table and a contract on his life. In this film, Wick discovers a way to defeat The High Table and earn his freedom, but not before killing an army of assassins before they kill him. (169 min.)

**Glen:** John Wick (Keanu Reeves) has been on the run from The High Table since the very first film, and he's running still, this time from the Marquis (Bill Skarsgård), who's been given carte blanche to find and kill Wick. His solution is to blackmail Wick's old friend and fellow assassin, Caine (Donnie Yen), who's blind but positively deadly, into doing the dirty work ... or The High Table will kill Caine's estranged daughter. It's an ugly world these people inhabit, but at least they have some rules, which is exactly what Wick's going to have to exploit if he wants a chance to get out again. This fourth installment in the bullet-strewn franchise has done what each successive sequel has: upped the ante. According to the interwebs, Wick kills 140 bad guys in this go-around, almost doubling the first installment's 77. Let me tell you how utterly gorgeous this film is. The cinematography by Dan Lausten is remarkably

beautiful, and you add in the amazing locations and you've got a visual stunner. Great story, great characters, and absolutely bonkers action. Putting a former stuntman behind the camera turns out to be a stroke of bloody brilliance.

**Anna:** Can I insert an "all the beauty and the bloodshed" joke here? Is this the appropriate time? No? OK then. Moving on. I'm not a big fan of just watching a whole lot of people get killed, but even I must admit these John Wick films get it right. There's a lot of money that went into making this pretty, and a well-placed chunk of that cash was in wardrobe. Reeves looks sleek as ever, but Skarsgård's costume closet was like the richest cake you've ever had topped with 24-carat gold leaf. There were several times during the film that I just shook my head in wonder and said, "There is \$20,000 in fabric on that man's body right now."

## JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 4

What's it rated? **R**  
 What's it worth, Glen? **Full price**  
 What's it worth, Anna? **Full price**  
 Where's it showing? **Fair Oaks Arroyo Grande, Movies Lompoc, Regal Edwards Stadium 10 Arroyo Grande, Regal Edwards RPX Santa Maria**

Seriously, the Marquis is on point. He also has the devilish curled lip smile that all too quickly reminded me of his far too frightening Pennywise, and a rolling French accent that makes it seem like he has too much tongue in his mouth. Of course, the enemy is not the most fun to watch here; it's Wick, or Reeves, rather. He's

stoic and so funny in his deadpan way. If you're going to watch 140 dudes go down, a John Wick flick is the way to do it.

**Glen:** Old favorites such as Winston (Ian McShane), Charon (Lance Reddick), and the



**HE'S BACK AND DEADLIER THAN EVER:** Assassin John Wick (Keanu Reeves) may have found a way to free himself from The High Table, in John Wick: Chapter 4, screening in local theaters.

Bowery King (Laurence Fishburne) show up, but there are some terrific new characters such as Harbinger (Clancy Brown), who represents The High Table during the final showdown, and a new assassin called Tracker (Shamier Anderson), who's got a deadly Belgian malinois sidekick. Somehow, the franchise manages to keep things fresh—we care about world weary Wick, and we want him to find much deserved peace. Is the film excessive? Yes! That's the point. The stunts are incredible. You'll absolutely get what you pay for.

**Anna:** My favorite part is probably in the last act, when every bad guy in Paris is called to find Wick for an epically large bounty, and we're treated to a high velocity tour of Paris. The 222 steps to the Sacre Coeur are a maddeningly long journey. Trust me, if you love a dude to root for, John Wick: Chapter 4 is the salve you need to sooth your soul. ○

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

## Film Reviews

### BOSTON STRANGLER

What's it rated? **R**  
 When? **2023**  
 Where's it showing? **Hulu**  
 Perpetually overlooked female journalist Loretta McLaughlin (Kiera Knightly) has a story on her hands. Usually given lifestyle pieces and appliance reviews, she can't seem to get any traction. But when women start turning up strangled, Loretta and her fellow reporter, Jean Cole (Carrie Coon), are given the opportunity to create coverage, and Loretta soon finds herself more involved in the story than anyone around her wants her to be.

Based on the real people behind the news coverage, the Boston Strangler is a compelling look at history and does well to honor the victims by staying true to the facts and focusing on those who helped to find justice as opposed to the killer himself.

Knightley is a great lead; she played McLaughlin with ease and nuance. The work/life balance of a 1960s housewife with a career is not easy, yet even when told to stop, McLaughlin pressed on, ultimately being the keystone in taking down



**PROTO FEMINIST:** Kiera Knightly stars as tenacious journalist Loretta McLaughlin, who through sheer will breaks through the glass ceiling to cover "real" news, in Boston Strangler, streaming on Hulu.

the killer. Any fans of true crime will find this fictionalized reality riveting. (112-min.)

—Anna **NEW FLICKS**

### ALL THE BEAUTY AND THE BLOODSHED

What's it rated? **Not rated**  
 When? **2022**  
 Where's it showing? **HBO Max**  
 Novelist Toni Morrison said, "The best art is political, and you ought to be able to make it unquestionably political and irrevocably beautiful at the same time." I think Academy Award-winning filmmaker Laura Poitras (Citizenfour) and her subject for this film, the photographer and activist Nan Goldin, took Morrison's words to heart. Goldin is known for explorations of LGBTQ subcultures, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and the opioid crisis, which is the focus of this Academy Award-nominated documentary.

Poitras puts Goldin's work on display, which is intimate and beautiful, but the center of this film is Goldin's activism and her long attempt to hold the Sackler family accountable for the scourge of opioid addiction brought by their company Purdue Pharma. Goldin does it the only way she can—by shaming museums, many of which have her work in their permanent collections, into removing the Sackler name from their buildings and disassociating themselves from their wealth and philanthropy.

Poitras follows Goldin around, getting



**ART AND ACTIVISM:** In this Academy Award-nominated documentary, we follow photographer Nan Goldin as she uses her activism to take down the Sackler family and Purdue Pharma, which drove the nation's opioid epidemic, in All the Beauty and the Bloodshed, on HBO.

unprecedented access to both her work and home movies, as she organizes and executes actions at various museums, ultimately making the Sackler name synonymous with greed and corruption. The Sacklers are still rich, thousands are still dead, but the Sackler name is mud. (122-min.)

—Glen

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**FEAST YOUR EYES:** One of the new options in the debut dinner service lineup at peasants FEAST is a brined, buttermilk fried chicken plate with garlicky greens, polenta, and herb honey.

COURTESY PHOTO BY BRI BURKETT

## Night makes right

*New chef de cuisine joins peasants FEAST for debut dinner hours*

**BY CALEB WISEBLOOD**

Like the prerequisite to board many roller coasters, local chef Brendan Collins' intro to cooking was subject to a height threshold.

"I've been cooking basically since I could reach the counter on a step stool," said Collins, who especially enjoyed helping out in the kitchen during family get-togethers throughout his childhood. "My dad was always into big holiday meals for as many people as we could have over; feasts for everyone."

Nowadays Collins is dishing out meals for a living at peasants FEAST, where he was recently welcomed as the Solvang restaurant's new chef de cuisine. Collins' arrival coincides with a newly launched evening dinner service at the venue—which earned its reputation as a popular lunch destination over the past three years.

"It was always supposed to be

a lunch and dinner restaurant," said chef and co-owner Michael Cherney, who started peasants FEAST with his wife during the spring of 2020.

The eatery opened within two weeks of the first pandemic shutdowns, so its owners decided to shift gears from their original vision and solely focus on takeout lunches and eventually added outdoor dining on-site.

This March marked the intro of the restaurant's dinner menu, offered during evening hours—with indoor and outdoor seating options—Thursday through Saturday each week. Some options on the new menu include a brined buttermilk fried chicken plate with garlicky greens, polenta, and herb honey; braised pork cheeks; varying cuts of prime steak; and a veggie-forward sunflower seed risotto,

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For more info on peasants FEAST, visit [peasantsfeast.com](http://peasantsfeast.com). The Bib Gourmand-winning restaurant is located at 487 Atterdag Road, Solvang.

To find out more about peasants DELI & MARKET, visit [peasantsdeli.com](http://peasantsdeli.com). The popular deli, with a new adjoining arcade, is located at 473 Atterdag Road, Solvang.

among several other selections.

"It's not just a casual lunch spot anymore, and Brendan is helping us raise the bar," Cherney said. "We have a lot going on, and for him to take charge and lead this dinner team to success is a huge progression with the business that we've been cultivating and building for the past three years."

Collins—whose previous chef roles include positions at restaurants in Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, and Los Angeles—said he jumped at the opportunity when he found out Cherney was looking for a chef de cuisine to lead the dinner service.

"It was something that Michael wanted to do for a while, but obviously he's got so much on



**DINNER IS SERVED:** Patrons of peasants FEAST in Solvang can now select from the restaurant's debut dinner menu, which is offered Thursday through Saturday from 5 to 8 p.m., with indoor and outdoor patio seating options.

his plate between a really busy lunch restaurant, deli, arcade, and everything else," Collins said. "I think he felt like he needed somebody he could trust to take care of it."

The arcade that Collins mentioned

is another one of the Cherney family's latest ventures, and is located at peasants DELI & MARKET—across the street from peasants FEAST—where it opened in February.

"It's kind of like a speakeasy,"

**EATS** continued page 22

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**Eats**

COURTESY PHOTO BY LENA BRITT PHOTOGRAPHY



**GAME ON:** Husband and wife Michael (right) and Sarah Cherney (left) co-founded peasants FEAST in 2020, and peasants DELI & MARKET in 2022. In February, the couple debuted a new '90s style arcade that's adjoined with the deli.

**EATS** from page 21

explained Cherney, who said that most kids are surprised to discover the arcade—complete with vintage pinball machines, air hockey, racing games, and more—when families visit the deli. “All the windows are blacked out, so unless you know about it, you’re not going to know there’s a ‘90s style arcade inside of there.”

In a similar low-key fashion, there’s a particular dish—which both Cherney and Collins ranked as their top personal favorite new dinner dish—stirring a surprising amount of buzz at peasants FEAST. It’s Collins’ roasted chanterelles.

“It’s a really tasty comfort food kind of dish,” Collins said. “We roast the chanterelles

with cipollini onions, and then throw in our house crispy potatoes, and that gets topped with a brown butter hollandaise sauce, that just kind of hides it in the bowl. I think it’s a really fun presentation.”

Collins explained that he and his line cooks use locally foraged mushrooms in the popular offering.

“We don’t even promote that one on social media,” Cherney said, “and almost every single table that’s come in for dinner has ordered it and loved it.”

Arts Editor Caleb Wisblood is humming “Pinball Wizard.” Send comments to [cwisblood@santamariasun.com](mailto:cwisblood@santamariasun.com).

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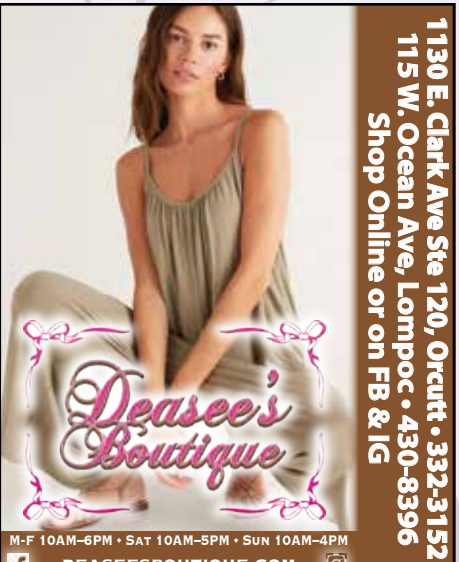
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