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The New Voice, a Bilingual (English/Spanish) Publication
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Pomona Chamber of Commerce



Member

Issue No. 150

Thursday, January 27, 2022

'It's like déjà vu all over again' as COVID surge rattles Pomona schools – and the community

It's all hands on deck this month at Pomona Unified School District, the seventh largest school district in Los Angeles County, where the Omicron COVID-19 surge has been taking a serious toll once again with 17 percent of faculty and staff – and as much as 20 percent of the students – out because of COVID-related causes, according to Supt. Richard Martinez.

The 20 percent of students alone translates to about 400 kids, as the school district currently is down to an enrollment of about 18,500 students from its latest "normal" of 22,000.

He said most of those out – whether faculty, staff or students – are out because they are either

sick, exposed or tested positive.

In an exclusive telephone interview with La Nueva Voz, Martinez said he essentially closed down the district's administrative offices with nobody with a teaching credential returning to the office after the holiday break – they all went directly into the classrooms to provide backup teaching at the school sites.

And, in addition to all of the COVID precautions already in place – and all of the regular COVID testing of students and staff – the school district is even installing "pop-up" COVID testing sites sprinkled around the district in partnership with Los Angeles County for the use of everyone including parents and the public.



Workers at the first of several "pop up" COVID testing stations being placed in operation by the Pomona Unified School District prepare to test the next two people in line out on the sidewalk at the Village at Indian Hill. The length of the line varies day to day but no appointments are required. The PUSD pop ups, which are free and open to the public, are expected to take some of the pressure off of the emergency room at Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center.

State School Supt. Tony Thurmond was even scheduled to visit Pomona early this month to see

how the local school district – one of the largest in the state – is dealing with the latest crisis as the pandemic once again takes an upturn.

(He didn't make it, however – he reportedly only got as far as the offices of the Los Angeles County Office of Education in Downey this time around.)

That closure of the district's administrative offices fortuitously came at a good time – not only did the district need to get more staff in the classrooms but officials were still waiting for formal clearance after a flooring job in the building over the holiday break involved the removal of asbestos tile that required a series of pre-

cautions.

District employees without teaching credentials were relocated into portable office space in a back parking lot pending receipt of an official "all clear" report.

How school district is combatting COVID

Then exactly how is the school district combatting the latest COVID variant?

According to Martinez, the district is adhering carefully to the three-pronged approach currently ordered by Los Angeles County health officials – masking, vaccinations and testing often.

"We've really been pushing **Déjà vu all over again...** pg. 8

MLK keynoters urge youth to remember 'justice, mercy and humility'

Keynote speakers at this month's 40th annual Pomona Inland Valley Martin Luther King Jr. Project's virtual community event told the three 2022 "Youth Social Justice" award winners – and other young people in the on-line audience – to remember just three words – justice, mercy and humility.

"I want you to remember those three words, and I want you to put them into action," said Victoria Rasshan, who operates Pomona's African American Museum of New Beginnings with her husband, Khalif Rasshan.

Referring to the theme of this year's program "True peace is not merely the absence of tensions **Justice, mercy, and humility...** pg. 15



Khalif Rasshan, at left, and Victoria Rasshan, of Pomona's African American Museum of New Beginnings, keynote speakers at this year's 40th annual Pomona Inland Valley Martin Luther King Jr. Project's virtual community celebration, told today's young people to remember three words -- justice, mercy and humility.

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Tri-City Mental Health offers Community Well-being Grants to support wellness

Community plays an essential role in fostering wellness for all individuals. Tri-City Mental Health would like to support communities and groups in the cities of Pomona, Claremont and La Verne that are doing the vital work of maintaining and improving the well-being of their members. The Community Well-being Grant (CWB) is part of Tri-City's Prevention and Early Intervention program. Through monetary grants and technical assistance, the CWB is designed to help communities across the three cities develop and implement community-driven projects to improve and sustain the mental well-being of their members. The CWB is for communities that work, serve and support children and transition-age youth ages 0 to 25. Communities and groups which are either comprised of youth or fund projects that directly benefit them are eligible to apply.

How you and your community can benefit:

- Receive a grant of up to \$10,000 to fund projects that enhance the well-being of your members
- Access community resources and ongoing support from Tri-City staff to achieve project goals
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- Achieve greater awareness of mental health and well-being in your community

How to apply:

Community members are invited to attend our upcoming Information Night and Bidder's Conference meetings. Information Night is open to groups and communities in the Tri-City area to learn more about the grant program and how it can support their community. Community organizations who intend to apply for the grant are required to attend one Bidder's Conference meeting for application and selection process details. Please visit www.tricitymhs.org for meeting registration or contact Daisy Martinez, Community Capacity Organizer, at dmartinez@tricitymhs.org for more information.

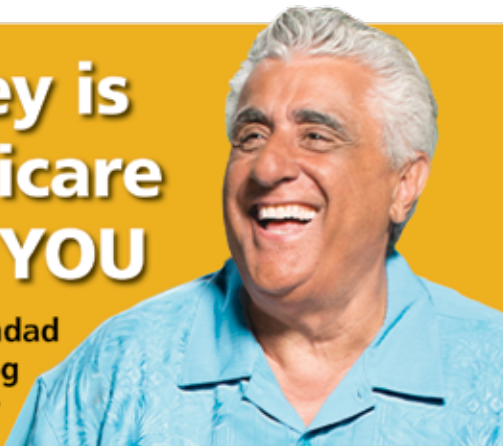
- **Information Night:** February 1, 2022 at 6:00pm-7:00pm via Zoom
- **Bidder's Conference:** February 15, 2022 at 6:00pm-7:00pm or February 17, 2022 at 10:00am-11:30am via Zoom





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Photo by Renee Barbee

COVERED WITH SNOW -- Pictured are the San Gabriel Mountains covered in snow last month in an early-morning shot before the clouds moved in to cover the mountain tops. The photo was taken from the hills of Pomona in the Westmont area. La Nueva Voz photographer Renee Barbee posted the photo on Next Door Neighbor where it had received nearly 1,000 "likes" and 114 comments by deadline day for the January issue -- something she said has never happened before.

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Optimist International head Patsy Garner tells local service club members their work during the pandemic encourages her

Optimist International President Patsy Garner, speaking in Pomona last month, told local Optimist Club members that after hearing of all they are doing for kids here in the community that they “encourage me, you ignite my passion inside of me from optimism.”

And, while she acknowledged that members everywhere are continuing much of their work, the COVID-19 pandemic has “flatlined a lot of what we have done” and, perhaps, how they approached their activities.

But, true to form, she gave all of that a bit of an optimistic spin.

“This is the time that we look at our tomorrow, this is the time that is a new day, and we repurpose what it is that we have been doing for something new,” she said. “And we make them fun again. We find causes to give to our projects. COVID has opened a lot of doors.”

If it sounds like she was quoting from last year’s television movie “Annie Live!” with lines like “tomorrow” and “a new day,” she was – she said she just saw the remake over the holidays of the story of a child who was left on the doorstep of an orphanage, escaped at the age of 11 to try to find her family, was adopted by “Daddy Warbucks” and lived happily ever after.

“As we approach our new year . . . I think about her message, and I think that however grim and dark things may be that there is always a tomorrow,” Garner said in the “President’s Dinner – a Celebration of Commitment,” a “meet and greet” at Pomona’s Pilgrim Congregational Church. “That to-

morrow has the potential to bring change. Tomorrow is always a new day, and we all have a chance and a new beginning.”

As an international organization, she said that “new day” may be coming sooner rather than later, as memberships – which she said always dip a bit during the year’s first quarter – are only down 527 compared to 1,600 last year and about the same the year before.

And she gave a shout out to Optimist International Pacific Southeast District Governor M. Joyce Bakersmith, past president of the Pomona club and host for the event, who reported that her district is number three in membership at “plus 17 members.”

“It’s just a way to measure members,” Garner said. “It does not measure what you do in your club, but that tells us that you’re out there and you’re growing. And you’re doing a lot of work in your community.”

Garner was in town with her husband Ken, a Past International President, to attend an Optimist presidents’ summit the following day near the Rose Bowl – a tradition that dates to the 1960s. She said one outgrowth of that gathering through the years has been to encourage the



Pomona’s M. Joyce Bakersmith, at right, Optimist International Pacific Southeast District Governor, welcomes Optimist International President Patsy Garner to town for a special speaking appearance last month between the holidays.

Lions, Kiwanis, Rotary and Optimists in every community to work together on one service project each year.

She also listed all the other non-profits and other organizations in attendance at the Pomona event – nearly a dozen groups all there in support of Optimists – and said that support speaks well for the work the local club is doing in the community.

Garner told the audience that she met her husband 10 years ago when he was an Optimist lieutenant governor in Fort Worth, and she was lieutenant governor in Arlington and that they sat beside each other the whole year.

“Optimism brought us together,” she said. “So, if you’re single and you’re here in the audience, there is hope

for you yet.”

But while she is a resident of Fort Worth today, she said she was born in California at the old March Air Force Base in Riverside but left four months later with her family for Texas.

And she said the Los Angeles Club, established in 1917 in the same Southeast District, recommended at the club’s first convention that the poem “Promise Yourself” be adopted as the Optimist Creed.

She said the 100th anniversary of the Optimist Creed will be celebrated in June.

“That’s the only one thing that every member in Optimist International has in common,” she said.

Recited in unison at the end of every meeting, it reminds members to be strong, to talk health and happiness, and to “look at the sunny side of everything.”

Garner, who has served as an Optimist for more than 32 years, has been a member of two local clubs in Texas. Both of her clubs achieved “Distinguished Club” status, the highest district recognition of achievement possible.

Pomona Unified named one of three top prize winners in National School Boards Association competition

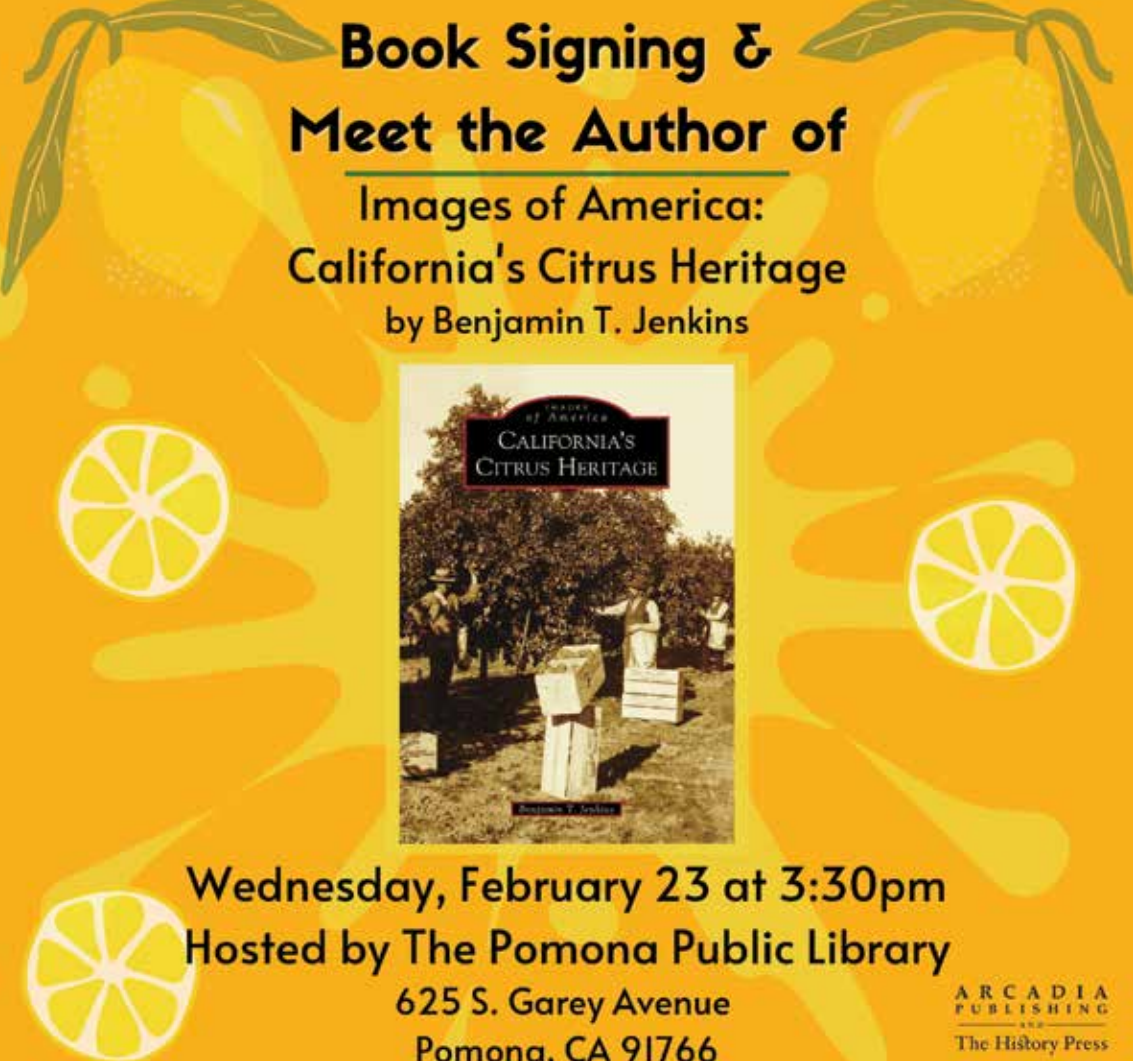
Pomona Unified School District is receiving a “2022 Magna Award Grand Prize” – one of only three winners of the award nationwide selected from 20,000 entries – from the National School Boards Association for an innovative parent participation “model” program, according to Pomona Unified Supt. Richard Martinez.

Pomona’s entry was based on a volunteer parent “leads” group that meets monthly and now involves between 50 and 100 parents representing the district’s

school sites meeting virtually to “educate, promote and inform” the community on matters of importance to students and the schools.

“It’s kudos to our parents making this work across the system,” Martinez told La Nueva Voz.

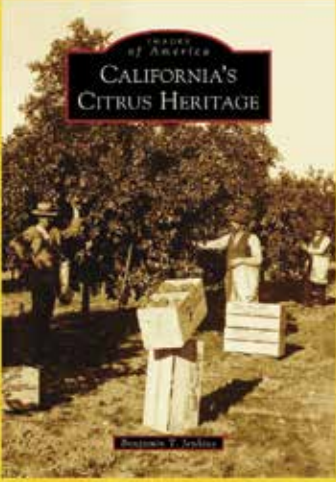
The National School Boards Association, founded in 1940 and based in Alexandria, VA, represents locally elected school board officials serving approximately 51 million public school students. The group advocates for equity and excellence in public education through school board leadership.



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AROUND TOWN**Pomona's 'COVID Hotel' a year later – a look back!**

By Jeff Schenkel, Publisher

A few “loose ends” are still bothering us a little regarding Pomona's “COVID Hotel,” now back to business as usual as the Sheraton Fairplex Hotel.

(In fact, it may be better than usual – they've got a new executive chef in McKinley's Grille and we enjoyed an amazing filet mignon and lobster dinner there on Christmas Day.)

The problem once again is an apparent lack of follow-through on the part of the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services, and Dr. Heidi Behforouz, who headed up the county's network of COVID-19 quarantine facilities including the Pomona hotel (in fact, her personal cell phone number was listed on a white board in the hotel lobby for use by staff).

She just wasn't forthcoming when we asked her for information a year ago (you might remember – we published a huge exclusive three-part series on alleged improprieties on top of page one from January through March of last year, plus an editorial in April).

Neither was the countywide communications office in its responses – last year and again earlier this month when we followed up with another question (and funny, they never sign their name to their e-mails).

Then what was our latest question?

Well, we had one of those middle of the night memories that the county's contract with Fairplex for the hotel required the county to provide “appropriate public relations support” during the term of the agreement and for 45 days at the conclusion of the agreement “directed towards restoring the public's perception and confidence regarding the safety of attending events and staying overnight in the hotel.”

As far as we can tell, that just didn't happen – and La Nueva Voz gets all of the county's press releases on COVID and, generally, other local matters out this way.

Plus, we didn't see anything in any other newspaper or magazine, didn't see anything on television news, nothing on Facebook, you get the idea.

Oh, and that part about “during the term of the agreement?”

“During,” we recall very clearly, they had a guard shack in front of the hotel and nobody was allowed in – and nobody WANTED to be allowed in – they had the hotel filled with COVID patients who were described as the sickest of the sick by La Nueva Voz confidential sources in health services at the time.

Just for fun, we asked county public information about all that between the holidays, received no response, and followed up early this month.

We got a nice response about how many patients they handled in the hotel, statistics on a few other quarantine facilities around the county, but nothing to address the question we asked in the first place.

We're just sayin'.

Hey, and we went to a lot of trouble to get our hands on that contract last year – we had to submit a California Public Records Act request to the Office of County Counsel and eventually got a copy from their lawyers by e-mail.

(In case you missed our February 2021 issue, page 13 spells it out – you can see it on our web site – the county was paying \$120 per night per each of the hotel's 244 rooms, which works out to \$897,920 per month, plus an additional sum of \$89,792 per month for the 10 percent City of Pomona Transient Occupancy Tax.)

While we're at it, we haven't heard back from law enforcement either, other than prompt responses from the Pomona Police Department regarding confirmed rumors of an alleged drug trade bringing drugs into the hotel for “guests,” with one of the many calls for service from the police department resulting in the confiscation of drugs since the delivery driver was gone and officials claimed they were unable to determine who the shipment was for.

But this wide-reaching three-part series touched on other areas – allegations of questionable billing, payroll, hiring and inventory practices, allegations of moving patients around by ambulance at night to other county facilities in order to pad the numbers and keep the billings up (with billings to the county passed on to the fed-

eral government, so it was really federal funds), doctors in charge allegedly skimming and receiving “kickbacks” – well, you get the idea.

(Actually, the entire series started when Renee Barbee of La Nueva Voz received a 9- by 12-inch package in the mail from a nurse at the hotel concerned about that “moving patients around by ambulance at night” part, and the story took off from there.)

At the time, La Nueva Voz reached out to everybody from the FBI to the federal Drug Enforcement Administration to the Los Angeles County District Attorney to the Attorney General – even to the Medical Board of California regarding possible complaints.

And across the board, no agency would confirm or deny an investigation was under way – not on the allegations of drugs, not on kickbacks, not on allegedly defrauding the federal government, nothing. And if one was, they declined comment because it might cause problems when any charges were filed in court.

We get that – we've been in news and public relations since 1970. We've heard this before. But after a year, we kind of thought we might have heard something.

If there was any happy ending at all, one of our highly placed confidential sources in health services (and we had about a half dozen confidential sources and a couple who didn't mind getting their names out there) told us our investigation was the reason the county shut down the hotel as a quarantine facility earlier than originally had been planned – something about if you can't stand the heat stay out of the kitchen.

If so, great. If not, that's fine, too – we just kept receiving information on this one and felt an obligation to publish the continuing story (we still receive calls from our sources from time to time). As we've said all along, it got to the point that we took it as far as we could – nailing down the facts behind the allegations would require somebody with actual subpoena power.

And it was a big deal, too – one of our sources said the hotel right here in Pomona was the largest

A look back... pg. 6

Pomona Valley Hospital ramps up 'surge plan' due to increase in COVID hospitalizations

The latest COVID-19 surge has prompted Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center to put a “surge plan” in place due to an increase in COVID hospitalizations in recent weeks, according to a statement from hospital President and CEO Rich Yochum.

In response to an inquiry from La Nueva Voz, Yochum said that the surge has impacted Pomona Valley along with many hospitals in the region.

“We have been able to effectively manage our bed capacity and have a surge plan in place to ensure we can further expand capacity and continue to provide safe, high-quality care to our patients,” Yochum said.

He added that individuals who may have been exposed to COVID or are experiencing mild symptoms are encouraged to follow public health guidance to isolate and get tested.

Free testing is available to residents of Los Angeles County

through the web site at covid19.lacounty.gov/testing.

Another option is at-home test kits, which can be purchased at local or on-line retailers.

Yochum also encouraged Pomona Unified School District students and their families to take advantage of the new “pop-up” testing sites sponsored by the school district.

“This is a highly valuable resource that will ease the staggering demand for testing in our region,” he said.

“It is important to note that if a person is experiencing emergency warning signs of COVID-19, including trouble breathing or chest pain, they should call 911 or seek emergency medical care immediately,” Yochum said. “We know that early testing and treatment is proven to improve health outcomes for patients.”

He said the hospital's emergency department remains a safe place to seek care.

State to pay college students \$10,000 to volunteer for public service

Californians for All College Corps, a new program being launched by the State of California, will pay college students \$10,000 to volunteer doing public service work for a year, according to a California News Service news release.

Cal Poly University Pomona is included as one of the schools partnering in the program on their campus.

Some 6,500 students will be able to participate and will be required to put in 450 service hours, working on issues such as COVID-19 recovery, climate change and education.

Josh Fryday, chief service officer for the state, said the program provides a way to help low-income students afford college, earn credits and gain valuable work experience.

“Like the G.I. bill, if you are willing to serve your community and give back in a meaningful way, we are going to help you pay for college,” he said.

A total of 45 campuses throughout California will participate including schools in the University of California and California State University systems, as well

as community colleges and some private institutions.

Gov. Newsom said the shared experience of giving back is intended to foster a new generation of civic-minded leaders.

“And if this thing works, we can go back to the legislature and take it to a whole another level,” he said. “We can take it to the rest of the country, because nobody else is doing this.”

The program will be open to “Dreamers,” or undocumented students brought to the U.S. as children. In addition, students who receive Pell Grants will be able to count the \$10,000 grant toward their required personal contribution to their education expenses.

Information on participating schools and details on how to apply can be found on-line at www.californiavolunteers.ca.gov/californiansforall-college-corps/#colleges.

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Mayor Sandoval announces rollout of 24 projects in virtual ‘State of the City’ address

Pomona Mayor Tim Sandoval, in a recorded year-end “State of the City” address late last month, said two financial moves during his term in office have resulted in a \$15 million budget surplus – and he said he soon will be rolling out a new initiative that will promise the completion of 24 “significant projects” by 2024.

One financial development, he said, was a “limited sales tax increase” approved by an “overwhelming margin” in 2018. And a move to restructure the city’s pension obligations is “resulting in savings of close to \$100 million over the next 25 years.”

“These actions have been essential for maintaining our financial strength during the pandemic,” he said, adding that they also have enabled the city to avoid layoffs and reductions in vital services.

Together, they have resulted in a \$15 million budget surplus in fiscal year 2020-2021, “and first quarter of 2021-2022 is already showing a modest surplus” which he said was unexpected.

“The financial future of the city continues to look bright,” he said.

He added that the city will be

receiving \$45 million through the American Rescue Plan to support its recovery from the pandemic.

“This includes ensuring that the financial health of Pomona families is as robust as the city’s financial health,” Sandoval said.

His new initiative announced late last year, called “24 by 2024,” will involve the completion of 24 significant projects in Pomona by the end of 2024 including a commitment to children and families to allocate \$5 million to a “universal income program” that will provide \$500 a month to 400 low-income families over a 24-month period.

He said it will include infrastructure projects like bathrooms at many of the city’s parks, paving of sections of the city’s major traffic arteries and residential streets, and improvements like playgrounds in the Pomona Civic Center, bikeways and walkways, beautification projects and a \$2 million allocation to the small business community.

Sandoval called the COVID-19 pandemic one of the most challenging times in “our city’s and our country’s history,” and called

it “a trying period for all of us . . . grief, pain, loss, overcoming, resiliency and hope as we try to work our way out of this pandemic.”

And he asked viewers to join him in a moment of silence to remember the toll COVID has had on Pomona and the 513 people who have lost their lives due to the disease.

“We grieve and pray for the families who have been impacted,” he said. “Life as we know it will never be the same. A crisis reveals much about the soul and the spirit of a community and I’m proud of our response and resiliency to overcome.”

He thanked everyone who stood up to help from the first responders to the teachers and non-profits.

Sandoval said he convened a group of community leaders to see how they could best serve the residents and the business community, and out of that he formed the COVID-19 action committee, comprised of more than 50 community leaders organized to address critical needs involving food, housing, education, business and health and wellness.

He said that committee continues to meet every Wednesday “to ensure no member of our community goes without basic necessities and access to critical information.”

And he acknowledged that the Omicron variant surge is continuing, with numbers expected to continue to rise.

“Mask up, get vaccinated, get your boosters if you haven’t already and avoid large crowds,” Sandoval said. “Pomona cannot afford to lose more of its residents.”

He also cited the “tremendous social unrest” in the past year and a half with calls to action to address inequities.

“Pomona residents including our youth peacefully joined in the call for change, asking that the city examine its own policies and procedures,” he said, adding that he previously announced the formation of the Mayor’s Police Reform and Accountability Task Force, out of which was created the city’s first-ever Police Oversight Commission.

Sandoval said the events of last summer brought about a new

sense of urgency, and the challenges of the pandemic exposed additional racial inequities around health care, food access and housing security.

“It became clear that we needed to do more to connect with all of our communities of color and reflect on how we can best serve all communities,” he added.

The independent Police Oversight Commission was established by the city last summer, he said, “to provide a forum for community members to express concerns about police practices and seek changes that address inequities.”

The commission met for the first time last month.

Sandoval said in an effort to better serve the African-American community, he helped form the African American Advisory Alliance and helped make it possible for the city to provide a space for the group in a building on Second Street in Downtown Pomona “to continue this important work” in areas of helping feed people in the community, providing cultural activities and more.

And he said last February, the

Rollout of 24 projects... pg. 6

**Las personas NO VACUNADAS
tienen 16 veces más
probabilidades de morir
por el COVID-19.***



*Basado en datos del 20 de noviembre, 2021.

MyTurn.ca.gov

Rollout of 24 projects... from pg. 5

city council unanimously adopted its own version of a law banning the use of “no knock” warrants and requiring police to announce their presence.

The decision was made as an outgrowth of a community effort after public outcry from the death of Breonna Taylor, who was shot and killed by police officers in Louisville, Kentucky, in 2020.

“Pomona was the first city in California to enact a complete ban on this practice in the interest of public safety,” Sandoval said.

He shifted in his address to acknowledge that “proactive intervention in our social system” also is needed.

“The research is clear – young people need communities that express care for them, empower them, value their contributions and provide constructive activities to stimulate learning, civic responsibility and healthy devel-

opment,” he said.

“We need to do more,” he said, adding he is committed to increasing the dollars the city spends on youth and children – “not by thousands of dollars but by millions of dollars.”

“Investing in our children is the best investment we can make for our future,” he said.

Sandoval promised he will continue to bring people together and work with them and listen to them to address their biggest social challenges.

“I’m excited for our future together,” he said.

The 12.5-minute State of the City address, released on YouTube on Dec. 29, had received 233 views -- along with several shares -- on Facebook by deadline day for this issue of La Nueva Voz.

Sandoval, first elected mayor in 2016, was reelected in 2020 for a second four-year term.

A look back... from pg. 4

quarantine facility in the country – and possibly the world – and, as we mentioned, it handled the “sickest of the sick.”

Because of all that, it still bothers us a little that the county apparently failed to perform on that public relations campaign to benefit a nice local hotel in town, as

required in the contract after all the clean-up was completed.

Like we said, we haven’t seen any press releases at all on the subject telling people the hotel is safe. Hey, we’re happy to help here at La Nueva Voz. We’ll even sell them an ad to help get their message out!

Cal Poly Rose float design contest entries accepted through Feb. 4

Have you ever dreamed of your work being showcased on international television or of designing something spectacular like a Rose Parade float?

The design contest for the 2023 Cal Poly Universities Rose float is now open, and your idea could be brought to life. The winning concept will cruise down Colorado Boulevard in Pasadena as part of the 134th Rose Parade which will be held on Jan. 2, 2023.

The contest is open to the entire community. The winner will receive \$500 or two Rose Bowl tickets. The deadline is 5 p.m. Friday, Feb. 4.

The 2023 parade theme is “Turning the Corner.”

“Whether that corner is actual or figurative like the unlimited potential that each new year brings, we all enjoy the opportunity of a fresh start,” said Amy Waincott, the 2023 president of the Pasadena Tournament of Roses Association.

“Turning a corner means rising above – alone, or with family, friends and community,” she added. “This year, as we turn the corner together, we share in the hope, beauty and joy of what 2023 will bring.”

Entries for the float, which is built by students from Cal Poly Pomona and Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, may be color or a black and white, with a maximum size of 11 inches by 17 inches and should illustrate or describe an idea rather than depict a finished design. Animation ideas are welcome. There is no limit on the number of entries an individual can submit.

Digital copies should be e-mailed to CalPolyRose-Float1949@gmail.com, with the subject line “2023 Concept.” Submissions must include the contestant’s name, phone number and e-mail address.

Float design contest... pg. 9

Understanding hoarseness

By Michael Johns, III, M.D.



Dr. Michael Johns, M.D.

music industry, teaching, call centers, and more. Other rarer causes of voice change include benign or malignant tumors and neurological conditions such as Parkinson’s disease.

So what should we do if we experience hoarseness? Because there’s typically no pain involved in voice use, even when we have a cold, we often continue to speak as if nothing is different. What we should be doing is “voice rest” – that is, trying to speak minimally until the condition resolves. Continued vocalization aggravates the swelling

and can potentially result in greater injury to the vocal cords. So, in addition to typical self-care like hydration, steam baths, and rest, it’s also a good idea to pipe down!

Hoarseness usually gets better within seven to 10 days. If yours persists more than two weeks, get evaluated by an otolaryngologist – also known as an “ear, nose, and throat” doctor – to rule out more worrisome (and rare) diagnoses like laryngeal cancer. The Ear, Nose and Throat Program at

Casa Colina Hospital and Centers for Healthcare offers specialized medical and surgical treatment for conditions of the ears, nose, throat, sinuses, and larynx. For more information, visit casacolina.org/ENT or call 909-596-7733, ext. 3800.

Editor’s Note: Dr. Michael Johns is the Medical Director of the Ear, Nose and Throat Program at Pomona’s Casa Colina Hospital and Centers for Healthcare and Director of the USC Voice Center.

We’ve all been there. You wake up, get dressed, and head to work only to find your voice has been reduced to a gravelly whisper. You don’t feel ill, but you sound like you’re getting over an awful cold. You’ve got dysphonia—more commonly known as being hoarse.

In general, “hoarseness” refers to any change in vocal capability. This can mean the presence of a number of symptoms, including roughness, breathiness, weakness, or straining to speak. It’s usually painless and always disruptive. And it often seems to appear for no reason.

It’s commonly assumed that hoarseness is simply “laryngitis.” Hoarseness can certainly be a symptom of laryngitis, which is inflammation of the larynx (voice box) usually caused by viral infection. In this scenario, swelling of the mucus membranes causes swelling of the vocal cords. Your voice becomes deeper and rougher because the vocal cords don’t vibrate as they should. Sometimes they swell so severely they stop vibrating altogether. So, you lose your voice.

While acute viral laryngitis is certainly the most common cause of hoarseness, it is not always so. Then what’s going on when we lose our voice but have no other symptoms?

In addition to the common cold, typical culprits of throat irritation include seasonal allergies, sinusitis, smog, and wildfires. Virus or no, throat irritation can cause vocal cord swelling. And if the vibrations of our vocal cords are disturbed enough by environmental factors, hoarseness can result. Alternatively, hoarseness also can stem from plain old-fashioned overuse. Think: yelling at a concert or ball game. Voice-use-related hoarseness is common in certain professions, including the

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Leyva to run for San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors, opts out of Senate race after redistricting

State Sen. Connie Leyva, who has been redistricted out of much of her original district with cities including Pomona now part of State Sen. Susan Rubio's District 22 over the hill in the San Gabriel Valley area, has announced plans to avoid a battle against a fellow Democrat and instead seek election in the June primary to the fourth district office of San Bernardino County Supervisor.

District 22 includes communities from Alhambra to West Covina and, after redistricting, also will include Pomona, Ontario and Chino, where Leyva is a resident.

Leyva's original District 20 currently includes everything from Pomona, Ontario and Chino to Fontana and San Bernardino.

Carved out of that district now will be a new State Senate District 29, which will include communities like San Bernardino, Colton, Rancho Cucamonga and Redlands.

"I think we need a bigger, stronger voice in (San Bernardino County) District 4," she told La Nueva Voz in a telephone interview, adding that doing something "closer to home" had been in the

back of her mind for some time.

But when the district lines changed so much, "I thought this is the time, this is the right time," she said.

"Susan and I are both Democrats – I'm a progressive, she's a moderate," Leyva explained, adding that going head-to-head against Rubio would become a "huge battle" between labor supporting her and "big oil" supporting Rubio.

And she said she didn't want labor spending the money to get her reelected, even though they were willing to back her once again.

"But for me it just seemed like a battle that could be avoided," she said, adding that fundraising would not have been a problem in the newly configured districts.

And the decision resulted in a new game plan.

"For me, it's always been about doing something where I can make a difference," she said.

Plus, San Bernardino County District 4 already includes three of her cities – the district includes Chino Hills, Chino, Montclair, Ontario and the southern portion of Upland. Leyva already serves Chino, Ontario and Montclair in

the state Senate.

She also pointed out that even though the county supervisor's seat is non-partisan, the district leans toward a Democratic majority. While the updated numbers are expected out at the end of this month, Leyva said Democrats usually outnumber Republicans by a 10 percent margin.

District 4 San Bernardino County Supervisor Curt Hagman, currently serving his second four-years with one possible term left before terming out, is a Republican.

Leyva, elected in 2018, currently is serving her second term in the California Senate and would have been up for election this year had she not decided to change course.

Then what about her previously announced plans to run for state superintendent of public instruction?

Leyva said she's keeping her fundraising account open for that race in 2026 when current State School Supt. Tony Thurmond terms out. She opened that account last year. And she was expected to open an account for San Bernardino County Supervisor last

week.

"I do have a very big interest in education," she said. Leyva serves as chair of the Senate Education Committee.

And, for those who are interested in elections still four years down the road, La Nueva Voz asked Leyva if Thurmond would endorse her as his successor. She said she has already talked to him, and he would be supportive of her decision.

Meanwhile, Leyva said once elected to the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors, she will be able to call on her experience in Sacramento as she continues to work to bring state money into the local district.

"I have been honored to serve as the Senator of the 20th Senate District and feel like I've done a lot of good work for my constituents," Leyva said. "I'm looking forward to the newest chapter in my career."

In a news release this month, Leyva reviewed her seven years in office.

"I have worked on and passed groundbreaking legislation to empower survivors of rape and sexual

assault, strengthen enforcement of wage theft violations, expand career technical education programs that lead to solid well-paying jobs, ban secret settlements in cases of workplace harassment and discrimination, increase access to safe and equitable reproductive health care, reduce truck pollution, and protect California's environment," she said.

"While celebrating the holidays with my family I came to the ultimate decision not to run for reelection to the State Senate so that I can be home more often when I complete my term later this year," she said.

"I thank my family, friends, staff, colleagues and everyone that has supported Team Leyva through this journey," Leyva added. "Our work is certainly not over, and I will continue delivering over the next few months on the vital legislative and constituent work that Californians have come to expect from our team."

The new district boundaries transition into effect as candidates run for office based on the new lines in the June primary and the November general election.

Public service ad courtesy of La Nueva Voz



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Pomona donors help Claremont non-profit provide shoes to local school children

Claremont-based Shoes That Fit, a national non-profit that provides new athletic shoes to school children in need so they can attend school with dignity, has received three generous donations supporting its emergency shoe warehouse from Pomona.

Donors were Pat and Mark Warren, Todd Memorial Chapel and Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center, according to a news release.

School districts in Pomona, Ontario-Montclair, Claremont and Upland are able to access the

warehouse year-round whenever children are found to be wearing inappropriate shoes or are missing school due to lack of shoes.

The need currently is at an all-time high due to the pandemic, the news release said.

Shoes for local children... pg. 8

MESSAGE OF THE MONTH

Your Voice Matters

It is a root cause of many health and social problems we face in our communities!

Consequences to children and to our society begin immediately.

- 70-80% of sexual abuse survivors report excessive drug and alcohol use.
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- CDC estimates that child abuse costs us billions annually.
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Talk to your children!

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Déjà vu all over again... from pg. 1

that,” Martinez said.

And that whole vaccination effort is something the school district is jumping on in a big way – going well beyond just taking care of students and staff but opening free “pop up” vaccination sites to the public in an effort to serve parents and the community at large.

Part of the thinking behind this effort, Martinez said, is to try to take some of the crunch off of the emergency room at Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center.

“We highly encourage PUSD families to take advantage of this offering if they need testing,” said Pomona Valley Hospital President and CEO Rich Yochum (see related story page 4). “This is a highly valuable resource that will ease the staggering demand for testing in our region.”

Even so, he said those experiencing emergency warning signs of COVID-19 including trouble breathing or chest pain should call 911 or seek emergency medical care.

“We know that early testing and treatment is proven to improve health outcomes for patients,” Yochum said. “The emergency department at PVHMC remains a safe place to seek care.”

“The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has confirmed that while the Omicron variant is less severe, it is significantly more transmissible, which is one reason that we are seeing a surge in cases,” Yochum said. “We urge our community to continue taking steps to protect themselves and

Shoes for local children... from pg. 7

“Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic created an even bigger need for the services that Shoes That Fit provides in our local community,” said Pomona Unified School Supt. Richard Martinez, a member of the group’s advisory board. “I want to thank Shoes That Fit for making it possible for children to walk with dignity and confidence with a new pair of shoes.”

The organization works with the public defender’s office, social workers and foster care agen-

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A “free COVID testing site was spotted this month outside a convenience store and near Cortez Magnet School (pictured at rear) off of Dudley Street near the San Bernardino Freeway. It appeared to be a privately operated testing site. Officials are warning the public to be on the alert for “pop ups” as some apparently are asking for personal information that may be used for identity theft, and some are charging for services that are intended to be offered at no cost.

others from spreading or contracting COVID-19.”

Those steps, he added, include getting vaccinated and boosted, wearing a mask and social distancing while around people who are outside of the immediate family.

Also, avoid high-risk areas, such as crowded or poorly ventilated indoor spaces.

PUSD opens first ‘pop-up’ COVID testing site

Meanwhile, the school district’s first pop-up testing site opened on Jan. 3 at the Village at Indian Hill and is free and open to the public from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, according to Denzel Greer, assistant regional manager of “COVID Clinic,” operator of the pop-up facilities.

The company operates pop-ups throughout California and, to some extent, out of state, Greer said.

Locally, the pop-up is situated on the sidewalk near Village entrance number two, at 1460 E. Holt

cies in addition to the local school districts to help kids in dire situations.

Last year, the group provided new shoes to nearly 3,000 kids in Pomona and Upland. The organization also partnered with the Newcomers Access Center to provide shoes to migrant children housed at Fairplex, as well as to Afghan refugees.

Residents, companies and civic organizations can support this work on the web site at shoesthatfit.org.

In addition, new athletic shoes can be sent to the group’s headquarters at 1420 N. Claremont Blvd., Suite 204A.

To volunteer in the warehouse, contact the volunteer coordinator

Ave., and is visible from Holt.

And only 50 yards to the west, inside the school district’s conference center, a second testing facility is in full operation, primarily for students and district staff.

Martinez explained that the outside pop-up is turning around test results in a day and a half, while the conference center testing, operated by Veritas Healthcare, offers rapid test results in 15 minutes, making it possible for teachers and students to get back to school.

“I’m impressed we’ve been able to cover as much ground as we have,” Martinez said.

He added that students, teachers, and members of the public can use either facility, depending on which type of test they prefer and how long they want to wait in line.

In addition, he said the conference room facility operates seven days a week and had just administered 1,000 tests on a Sunday with 700 tests that same Saturday.

Both vendors providing the test-

ing, Martinez said, are operating at no cost to the school district other than providing space on the sidewalk (or in the conference center) and access to electrical power.

Even the liability insurance is covered by the vendors, who are required to list the school district as an additional insured.

The way it works for the Veritas testing is the actual cost of the tests is being paid by the federal government.

“We’re paying a fee per test,” Martinez said, explaining that the district has received a “not to exceed” amount of \$3.6 million from part of the federal CARES Act package that can be used for testing only.

And, while he said the district is

at (909) 482-0050.

“One in three children in the United States lives in poverty, and shoes are one of the most expensive items for low-income families to provide,” said Shoes That Fit Executive Director and CEO Amy Fass. “When families must choose between putting food on the table or buying new shoes for school, you can imagine that food wins every time.”

“We are so thankful that our generous donors are taking the time to make such a positive impact on these kids,” she added.

Shoes That Fit delivered new athletic shoes to approximately 104,000 children in more than 1,500 schools across all 50 states last year alone.



A second COVID testing operation is located in the conference center at the Village at Indian Hill, primarily for Pomona Unified School District faculty, staff and students. Although testing protocols and turn-around times are different, this indoor testing center is located only about 75 to 100 feet from the “pop up” the district opened outside on the sidewalk.

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Even the liability insurance is covered by the vendors, who are required to list the school district as an additional insured.

The way it works for the Veritas testing is the actual cost of the

COVID positive test rate drops among students and staff with safe in-person learning

With most schools open for in-person learning, recent Los Angeles County public health data showed COVID-19 test positivity rates dropped among students and staff while the number of schools reporting cases increased sharply coinciding with the re-opening of Los Angeles Unified School District campuses.

For the week of Jan. 9, a total of 1,032 K-12 schools reported positive cases representing a 55 percent increase since the first week of December when 665 schools reported positive cases.

Also this month, there were nearly 595,000 tests administered to students and staff at K-12 schools. Of those, 11 percent

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And, while he said the district is

COVID positive test rate drops among students and staff with safe in-person learning

were positive, down from 15 percent the prior week.

Although an estimated 65,000 students and staff tested positive during the week, only three new outbreaks – two in elementary schools and one in a high school – were identified, signaling that most of the recent cases represent high rates of community transmission, according to a county news release.

To help ensure safety at schools, more than 140 school-based vaccine clinics were scheduled this month and nearly 500 were scheduled in February.

School vaccine clinics offer pediatric doses for those 5 to 11

Positive test rate drops... pg. 14

Pomona shows, as does Los Angeles County, increase in property values for 2021 despite the pandemic

A just-released 2021 annual report shows property values in Pomona reached \$13,551,324,531 last year, representing a 1.6 percent increase and following the trend that shows taxable real property in Los Angeles County has seen growth and increases in assessed value despite the pandemic, according to Los Angeles County Assessor Jeff Prang.

The 2021 figure increased \$211,769,275 over the previous

Float design contest... from pg. 6

Students on the Rose Float leadership team from both Cal Poly Pomona and Cal Poly San Luis Obispo will review the submissions and vote on the winning concept, which will provide the basis for the 2023 final design.

The Cal Poly Universities' Rose Float is the only student-built float in the Rose Parade. The team is known for colorful characters and animation. Stargazers, the team's 2022 float, won the parade's Animation Award.

For details, e-mail Cary Khatib at kkhatib@cpp.edu or call (909) 869-3204.

year, according to the report.

Current figures are based on 27,271 single family residential parcels, 2,263 residential income parcels, and 3,615 commercial/industrial parcels, for a total of 33,149.

"The diligent work of our staff during these difficult times saw us find new ways to produce and complete our vital functions that ultimately serve as the foundation of the property tax system which generates \$17 billion in

revenue for vital public services, especially now when the county needs it the most," Prang said.

He said the report reveals that last year nearly every major city in Los Angeles County recorded an increase in assessed valuation over the previous year.

It highlights the total net value of \$1.76 trillion for the entire county, indicating the 11th consecutive year of growth with an increase of \$62.9 billion, or 3.7 percent, over 2020.

Prang said the top five highest valued cities remained the same last year with the City of Los Angeles ranked number one with an assessed valuation of \$723.6 billion (4 percent increase), followed by Long Beach at \$65.7 billion (3.5 percent increase), Santa Monica at \$43.834 billion (3.7 percent increase), Beverly Hills at \$40.6 billion (4.1 percent increase), and Santa Clarita at \$38.3 billion (1.1 percent increase).

The top three fastest percentage growth cities in the county last year were Cerritos at 9.1 percent growth, Hidden Hills at 8.9 percent and Vernon at 7.1 percent.

But he added that nine out of 10 property owners will see only the modest 2 percent adjustment prescribed by Proposition 13 on their annual property tax bills.

The complete report is available on line at www.assessor.lacounty.gov/reports.



Cal Poly University Pomona President Dr. Soraya Coley said last year at the opening of the Pumpkin Patch that the animals don't know there's a COVID pandemic going on. And that certainly seemed to be the case on a sunny but cool afternoon earlier this month on the Cal Poly campus that just seemed to be a perfect day for grazing.

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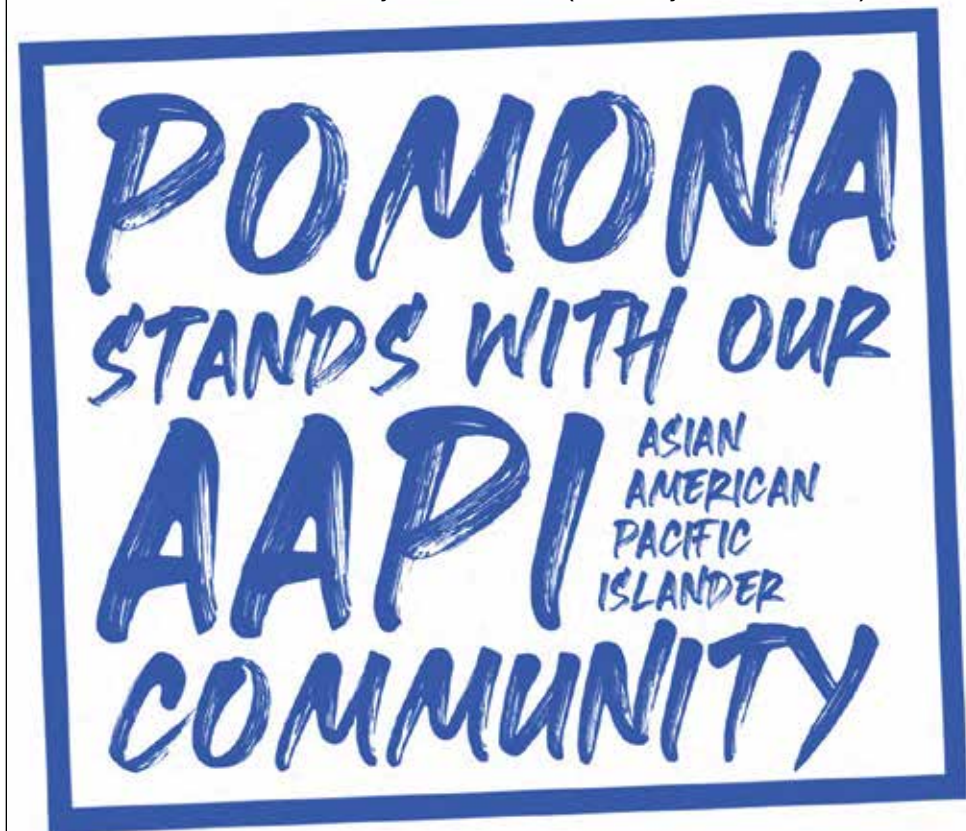


Crystal Orosco of the children's room at the Pomona Public Library reads the classic Dr. Seuss story "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" (from the collection "Six by Seuss") to a room filled with kids at a special holiday event. After storytime, the children had an opportunity to meet the Grinch himself. Kids also were able to get creative in a special holiday crafts session.

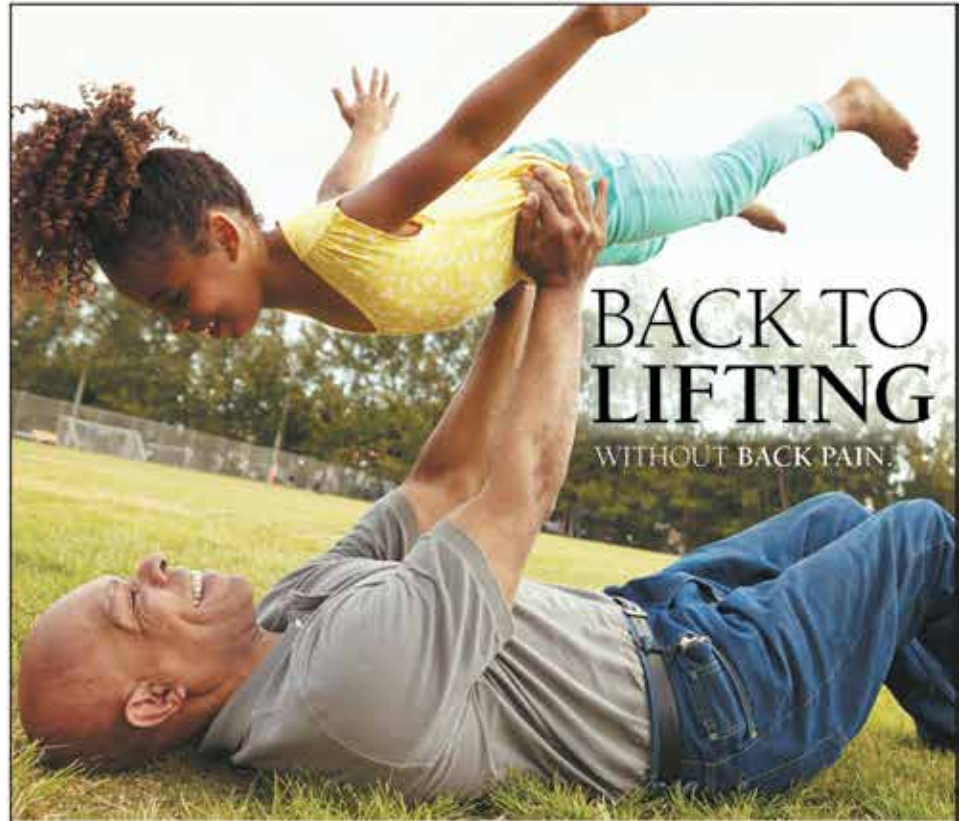


MERRY GRINCHMAS! -- The Grinch himself visited the Pomona Public Library last month, with none other than Pomona City Manager James Makshanoff himself inside that costume, reportedly at the request of a library commissioner. Asked by La Nueva Voz what advice he had for the children of Pomona, the Grinch said "to read your books, go to school, do well and enjoy the holidays!" The appearance and pictures with the Grinch were part of a special holiday event in the children's room at the library.

Public service ad courtesy of La Nueva Voz (created by Joshua Swodeck)



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Recipients of Pomona's coveted Goddess of Pomona award were on hand at the Pomona Civic Center this month to participate in Pomona Goddess Day. Pictured, from left, are Pomona City Councilmembers Elizabeth Ontiveros-Cole and Robert Torres, and award recipients Jacqueline Elizalde, Lorraine Canales, Debra Martin and Mike Suarez.

Pomona Valley Historical Society President Deborah Clifford presented a bit of historical background on the Goddess of Pomona, the Goddess of fruit trees, orchards and gardens. Pomona Goddess Day was sponsored by the City of Pomona and various Pomona commissioners.



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Kids of all ages participated in the "Pomona Goddess Day" art celebration in the Pomona Civic Center this month, transferring a line drawing of the Goddess of Pomona to canvas and, well, going from there to paint the finished product. One budding artist even came in costume dressed as a goddess herself. Oh, and everybody received a goddess sash and a head wreath.



Pomona artist Gary Lett, at left, poses with Pomona Vehicle Parking District Commissioner Jacqueline Elizalde, with a "finished product" of a Goddess of Pomona painting. Elizalde, an organizer of the event, brought in Lett, of Lett's Do Art," for an instructional event as both a creative exercise and to help kids in Pomona learn more about the history of their city.

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Positive test rate drops... from pg. 8

years of age, as well as boosters for eligible students 12 years of age and older.

Schools are working with the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health and the Los Angeles County Office of Education to increase testing capacity and best manage potential school exposures while supporting in-person learning for as many students as possible.

All infected students and staff are required to isolate at home away from others for a minimum of five days. Asymptomatic stu-

dents and staff that test negative on day five of their isolation period may return to school on or after day six of their isolation.

Returning students and staff must remain asymptomatic and always wear a high-grade mask when around others, both indoors and outdoors, until 10 days have passed from their positive test or the day their symptoms began.

"Keeping our schools available for in-person learning during this Omicron fueled surge is not easy and I commend our school com-

Positive test rate drops... pg. 15



Ethel Gardner, Founder of Pomona's Kennedy Austin Foundation, hands out an advance Christmas present last month to one of a whole lot of kids who lined up at the group's 13th annual toy give-away in front of Pomona's African American Advisory Alliance offices on Second Street in Downtown Pomona.



One little guy walked away with just the right toy that he decided would work out just fine at the Kennedy Austin Foundation's 13th annual toy give-away last month on Second Street.

The group is a family crisis intervention center focusing on mothers who have lost children, women in domestic violence and families in need. Members of the Black Knights motorcycle club were on hand again this year to help.





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Services pending for early Miss Pomona Joanna Payne-Jones

Joanna Payne-Jones, believed to be the first or one of the first in modern day history to wear the Miss Pomona crown, died last month at her home in Pomona only a week before her birthday. She was 86.

Jones apparently reigned as Miss Pomona in the 1950s, although research by La Nueva Voz was able to locate a photo of Miss Pomona contestants wearing bathing suits in the early 1920s at Pomona's Ganesha Park, and additional information from Pomona Public Library showed that Graciosa Vejar was a "Miss Pomona" in the 1914 "Battle of the Clouds."

And the LA County Fair even had its own "Queen" which author Dr. Bill King referred to as "Miss Pomona," although dates were not clear, according to library researchers.

In addition, Pomona's Junior Chamber launched its own Miss Pomona pageant in 1958, naming Marjorie Townsend as its first winner.



Joanna Payne-Jones

Jones, who was born in Forest Park, Illinois, studied education at Claremont Graduate University and Keck Graduate Institute, earning a doctorate in education.

According to her family, she had a long career in teaching, was a lifelong learner and loved teaching.

When she settled in Pomona, she taught and was on staff at Chaffey College and Mt. San Antonio College.

She loved her community and she loved traveling, but as she lost some of her mobility, she continued writing poetry and reading.

Jones became known in recent years for advertising and conducting local estate and antique sales with her husband Paul.

She is survived by her husband of 49 years and her care giver Paul Jones, her daughter Diana Koenen, grandsons Louie and Mario De La Torre, and a large extended family.

Services were pending due to COVID-19 restrictions.

'Girl Scout Cookie Season' under way through March 13

Girl Scouts of Greater Los Angeles, which includes troops in the Pomona area, kicked off the 2022 "Girl Scout Cookie Season" this month and will be back to selling cookies, taking action in the community and practicing their entrepreneurial skills through March 13.

Consumers are encouraged to support their local Girl Scouts in this long-standing tradition by purchasing their favorite cookies and trying the newest cookie to join the lineup, "Adventurefuls."

Eight other iconic Girl Scout cookies will be back, including favorites like Thin Mints, Samoas and Tagalongs.

Adventurefuls is an indulgent

brownie-inspired cookie with caramel-flavored creme, a hint of sea salt and a taste of adventure in every bite, according to a Girl Scouts news release.

"Like everyone, our girls have persevered through some very tough challenges this year and we are all so excited for another season of cookies," said Girl Scouts of Greater Los Angeles CEO Theresa Edy Kiene. "In true Girl Scout fashion, they have adapted, stayed hopeful, and supported each other and now they launch their beloved annual cookie traditions."

She added that this season is particularly special because it comes at the time of the scouting council's centennial celebration.

Déjà vu again... from pg. 8

"drawing down" from that allocation, he anticipates the district will use no more than \$2 million per semester on testing.

For the pop-ups, billings go to the state or, where possible, to the medical insurance providers of those being tested.

Martinez said the testing is really being offered to anyone who wants it whether they live in Pomona or not, adding that even residents of San Bernardino County have been in for tests.

COVID precautions continuing in schools

Back at school district headquarters, Martinez said administrative staff is keeping current on which teachers and staff members are out and when they become eligible to return to work under what

he called the official "rules of engagement" prescribed by county health officials.

And remember those photos last year of the little plastic cubicles around desks in the classrooms? Martinez said those are still in place as an extra precaution since they were never required by the county.

And staff is continuing to sanitize, well, everything, particularly cleaning high-touch areas, hand sanitizer is available everywhere, and HVAC air filters are being changed often.

Temperature checks are continuing in some areas as well.

How are school district employees holding up in the aftermath of four days of canceled classes in the nation's third largest school

district in Chicago where teachers were concerned about COVID safety protocols?

Martinez said he and Deputy Supt. Darren Knowles of the district's human resources department have been talking to the unions.

"They understand the magnitude of the work we've put into this," he said.

They then work with the troops to decide which projects to take on and use the proceeds from cookie sales to put their ideas into action.

PUSD plans for more pop-ups, remote learning

Those additional testing pop-ups, Martinez said, are being considered for areas like the Ganesha High School parking lot and possibly Garey High School and even Golden Springs Elementary School.

He said staff is considering final locations based on placing the

Services pending for long-time La Verne resident Jill Coverdale

Jill Coverdale, a long-time resident of La Verne who loved both horses and motorcycles, died this month following a return bout with breast cancer. She was 63.

A 1975 graduate of Pacifica High School in Garden Grove, she was the daughter of Yvonne and Bill Wilke.

She worked in food services at the University of La Verne for many years before retiring to travel with her husband, who she met at Hillcrest Homes in La Verne where they both worked at the time.

She also enjoyed traveling the country – and taking cruises to Alaska and Hawaii – with her daughter.

And she enjoyed her "General Hospital" soap opera and her pets – a dog "Sporty," and three cats – "Harley," "Patches" and "Dakota," all motorcycle names.

A former resident of Azusa, she and her husband recently purchased a home in Arizona.

Coverdale was predeceased by her parents and brothers Phillip and Roger Wilke.

She is survived by her husband, Wil Coverdale, daughter Danielle Fonseca, grandson Gabriel Fonseca and granddaughter Katelyn Fonseca.

Services were pending due to the pandemic.

Claremont Mayor Reece, La Verne

Councilmember Carder to lead Gold Line board

Claremont Mayor Pro Tem Ed Reece and La Verne City Councilmember Robin Carder were sworn in as the incoming chair and vice chair of the Foothill Gold Line Construction Authority Board of Directors at their meeting this month after being unanimously elected last month.

Reece replaces Pomona Mayor Tim Sandoval as board chair, a position Sandoval has held since 2019. He will remain a board member as an appointee of LA Metro, where he serves as a board member.

Sandoval was first appointed by the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments to serve on the board as an alternate in 2017.

"This year we will be laser focused on securing the funding needed to complete the project to Claremont and Montclair and bring the full benefit of this much-needed infrastructure project to fruition," Reece said. "I know I speak for Vice Chair Carder as I thank our colleagues for their confidence in us. It is a tremendous honor to serve on this board."

The 9.1-mile, four-station project segment from Glendora to Pomona is currently undergoing major construction, while the construction authority is seeking additional funding needed to complete the final three-mile segment of the project that includes stations in Claremont and Montclair.

The segment to Pomona is on budget and on time to be completed in 2025.

The agency completed the first segment from Union Station to Pasadena in 2003.



Jill Coverdale

Your insert here!

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testing sites closer to homes and at spots that have easy access for automobiles.

"We're trying to put these in places it's going to be well received and well utilized," he said.

He even plans to talk to the City of Pomona about placing one in South Pomona, perhaps in Washington Park.

And what about the prospect of returning to remote learning?

Martinez said there are no plans for that.

He said Pomona Unified already has dropped from a high positivity rate of 30 percent down to about 21 percent this month, which is consistent with the rest of Los Angeles County.

"So, it's going in the right direction," he said.

Justice, mercy and humility... from pg. 1

– it’s the presence of justice,” she cited a passage in the Book of Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament, that asks “how do we live, how do we be, how do we become good people.”

Rasshan said the three words address just that question and focused first on “justice.”

“It means freedom, it means fairness, and at this time and day that’s what we are all fighting for,” she said.

And, for today’s young men, “we don’t want them to forget about justice and your responsibility to make sure that you do the fair and the right thing because it’s the right thing to do,” she said.

On “mercy,” she told the award winners, there will be a time in their life when they will “want mercy.”

“So right now, we want you

“I think we forget to say thank you, we forget to hold the door for an elder,” she said.

“Remember that God is always watching out for you, you are loved by the community, and we are here for you,” she said.

Khalif Rasshan’s approach was to use the message of lyrics to a song – he sang for a moment and then explained.

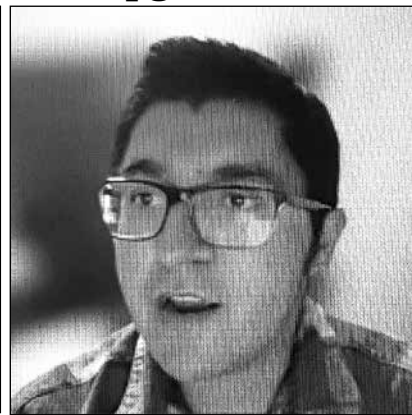
“Our spirit cries still locked in chains, and we forgive now all our pain,” Rasshan said, singing the words.

“We are still in pain as a people and America is still crying and we are working to stop that,” he explained to the three award winners.

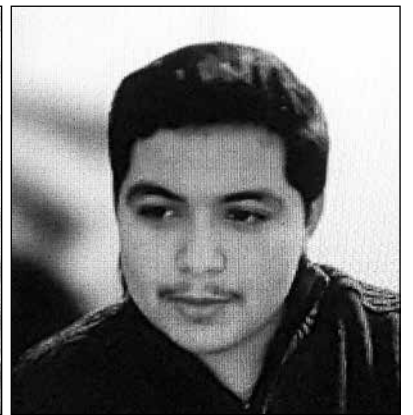
Again singing the words, he



Ellis Stagg



Denny Duran-Flores



Luis Castro-Limon

ing now were happening then,” he said. “But it takes a lot of courage for a people at the Pilgrim (Congregational) Church to stand up and say we’re going to be free and we’re going to do this.”

“We’re here at the museum to help the whole community find our way together . . . as well as Black folks find ourselves specifi-

man at Mt. San Antonio College.

This year’s Zennie Cummings “Community Service” award went to Church Women United in the Foothills. MLK Project Vice President and Treasurer Gayle Claiborne presented the award to the honorees.

MLK Project Board Secretary Renee Barbee presented a brief look back at Coretta Scott King.

“Looking back at the late Coretta Scott King, she became a civil rights leader in her own right, joining her late husband, Martin Luther King, Jr., at rallies and many other public events advocating for social justice and peace which they both fought hard to achieve together,” Barbee said.

“After Rev. King was shot and killed on April 4, 1968, she continued the work, ultimately leaving her own legacy, after making the decision to continue the movement to end social injustice in this country,” she added.

Her efforts contributed to the move to establish a federal holiday in her husband’s honor.

The program, with MLK Proj-

ect Board President Sherie Rodgers serving as master of ceremonies, began with a performance of “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” known as the “Black National Anthem,” by the PS (“primary school”) 316 Children’s Choir in Brooklyn, New York, and concluded with the singing of “We Shall Overcome” by Rabbi Zev Hayyim-Feyer, a member of the Martin Luther King, Jr., Project committee.

Pastor Dr. Patrick Horn of Pilgrim Congregational Church, traditional home of the annual event, offered the invocation and Pomona Mayor Tim Sandoval provided the welcoming greeting.

The Pomona Inland Valley Martin Luther King, Jr., Project, founded in 1982, addresses the needs of local students striving to obtain their educational goals in the spirit of King’s vision of social justice reform.

The non-profit has provided nearly \$50,000 in scholarships to more than 100 students ages 15 to 19.

For donations, visit the web site at pivmlkproject.org and mail checks to PIVMLK, P.O. Box 1141, Pomona, CA 91769-1141.



MLK Project Board President Sherie Rodgers



MLK Project Board Secretary Renee Barbee



Pomona Mayor Tim Sandoval

to remember to give mercy,” she added. “Mercy is compassion.”

Finally, she focused on “humility.”

“It means not to be caught up on yourself but to think about other people,” Rasshan said. “I want you to remember to be humble. And that’s not being a wimp, that’s being nice, that’s being kind.”

Positive test rate drops... from pg. 12

munities for all the work they are doing to keep children and staff safe,” said Barbara Ferrer, the county’s director of public health.

“This is particularly challenging in our elementary schools where, on average, three-quarters of students are not fully vaccinated, making it critically important to use infection control practices to limit spread of a highly infectious variant,” she added.

Updated isolation and quarantine guidance is available on-line at www.publichealth.lacounty.gov.

said “now we have found our place in history . . . how can we explain to you the life, the times that we’ve been through . . . our work is only just beginning.”

And again stopping to explain, Rasshan said that the 40 years of work of the Martin Luther King, Jr., Project is “monumental.”

“A lot of things that are happen-

cally,” he concluded. “We have a lot of work to do as well.”

Youth Social Justice award honorees this year, presented by Rev. Natalie Shiras, MLK chaplain, were Luis Castro-Limon, a senior at Diamond Ranch High School in Pomona; Denny Duran-Flores, a senior at Bonita High School in La Verne; and Ellis Stagg, a fresh-

time likely contributing to more exposure to blue light.

While this low-wavelength, high-energy light offers some benefits, such as boosting alertness, too much of it may cause problems. Researchers continue to evaluate the potential short- and long-term health implications that may come from excessive exposure to blue light, including potential damage to retina cells, particularly in children and teens; increased incidences of age-related macular degeneration; disrupted sleep cycles; and digital eye strain.

Three tips to help block blue light in an increasingly remote world

By Dr. Scott Edmonds

With persistent spread of the virus that causes COVID-19 in California and nationwide, some traditionally in-person activities – work, school and social interactions – likely will remain remote more often than usual for the foreseeable future.

As a result, the use of digital devices has surged significantly, with Americans logging an average of 13 hours per day watching screens. That compares to between seven and 10 hours per day before the COVID-19 pandemic started, with the increase in screen

In fact, nearly 60 percent of U.S. adults report symptoms of digital eye strain, which may result from extended computer and smartphone usage and can contribute to dry eyes, headaches and neck or shoulder pain. With that in mind, here are three tips to consider as the consistent use of digital devices remains a fact of life for most people:

Use the 20-20-20 rule or other rest tactics. It is important to give your eyes some rest during the day by breaking up long stretches of screen time. The 20-20-20 rule recommends that after 20 minutes

of computer work, people take 20 seconds to look at something that’s approximately 20 feet away. Other strategies include keeping devices at least 30 inches from the eyes, as this separation can help reduce blue-light exposure; and switching to a task for which the eyes don’t have to focus on something up close, such as returning a call. Also, getting outside may reduce the risk of developing nearsightedness, which has become increasingly common in part due to the increased use of screens and today affects 41 percent of Ameri-

Help block blue light... pg. 16

A conversation with Dr. Arthur Benjamin, professor of mathematics

By Jose R. Bermudez

Mathematics is such an important part of our lives that students need to understand it in elementary school and high school so that they can succeed whether going into a career that requires college preparation or one of the trades and professions in industry and business.

Dr. Arthur Benjamin is a mathematics professor at Harvey Mudd College, part of the Claremont Colleges in Claremont. He has been profiled in the New York Times, Los Angeles Times, USA Today, and Scientific American. He was interviewed by National Public Radio, he has conducted TED talks, he lectures on Great Courses, and has written several popular books on mathematics. Also, and importantly, he has been a frequent presenter at schools in the Pomona School District.

Question: Professor Benjamin, how did you choose a career in mathematics?

Answer: When I was young, I enjoyed math, its numbers and patterns, and my parents encouraged and supported my interest in and love of math.

Question: Where did you go to school?

Answer: I attended public schools in Cleveland, Ohio, then obtained a bachelor's degree at Carnegie Mellon University, and a master's degree and doctorate at Johns Hopkins University.

Question: What is it that drew you to mathematics?

Answer: Mathematics is number oriented, sequential, and linear in comparison to other subjects that are equally important where the subject matter is taught but not as often applied as in math. Also, I love the elegance and symmetry as problems are solved.

Question: Why is proficiency in mathematics important as part of comprehensive college education even if a student chooses not to go into the field of mathematics?

Answer: Math opens up opportunities in law, engineering, computers, and medicine, among others, because it helps individuals to analyze and solve problems.

Question: Why is math such a difficult subject for some students

to learn?

Answer: Some students get a bad impression of math because they see it as dull and abstract and difficult to connect with daily life (compared to) other school subjects. Our computers and calculators make it easy to solve a math problem without a student having to understand the steps that need to be undertaken to solve it. Calculators can be used in solving problems as long as students understand the steps to solve the specific problem.

Question: What would you tell a student who has challenges in understanding math?

cans – up from 25 percent in 1970.

Leverage blue-light-blocking technology. Many smartphones now include a “night mode” feature, which adjusts the screen's setting to help filter out blue light. Likewise, specialized screen protectors can feature blue-light-filtering properties, while also helping prevent cracks or scratches. To help block blue light at the source, some computer manufacturers are

Answer: Don't give up, math takes practice, and persistence. Get help from your teacher, your parent or a tutor. Math can and will open so many doors that it is worth fighting for.

Question: What is “mathemagic” as used in your presentations?

Answer: “Mathemagic” represents fast mental skill in solving a math problem in your head without the use of a calculator in addition to performing magic tricks.

Question: Does Harvey Mudd College provide resources for local students in the community?

Answer: Harvey Mudd provides a free over-the-phone math

and science tutoring service for students in grades 4 through 12, Monday through Thursday from 6 to 9 p.m.

Question: Where do Harvey Mudd students come from?

Answer: Student candidates come from the U.S. and the local communities here in Southern California.

Editor's Note: For more information about Dr. Benjamin, visit his web site at arthurbenjamin.info. The Homework Hotline is open Monday through Thursday from 6 to 9 p.m. at (877) 827-5462. Jose Bermudez is a frequent contributor to La Nueva Voz.

Help block blue light... from pg 15

embedding blue-light-filtering technology into the screens, helping ensure color clarity while reducing exposure to blue light. Another option is to get glasses with premium anti-reflective coating, which may help prevent harmful reflective glare and reduce the risk of digital eye strain.

Get a comprehensive eye exam. It's a good idea for computer users to get an eye exam every year, according to the American Opto-

metric Association. If you experience ongoing symptoms of digital eye strain, prescription lenses for computer viewing may be needed. Plus, a comprehensive eye exam may uncover other health conditions not usually associated with the eyes, including diabetes and some types of cancer. For children, remember that a school's vision check is not a substitute for a comprehensive eye exam,

Help block blue light... pg. 17



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Info on student group programs at AGRIsCapes:
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Photos by Renee Barbee
ADMINISTERING COVID TESTS -- Pictured are outside contractors administering free COVID tests this month on the first day of a new program at Pomona's American Legion Post 30. More than 100 people were tested on the first day.

FREE COVID TESTING AT AMERICAN LEGION -- Pomona's American Legion Post 30 is providing free COVID testing with no appointment needed in the Post 30 parking lot. Pictured at the check-in table this month at left pitching in to help is Pomona Chamber of Commerce Board Chair Annette Limon. Testing is scheduled to continue from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday at Post 30, 239 E. Holt Ave., Pomona.



Assistance League 'Valentine Tea' to be 'virtual' week-long fundraiser

Ladies, we're thinking you can still wear your fancy floral hats with the ribbons next month even though the annual Assistance League of Pomona Valley Vintage Valentine Tea is a virtual fundraiser this year.

On the upside, it lasts for an entire week!

The event, normally held in Pomona's historic Ebell Club, begins at noon on Saturday, Feb. 12, continues through noon Saturday, Feb. 19, and includes an on-line auction (baskets valued at \$200 and up), mystery bags for \$20 (guaranteed

value of at least \$25), and a "do it yourself" tea party program for \$10 featuring recipes, tea trivia and more.

Sound good so far? It's always a fun event and it raises money for a good cause – helping local kids in need. All net proceeds will be used to provide critically needed help for children and families in the com-

munity.

For more information, e-mail fundraisers@ALPV.org.

Editor's note: An advance story on this event in last month's La Nueva Voz reported that the event would be "live" at the Ebell Club. Since that time, organizers revised plans due to the COVID-19 surge and decided to keep it "virtual."

Help block blue light... from pg. 16

as screenings usually focus on measuring acuity levels and might miss conditions such as poor eye alignment, focusing problems and farsightedness.

As we contend with the ongoing pandemic and transition to an increasingly virtual world, considering these tips can help people maintain or improve their eye health as part of an overall focus on whole-person well-being.

Editor's note: Dr. Scott Edmonds is the chief eye care officer for UnitedHealthcare.

A new La Nueva Voz publishes each month on the fourth Thursday of the month.

Pick up your free copy of La Nueva Voz at these locations and dozens more:

- Pomona City Hall lobby
- Pomona library
- Claremont library
- Claremont City Hall lobby
- La Verne City Hall lobby
- La Verne Senior Citizens Center
- Pomona Chamber of Commerce, 101 W. Mission Blvd., Pomona
- Downtown Pomona Owners Association, 119 W. 2nd St., Pomona
- Pomona Unified School District administration building lobby
- Western University of Health Sciences Patient Care Center
- Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center maternity lobby, outpatient services, emergency room
- Gold Strike Market Carniceria, 412 N. Park Ave., Pomona
- Jicamex Tacos Y Carniceria, 604 E. Mission Blvd., Pomona
- Fairplex Chevron, Fairpex Drive and San Bernardino Freeway, Pomona
- Discount Market, Philadelphia Street and Towne Avenue, Pomona
- LaunderLand Coin Op Laundry, 744 E. Holt Ave., Pomona
- American Legion Post #30, 239 E. Holt Ave., Pomona
- Pomona Eagles, 854 W. Mission Blvd., Pomona



What compassion means to me

By Anthony Hostetler-Muñoz
 Just Us 4 Youth

My name is Anthony Hostetler-Muñoz, and I am a Credible Messenger at Just Us 4 Youth in Pomona. The main goal of Credible Messengers is to restore justice in the community by building relationships with others, providing resources, and spending time with people in our neighborhoods. To me, this is what compassion is about.

I am truly blessed to be able to do this type of work in the community that broke and then built me into the young man I am today. I was going down a very scary, dark path including crime, drugs, and sex earlier in my life. One day I got a phone call from my hero, who goes by the name of Luis Antonio, and his love and compassion showed me that not all things that go on in this world are dark or cruel, and that there is hope in this life.

Luis believed in me when no one else did. I was an overweight, depressed teen who had terrible self-esteem. He took me under his wing and worked out with me,

showing me my true, positive "inner beast" and helping me build self-confidence. The compassion and love he showed to me mean a lot. Now I take life one day at a time, and I try and make the most out of every day – not only for myself, but also for the ones around me.

Stay blessed everyone!

Editor's Note: Anthony Hostetler-Muñoz is a member of the "Credible Messenger" team at Pomona's Just Us 4 Youth. Renee Barbee, of La Nueva Voz and a member of Compassionate Pomona, asked the youth group's new gang interventionist Michael Stephens to call on one of their "at promise" youths to write a short piece about compassion. Hostetler-Muñoz was the first to step up and volunteer to write the above article.

Just Us 4 Youth mentors "at promise" youth to be better students, better people and better leaders. It works to positively impact a culture, a community and a region by providing an innovative and holistic approach to quality mentoring for urban youth and their communities.



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Cal Poly Rose Parade float wins 'Animation Trophy'

Months of work by students and volunteers representing two Cal Poly University campuses paid off again this year as the Cal Poly Rose Parade float, "Stargazers," received the "Animation Trophy." It was the 61st award for students from the Pomona and San Luis Obispo campuses who, before last year's parade cancellation due to the pandemic, had designed and built 72 consecutive floats.

The entry, the 82nd float of 86 in the 133rd New Year's Day parade, showcased three giant cows working on jetpacks to achieve their goal of jumping over the moon -- a concept intended to beckon Rose Parade viewers to dare to dream.

It was the only student-designed and built float in the parade.

More than 80 students involved in the project worked in the new \$5.5 million Rose Float Lab and Design Complex on the Cal Poly Pomona campus, including a fully enclosed float construction bay with 7,200 square feet of design workspace and storage facilities.

La Nueva Voz was able to cover progress of the float construction this year with early photos in the Rose Float Lab appearing in the November and December issues (view them in "past issues" at www.lanuevavoz.net) beginning just after half of the float from the San Luis Obispo campus was transported to Pomona and connected to the Pomona half.

This month's photos -- taken across the street from the Rose Bowl in a float construction facility on a rainy day -- show students and volunteers hard at work racing against the clock -- up until about 11 p.m. the last few days -- in their final days before parade time.

Cary Khatab, director of the Cal Poly Rose Float program, told La Nueva Voz that the rain outside actually was a good thing for preserving the flowers ahead of the parade.

Pictured are some of the estimated 100 volunteers who were working on the float in Pasadena when La Nueva Voz visited on Dec. 29.

The float was 54 feet long, 16 feet wide and more than 20 feet tall at full height. The trip to transport the float from Pomona to Pasadena on Dec. 19 took seven hours.

In addition to flowers, edible items were used on the float including rice, almonds, blue corn, coffee beans, cranberries, flax seed, kale, kumquats, purple cauliflower, and purple, white and pearl onions.



KTLA 5 television "screen shot" photo







Valley Vista Services

January 2022

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE RESIDENTS OF POMONA:

Happy 2022! I pray this year brings you and your loved ones health and prosperity. This letter is to bring to your attention two developments that will change the way your trash is collected in Pomona – and both developments represent a change for the better.

First, California's Senate Bill 1383, "Short-lived climate pollutants, methane emissions, dairy and live-stock, organic waste, landfills," was signed into law by the governor on September 19, 2016. Because the California Air Resources Board was charged with monitoring and regulating sources of emissions of greenhouse gases under the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006, SB 1383 required CARB to approve and begin implementing a comprehensive regulatory strategy.

And the California Integrated Waste Management Act of 1989 required cities and counties to develop a plan to reduce organic waste in landfills. Generally, those plans make it illegal to dispose of organic material in landfills – it needs to be recovered in compost or gas or both, and the gas needs to be used to produce energy, thereby closing the loop and creating a market for the material that is being recycled.

In California, this program has been in effect for commercial waste for several years but went into effect for residential customers on January 1 of this year. Trash disposal companies will be either providing residents with separate containers for organic waste to make it easy, or asking residents to combine organics with green waste, for everyone to help improve the environment by reducing our impact on global warming.

Second, the City of Pomona is making a major, prudent cost-saving move by requesting proposals from trash disposal companies for an outsourcing in a single franchise agreement the city's residential AND commercial trash collection responsibilities. Currently, the city is handling your residential trash collection with its own trucks and its own staff. Commercial trash disposal is handled by several private companies.

Valley Vista Services is heavily invested in Pomona and, naturally, we are very much interested in continuing to be of service. We have provided commercial service here since the 1980s, we opened our highly successful \$15.5 million transfer station in Pomona in 2015 to reduce the need for additional landfills (the transfer station is also contributing \$1 million each year to the City of Pomona), and we even built a \$1.1 million compressed natural gas fueling station on site at the transfer station that is open to the public.

Valley Vista Services has been an excellent corporate partner with the City of Pomona, through direct community involvement for over two decades – sponsoring events and activities and serving on many boards including the Pomona Chamber of Commerce, the Youth and Family Club of Pomona Valley, Pomona Community Foundation and more.

I hope you'll give us a call with any questions at any time. I will continue to update you on important events and remember, at Valley Vista Services, we're committed to the city and its residents for the long haul. We're in Pomona for good!

David Perez, Owner
Valley Vista Services

VALLEY VISTA SERVICES, INC.
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