



Eva Forgeron, a student of Joe Marsella, is all smiles as she enjoys time on the playground. (courtesy of Emily Forgeron)



Eva Forgeron works on a lesson with teacher Joe Marsella. (courtesy of Emily Forgeron)

A special teacher for wonderful kids

By Terry L. Wilson

For 30 years, teacher Joe Marsella has helped shape the lives of countless special needs students during his tenure at Dingeman Elementary School's Early Childhood Special Education preschool.

His dedication to the students, their families and the community has earned him superstar status in the eyes of everyone he has helped. Marsella received the San Diego Unified School District's "Above & Beyond" award for his contributions to the community.

"His two-year program was life-changing. Mr. Joe opened my autistic daughter's world to learning," parent Emily Forgeron said. "He tapped into everything she loved to build a trust with her, and this was an autistic child who was deeply afraid of unfamiliar men and would hide or cower around them. In Mr. Joe's classroom, Eva (Forgeron's daughter) had access to learn from peer models. She blossomed."

Marsella, known as Mr. Joe, explained his role.

"My class is especially there for children with special needs," he said. "But I also take children from the neighborhood as peer models, language models and social models. Right now, we have about half and half. In our morning session we have four children with special needs and four children without."

Forgeron described an example involving her other daughter.

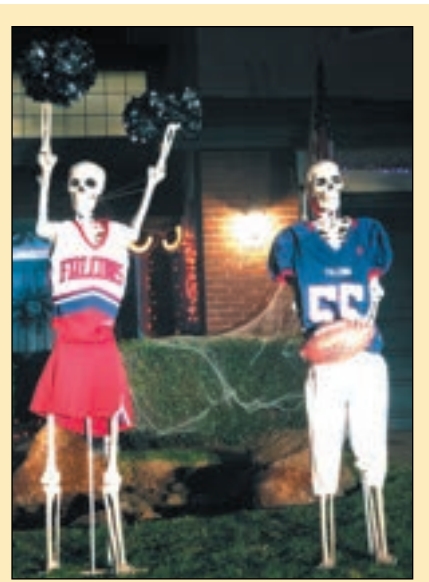
"Eva's younger sister, Lily, is 4 and she is now a peer model in Mr. Joe's class," she said. "So, I have experienced both sides of how this program is beneficial for both a child with an IEP (Individualized Education Program) and one without."

"When it comes to how the kids interact with each other, most of the time they don't even notice that a few of their classmates have special needs. But there are times when some students are moving faster than those

See **SPECIAL TEACHER**, Page 10



Joe Marsella poses with some of his students. (courtesy of Emily Forgeron)



Skeletons Belinda and Jeff cheered on the Falcons during last year's SRHS Homecoming game. (courtesy of Shannon Walsh)

The skeletons of Scripps Ranch

By Alex Piscatelli

It's the spooky season in Scripps Ranch!

Some may have seen two skeletons on Rock Creek Drive that dress up differently each day in October leading up to Halloween. Shannon Walsh and her family created the dapper skeletons that go by the names Jeff and Belinda to bring a smile to the community.

"Laughter is medicine," according to Jeff and Belinda's Instagram page.

The tradition began in 2018 with the skeleton named Jeff. Walsh was putting up decorations for Halloween when her youngest son grabbed the skeleton and put it on his bike.

"All of a sudden, one of us put

See **SKELETONS**, Page 8



Jeff and Belinda, the skeletons of Scripps Ranch, take a car ride. (courtesy of Shannon Walsh)

WHAT TO READ



New children's book

"Mother Nature has the Blues," by Scripps Ranch author and illustrator Patricia Overton, was recently published and released globally. Overton

cites her children as her greatest inspirations. The book was born during this crazy (quarantine) time in history in hopes of helping children and parents rediscover together the joy, love and creativity of childhood. Available for purchase on Amazon.

TIME TO VOTE



Presidential Election

Mail ballots were mailed to San Diego County registered voters for the Nov. 3 Presidential General Election. It's safer to vote by mail

during COVID-19. Voters can also drop ballots at the Scripps Miramar Ranch Library, 10301 Scripps Lake Drive, through Nov. 3., or the Registrar of Voters office, 5600 Overland Ave. Visit sdvote.com or call (858) 565-5800.

HOW TO HELP



Becky's Gift toy drive

The Becky's Gift toy drive starts Nov. 1, allowing families affected by cancer to choose

a gift for their children for the holidays. Toys are delivered to four cancer centers. Donate unwrapped new toys for children ages 1-16. Gift cards accepted. Drop gifts off at Scripps Rock Dental, 12112 Scripps Summit Drive, Suite C or at St. Gregory the Great Catholic School, 15315 Stonebridge Parkway. Visit beckysgifts.org.

Pre-med student runs shoe drive

By Nick Ng

A Scripps Ranch High graduate started a two-month-long shoe drive to help her raise money to work as a pre-med student in Costa Rica next year.

Eezya Singh, who graduated in 2019, is a second-year pre-med student at the University of California, Santa Cruz, majoring in neuroscience with a minor in environmental studies. Her goal is to gain hands-on experience working with local doctors in Costa Rica while getting new perspectives and networking with others in the medical field.

The COVID-19 pandemic made Singh realize the importance of contributing to the local community, no matter how small the act seems. The shoe drive is a small step in curbing climate change and other environmental problems.

"We throw away at least 300 million pairs of shoes every year and the average pair of shoes takes 30 or more years to completely decompose," Singh said.

She joined Vida Volunteer, a non-profit organization

that helps medical and dental students gain work experience in countries where there is limited or no access to healthcare.

Singh said that she will learn to perform physical examinations, fill out patient intake forms, run a pharmacy and develop diagnostic skills.

"This experience will play a big role in my academic career," she said.

Teaming up with Funds2Orgs to run the shoe drive, Singh hopes to collect 400 pairs of shoes. Funds2Orgs helps students and non-profit organizations earn money



Eezyah Singh

through similar shoe drives.

"By donating your unworn, gently worn or used shoes, you'll be contributing to not only an aspiring medical student in your community, but creating sustainability in the environment and to families who will be able to create their own businesses and economic opportunities," she said.

Singh's shoe drive will be at Spring Canyon Neighborhood Park every Saturday starting Oct. 17 and will end Dec. 7. She also accepts donations at her residence, and she can pick up shoes at donors' homes. Contact Singh at eezyasshoedrive@gmail.com and follow her shoe drive on Instagram: @eezya.

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Maksimow gains huge honor

Scripps Ranch resident Ghean Maksimow, co-founder of Bow Genie International, was recognized by the floriculture industry by having a flower named in her honor at the International Floriculture Exposition (IFE), held virtually on Sept. 16.

Maksimow is only the 11th person in the United States

to be recognized by the IFE with this award. The lavender breed of dahlia is awarded the name and trade designation “Genie,” and was bred by the Miyoshi Company and Ball SB., a division of Ball Horticultural Company. It’s impossible to discuss the history of the floral industry without recognizing Maksimow’s contributions for the past 35-plus years, according to the IFE.

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DISTRICT 5 CITY COUNCIL RACE

Joe Leventhal

By Terry L. Wilson

Attorney Joe Leventhal is campaigning for the San Diego City Council District 5 seat. His platform includes public safety, road repairs and reducing homelessness.



Joe Leventhal

“I am a registered Republican, but this is a non-partisan race. With the current situation we are currently facing, my focus is on improving the economy in our city. We want people to have jobs so they can keep a roof over their heads and food on their tables. Keeping people employed during this era of COVID is a real challenge for our city budget, so another priority is to protect core city services like fire and police services,” Leventhal said.

‘We want people to have jobs so they can keep a roof over their heads and food on their tables.’

—Joe Leventhal

“I’ve been living in the district for over 15-years and in the city more than 20 years of my adult life. During that time, I started and grew a business, and I think that’s important experience when it comes to managing a city’s finances,” he added. “I’m also married with three children. I’ve been very involved with the community and understand the challenges that everyday voters are dealing with today dealing with COVID.”

Leventhal explained more about his community involvement.

“Some of the community work I’ve done includes being a leader in organizations serving children with disabilities, and organizations focused on improving our justice system. I’ve been a common-sense conscience builder, bringing people with different backgrounds together and focus on moving our objective forward,” he said. “It’s that sort of leadership and proven experience that, I think, makes me exceptionally well qualified to be on the city council.”

Leventhal also described some items pertaining to the Scripps Ranch community.

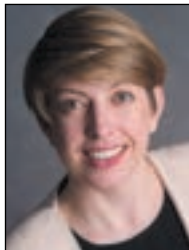
“My issues specific to Scripps Ranch start

See **JOE LEVENTHAL**, Page 4

Marni Von Wilpert

By Bella Ross

Marni Von Wilpert, Democratic candidate for San Diego City Council District 5, knows a thing or two about how things work in Scripps Ranch – and in public service in general.



Marni Von Wilpert

She was born and raised in Scripps Ranch, and lives just a mile from her childhood home where her parents still reside. Von Wilpert has also worked in the public sphere for the majority of her career, eventually landing in her current position as a deputy city attorney for San Diego.

“I am one of the only council candidates city-wide that actually has experience in city government, so I’ll be able to serve the

‘A lot of these rushed re-openings led to us closing back down again and increased cases of COVID.’

—Marni Von Wilpert

residents of District 5 because I can hit the ground running on day one,” Von Wilpert said. “My opponent will have to learn on the job.”

One of her earliest experiences in public politics was working for the Peace Corps in Botswana during the height of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, a background that will come in handy given the current situation with COVID-19, she said.

During her two-year Peace Corps deployment, her work included contact tracing, testing and treatment.

Regarding the fight against the current pandemic, Von Wilpert said she would like to see widespread enforcement of the mask mandate as well as a dedicated public health message.

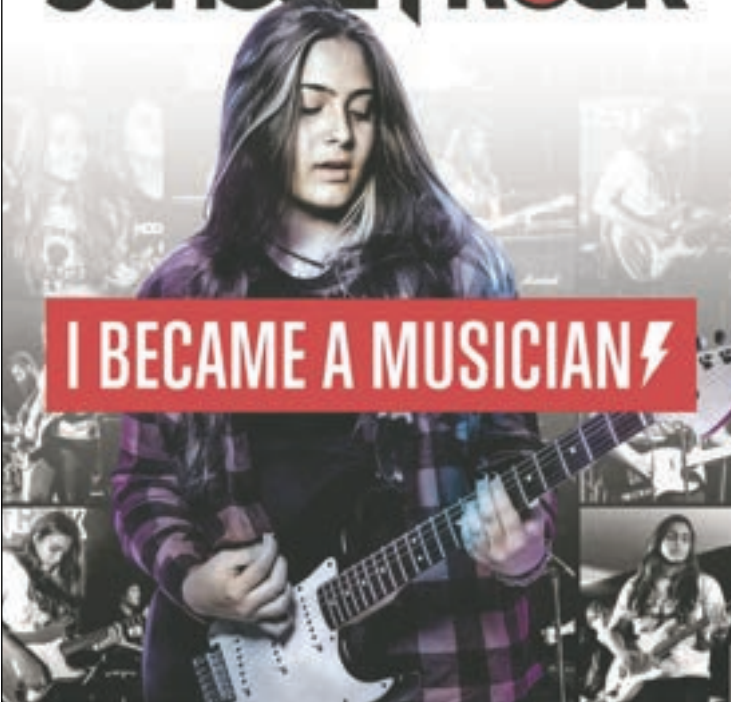
“A lot of these rushed re-openings led to us closing back down again and increased cases of COVID,” Von Wilpert said.

She described that situation as having a significant adverse impact on Scripps Ranch’s small business owners.

Also among her top priorities is addressing climate change, an issue that hits home

See **MARNI VON WILPERT**, Page 4

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JOE LEVENTHAL

Continued from Page 3

with fire safety. I'm concerned about evacuation routes, not if, but when there is another large fire. I know there's a concern about evacuations on Pomerado Road. I've spoken to the head of Miramar about the opportunity of opening up Miramar south of Pomerado in the event of an evacuation, and they are supportive of that concept – so that there would be a secondary evacuation route for the people in Scripps Ranch. And that is just one particular part of Scripps Ranch," he said. "I know the folks in Stonebridge are also concerned about evacuation. So, fire season in particular has always been a topic of high concern."

He also explained his thoughts about the care of trees in the area.

"Another concern of mine is how the city manages our eucalyptus trees here in Scripps Ranch. I don't know that our city employees that are managing our trees really know what they're doing all the time," Leventhal said. "I've heard from a lot of folks that there is a lot of inconsistent management of those trees and I'd want to make sure that we do a better job than we've been doing."

MARNI VON WILPERT

Continued from Page 3

in a community where many people have either lost their house to wildfires or came close. The increasing severity of local fires, she said, can be attributed to a failed response to climate concerns.

"I want to also take care of our planet for the next generation and keep our air and water clean to help fight climate change," said Von Wilpert, who has been endorsed by the San Diego City Firefighters Association, Local 145, as well as the Sierra Club of San Diego.

Homelessness is another issue toward the top of Von Wilpert's priorities, despite beliefs from some that this issue is less pertinent in her district.

Although her role in city council could have impacts city-wide, she reminded constituents that many of the main causes of homelessness can still take root in suburban communities.

"People don't think that homelessness affects Scripps Ranch, but there are quite a few people who are suffering from domestic violence or addiction or other issues that lead to homelessness, even up in our area of town," Von Wilpert said.

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Seniors unmask dangers of COVID-19

By Ashley Shah

Scripps Ranch High School (SRHS) seniors Isabella Yang, Benjamin Gietzen and Benjamin Gietzen teamed up to unmask myths and questions surrounding COVID-19.

Due to the spike in COVID-19 cases, Gietzen and Yang formed the organization Wear a Mask San Diego.

‘As teenagers, we can really make an impact and help out others who are at higher risk...’

—Isabella Yang

“When cases started to go back up in San Diego in July, I think there was a level of frustration about how there was a lack of progress being made to lower cases. Seeing businesses being closed and the uncertainty surrounding everyday life made us realize that we had to create a movement to help,” co-president Gietzen said.

The organization is comprised of 11 SRHS seniors: Isabella Yang, Benjamin Gietzen, Mark Rusnak, Amy Tran, Ashley Nguyen, Varshi Gottumukkala, Melinda Luo, Hannah Lee, Vaishnavi Ventrapagada, Kate Rees and Derek Phan.

Their goal is to inform the public about the effective ways of preventing COVID-19 – which will help lower cases and hopefully lead to the reopening of San Diego.

“There is so much media out there and it’s easy to be confused. I think, for some people, they start to doubt why they are forced to do things such as wearing a mask and we just want to educate people in a way that’s simpler,” co-founder Yang said.

They are also helping the community by fundraising and making sure everyone has the resources they need to stay safe.

“Currently, we have set a goal of \$1,000 on our GoFundMe so that we are able to buy supplies and make masks. We have gotten some students and others in the



Benjamin Gietzen



Isabella Yang

community to help make masks so that we can hit our goal each month,” Yang said.

They are hoping to make 100 masks each month and deliver them to children’s hospitals.

Not only is the team working on making masks, they are hoping to do more outreach.

“We are working on making some signs that promote following the guidelines such as wearing masks and social distancing, and we plan to tag our organization on them as well. We are

hoping to put up the signs at local businesses so that the community stays informed,” Gietzen said.

On Oct. 7, the team was scheduled to speak during the Poway-Scripps Rotary Club about ways to prevent COVID-19.

“We really want to foster collaboration. It’s very important to reach out to people of all different ages and that’s what we are trying to accomplish. As teenagers, we can really make an impact and help out others who are at higher risk, so we’ve really

been pushing our social media platforms,” Yang said.

Gietzen said his main goal is to lower the cases of COVID-19 to reopen San Diego.

“Every summer I volunteer at a museum and this year I was not able to do so because of the coronavirus. We are dealing with a very serious issue that is affecting the safety of Scripps Ranch and San Diego. I think it is important to show that we are all in this struggle together and if we all work together, we can move toward reopening,” he said.

Outside of Wear a Mask, Gietzen has run for the SRHS cross country and track teams since his freshman year.

Yang has been involved in speech and the debate team since her freshman year.

“I think for most students and I, COVID-19 has affected us mainly by having to do virtual learning. I think by recognizing how this virus has affected us, it creates a sense of unity and shows how we can work to do better,” Yang said.

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Rotary Club of Poway-Scripps President David Parker is shown during his donation.

Rotary Club holds successful blood drive

COVID-19 can't keep the Rotary Club of Poway-Scripps from doing good deeds. In September, the club held a successful blood drive in conjunction with the San Diego Blood Bank. Rotarians ensured that nearly every appointment time the blood bank had was booked. Members of the club donated as did generous folks who have no ties to the club.

Student becomes published author

By Ashley Shah

Brady Durkin, a sophomore at Scripps Ranch High School (SRHS), is now a published author.

He is one of nine teenagers across the nation, from California to New York, who share their testimonials of life during quarantine in the book "QuaranTEEN."

"I thought that writing about my quarantine experience would be a great way to express myself," Durkin said.

Owners of the publishing company Scriptor Publishing Group, based in Kansas City, Kelli Watson and Greg Justice brought the concept of "QuaranTEEN" to life.

"The idea for this book came about soon after quarantine began. At that time, Greg and I realized that although everyone was impacted by the shutdown, teenagers had a unique situation. It seemed important to give them a voice and to allow them to share their perspectives. We also realized the importance of capturing the historical moment," Watson said. "The main purpose of this book is to share a perspective of the world-wide pandemic as seen and experienced through the eyes of teenagers."

Durkin began the process of brainstorming and writing in June.

"I think one of the biggest challenges I faced was that I had so many different ideas in my mind, so at first it was hard to get one idea down. However, I created a mind map and that really helped me narrow down what I wanted to write about," Durkin said.

Throughout his chapter, he focuses on how working out and keeping himself healthy and building a closer relationship toward God helped him cope through the isolation.

"In my chapter, I focus on my personal experiences. I really got the opportunity to express myself, the issues I faced and what I learned. I also really emphasize the importance of empathy. We were all in a very difficult time and many of us probably felt very isolated and it is crucial that we all empathize with each other," Durkin said.

He worked countless hours and worked on a weekly basis with the publishers before submitting his final copy in early July.

"I'm most proud of his commitment to writing and rewriting his story to make it exactly as he wanted. He worked for months and took the feedback of the publishers and learned how to express himself through his story. Brady has always set big goals for himself and it was fun to see this one come true," mother Melanie Durkin said.

See **STUDENT AUTHOR**, Page 7



Brady Durkin

Welcome Club continues virtually

By Denise Stewart

Welcome Club has a tradition of enriching meetings, enjoyable social gatherings and entertaining outings that go on throughout the year. The pandemic restrictions slowed these activities, but interest group chairs quickly adapted to new ways of organizing and doing the things members enjoy.

The four book groups turned to their computers and Zoom programs to meet to talk about their reading selections and enjoy the company of their members in a friendly, but safe, format. While the books stimulate the literary conversation, there is also lots of catching up that warms these friendly events.

The Welcome Club newsletter editor Diane Rider organized a Photo Pet Parade of members' favorite animals that was published recently. Parade participants got to show off their furry and feathered friends to other pet lovers, many of whom have deepened their attachment to their animals during this confinement period.

While members aren't gathering to take jaunts to museums now, they were able to enjoy a virtual tour of the paintings of local artist and Welcome Club member Margaret North. Margaret is an accomplished water colorist who shared several of her works. Margaret's work has been shown at the Rancho Bernardo Library among other local art venues.

Once again, Diane Rider took the club on another virtual museum tour. This time it was of Dee Humphrey's Coca-Cola memorabilia. Diane explained that, "Dee says it (her collection) started with the 1992 Olympics with the little polar bears bobsledding in the Coke commercial. Later, she began adding trucks and cars to her collection. Then, like a can of Coke that's been shaken, her collection exploded into dishes, trays, bottles, clothes, jewelry, puzzles, hats, cookie jars and even furniture."

Welcome Club has fostered its friendship circle in Scripps Ranch for more than 35 years. If you visit scrippsranchnews.com, you will find information about the club's activities during the normal times as well as those of this exceptional era. There is contact information on the website if you would prefer hearing a friendly voice sharing the club's news.

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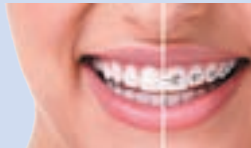
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Travel agent celebrates 50 years

By Hoyt Smith

A local travel agent has wandered the globe for the past five decades but said the best part of her job has always been returning home to Scripps Ranch.

Jayne Gomes, founder of Cruise Company of So Cal, remembers the exact day she set foot in Scripps Ranch: “April 15, 1970. When we arrived, there were only three streets. We must have been among the first 100 families to move in.”

Gomes was a stay-at-home mother in those days, and once her children enrolled in school, she said she took up tennis.

“One day my husband said, ‘since you have so much time to play tennis, why don’t you get a job?’ So, I did,” she said.

Being in a military family, Gomes traveled a lot. She was born in Oxford, England and raised in Bath. She met her husband in Spain while he was serving in the U.S. Air Force. From there, the Gomes family moved to Wichita, Kansas; Riverside, California; Panama; and Minot, North Dakota before



Jayne Gomes (photo by Hoyt Smith)

settling in Scripps Ranch 50 years ago. Traveling was something she knew well and thoroughly enjoyed.

“I’ve been in the travel business now since 1974,” she said. “It’s been a long time. Where haven’t I visited? I’ve travelled to China, Vietnam, Iceland, all around South America, Ecuador, Brazil, Argentina, Egypt, Africa, Jordan, Israel, you name it.”

In 1981, she opened her own travel agency, one of the first to specialize in cruise vacations, she said. Before Gomes would recommend a voyage to one of her clients, she was likely to explore the ports of call herself. She has cruised down the Nile, up the Amazon,

through the Suez Canal, around Cape Horn, amid the Scandinavian fjords, “and of course I’ve been to Alaska,” she said.

At one point, Cruise Company of So Cal boasted four storefront offices and about 40 agents. The last office was in Point Loma, but she closed it a few years ago and moved her business into her home.

Her daughter, Anita, attributes her mother’s longevity and success in the travel business to her personality.

“She’s very vivacious and outgoing, and people have always been drawn to her,” Anita said. “She’s established great relationships with her vendors, and because she loves to travel, she can speak to clients from a personal perspective because wherever they’re going, she’s probably been there.”

Gomes said business “hasn’t been the best” this year due to the worldwide pandemic.

As far and frequently as Gomes has travelled, she said that the best thing about touring the world has been returning to Scripps Ranch.

Visit cruisecompanyofsocal.com.

STUDENT AUTHOR

Continued from Page 6

The book came out on Aug. 25 and hit number 1 in three different categories including “Being a teen,” “Children’s studies” and “Education philosophy and social aspects.”

Not only did the book launch successfully, but the nine students decided to donate the proceeds to two organizations which they chose together: Center for Disease Philanthropy, Covid-19 Response Fund and Doctors Without Borders. To date,

they have donated \$1,000 to these organizations.

While this may have been the first book Durkin wrote, it will not be the last.

“I’ve always been interested in writing. It’s a great way to express yourself. I think this was a great way to get started into the world of writing,” he said.

Alongside his passion for writing, Durkin participates in varsity lacrosse, JV football and is a member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes at SRHS.

Throughout Durkin’s journey, he was able to grow as a

person and writer.

“One sign of a good writer is when they are able to bring a level of vulnerability to their effort. It is hard to do, and many authors shy away from being personal. But Brady took the challenge and stayed true to himself. That is very hard for any author to do ... and especially one who is a teenager. His maturity shows in the way he opened up and shared about the most important parts of his life – faith, family and fitness,” Watson said.

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Skeletons Jeff and Belinda display their incredible dance moves. (courtesy of Shannon Walsh)

SKELETONS

Continued from Page 1

a helmet on it and a wig,” Walsh said. “The next day, it was like, ‘Oh, let’s change it.’”

The family then dressed Jeff up as everything from Braveheart to a paddleboarder.

“(Once) he got into a skateboarding accident on a skateboard ramp, and he fell apart into pieces,” Walsh said. “He was put back together in a wheelchair and popping a wheelie.”

She said Jeff was a loner, so he needed a skeleton friend.

“At the end of the first year, we introduced Belinda – and they went to some kind of formal dance,” Walsh said.

She said her neighbors looked forward to seeing what the skeletons were up to each day. Then Jeff and Belinda started to get more attention from the community.

“People started saying they’re coming over, or they would send pictures to their kids in college,” Walsh said. “Or they would tell their friends and then they would start driving to the neigh-

borhood.”

Her favorite Jeff and Belinda moment was when they dressed up for Scripps Ranch High School’s homecoming game. The two skeletons dressed in a football jersey and cheerleading uniform.

“We turned the car around and put headlights on (the skeletons) so it would be like Friday night lights,” Walsh said. “It was fun for the community. I think that’s really when people started laughing.”

Walsh originally got the skeletons at CVS Pharmacy.

“I’m really bummed because they just changed the type of skeleton that they sell. So, if these guys break ... then all of a sudden, they’re going to have beady eyes in one of them, but we’re hoping we can milk them the rest of the season,” Walsh said.

Yes, there have been multiple Jeff and Belindas.

“But nobody knows,” Walsh said.

Who was the genius behind the names Jeff and Belinda?

“The kids. We just let them choose. They name the Christmas tree every year, so it was natural for them to name the skeletons,” Walsh said.

READY FOR HALLOWEEN!

Readers sent in these photos of their costumes and decorations in preparation for Halloween 2020. You may send your photo for publication in the November issue of Scripps Ranch News. Email photo, name of photographer and names of those in the photo to info@scrippsranchnews.com.



Colin and Riley Ryan dressed in their Halloween costumes as Link and Zelda. Photo taken by mom Jennifer Ryan.



Photo by Steve Ungar, decorations by Kyle Ungar



Halloween decorations on Libelle Court



T-rex aka Tony Garcia (photo by Dana Reeder)

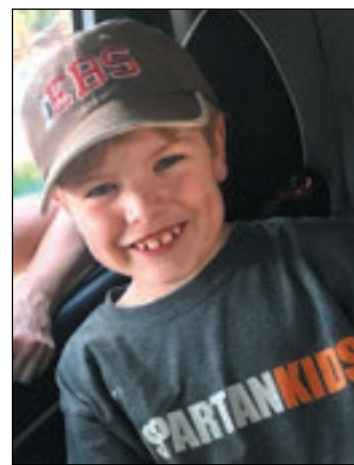


Halloween decorations on Libelle Court

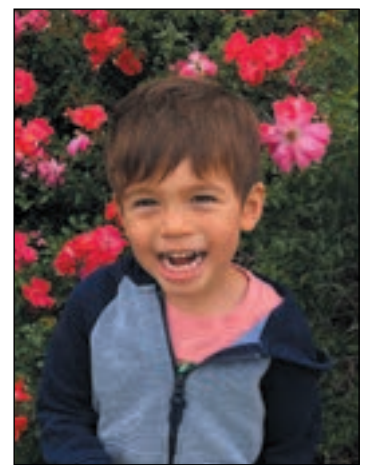
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Emma Collins - you may be the last of our daughters to turn 18, but you are so amazing in all you do and how you handle life's ups and downs! Happy 18th to our baby girl!



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If you know someone having a birthday in November, you can send a message and photo to Scripps Ranch News and we'll share it on the special day on our Facebook and Instagram pages – and publish it in the next issue of Scripps Ranch News. Send your birthday message (25 words maximum) along with a photo and the birthday date to info@scrippsranchnews.com.



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Seniors Corner: Missing Friday night lights

By Ashley Shah

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Scripps Ranch High School (SRHS) students have not been able to experience the regular in-person school year. These seniors now have an opportunity to share their thoughts.

Annalee Luke

Vice president of Associated Student Body (ASB)

“I think the main thing that I’m missing is getting to experience and plan all the senior events such as senior homecoming and football game themes. We have such a build up to senior year, it’s the last hurrah and it’s potentially our last time to be amongst all the students in our class, and we’re all missing out on that,” Luke said.



Annalee Luke

Luke and ASB have been trying to keep up the morale of students.

“This year, even though we won’t be able to have the regular Friday night lights games, every Friday we will be turning on the stadium lights for 20 minutes and 21 seconds in honor of the class of 2021. We are also still planning on having homecoming kings and queens,” Luke said.

Not only is Luke involved in ASB, but she is also the vice president of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and the Butterfly Effect Club on campus. After graduation, Luke hopes to attend Baylor University or California Polytechnic State University where she plans to study business.

Riley Merrigan

Captain of the varsity football team

“What I miss the most is battling with my brothers. I miss running out onto the field and having the whole crowd behind me and a whole sideline behind me. I miss playing football,” Merrigan said.



Riley Merrigan

Not only does he miss the Friday night lights, but he shares his struggles in school

due to virtual learning.

“There really is no substitute to in-person learning. I feel like there is no accountability or motivation. There is no structure and I know the teachers are trying their hardest, but it’s just been very hard to keep up with everything,” Merrigan said.

If given the chance to go back to campus, Merrigan hopes to build some last memories with his team.

“I’m looking forward to having a full weight room with my team, and just sitting in the classroom with all my peers,” he said.

Merrigan hopes to continue his career in football in college while studying something related to business.

“Currently, the University of Washington Saint Louis and Carnegie Mellon are the two top schools recruiting me to play Division III football,” Merrigan said.

Izzy Hall

ASB treasurer and varsity lacrosse player

“I really miss the overall atmosphere of Friday night lights. I think that we, as seniors, are missing

out on a lot of key moments like Homecoming and those games. I’m hoping that we can at least get some memories in as a class,” Hall said.

She explained her feelings on the changes made due to virtual learning.

“I think the way they cut down the amount of classes we have to take this year is nice. It helps us adjust to this different way of learning,” Hall said.



Izzy Hall

She was excited to play her last season of lacrosse if able to go back to in-person learning.

“Our season last spring was cut early due to COVID-19, and I’m just hoping that we can come back this year and win CIF,” Hall said.

She committed to Dickinson College to play Division III lacrosse and plans to study political science.

Connor Colletto

4-year varsity soccer player

“I miss the Friday night lights the most. I miss being

part of the student section and cheering on our team,” Colletto said. “In about a month, we would be trying out for soccer at school and it’s just sad knowing we won’t be able to do that.”

Colletto conveys his thoughts on the new adjustments made this year.

“This year has been better than last spring because I think it is a lot more manageable. However, it’s rough in the sense that I miss being able to see my classmates. It’s been so long since I have been able to see anyone in person and I just miss the experience of actually going to class,” he said.



Connor Colletto

Outside of SRHS, Colletto volunteers for the organization Build a Miracle and plays for San Diego Surf Soccer Club.

Colletto hasn’t decided if he will play soccer in college, but plans to attend the University of Washington or Clemson University to study business.





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SRHS teens launch free tutoring online

By Nick Ng

Two Scripps Ranch teens launched an online tutoring service that helps struggling students at Marshall Middle School to excel in their math and English classes.

H2N, which stands for Homework Help Network, helps to reduce academic inequality that was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. It offers free group

and one-on-one tutoring once a week with Scripps Ranch High School (SRHS) honor students, who are experienced in working with younger students.

Although many of Marshall's students have received help to attend online classes, such as getting Internet access and laptops, many are still falling behind. Some families cannot afford tutoring services, especially during the pandemic.



Anjali Koganti



Sumana Srinivas

"Many parents also work from home and don't have enough time to help them with their homework," said Anjali Koganti, 17, who is a co-founder of H2N and graduated from SRHS in spring 2020. "We fill in the gap to help these students and families."

Koganti got the idea from TutorFly, which is another online tutoring service, but H2N is de-

signed to work only with students at Marshall. She knew she could not do this alone. Koganti asked her friend Sumana Srinivas, who is a senior at SRHS and had taken a computer coding course last summer, for help with starting H2N. Both share the roles of creating and managing the website with Srinivas handling most of the student sign-ups.

With the help of Marshall's vice-principals Kaitlin Moffatt and Stephen Olds, Koganti and Srinivas set up H2N as a connection between the students at Marshall and SRHS.

"Vice-principals Moffatt and Olds helped us to get the resources together for H2N," Koganti said. "They help us out with logistics and improvements for the website based on their knowledge of the students and parents."

The vice-principals also help spread the word about H2N to the Marshall students' families, and they meet with Koganti and Srinivas once or twice a week to see how the program is doing.

Marshall's students choose See **TUTORING**, Page 11



Featured smile: **Ethan**

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SPECIAL TEACHER

Continued from Page 1

with special needs, and it's our job to help them to understand that some kids require extra help. Our job is to explain things and to keep the special needs students included in the group. This is especially true when it come to kids with autism," Marsella said. "A child with autism may not want to play with others, and that will confuse the non-special needs classmate. An autistic child can have an especially difficult time socializing with others. Our goal is to help students understand and to deal with certain situations like that. I think it's a positive learning experience for the students with-

out special needs."

Part of Marsella's "magic" is his unique ability to connect with students. In Eva's case he recognized her affection for Sofia the First, an animated character in a Disney series.

"First I had to watch the show to find out who Sofia the First was," Marsella said. "Then I purchased a few items with Sofia's picture to make Eva feel more comfortable. I'd never met anyone as apprehensive about coming into school as Eva, and getting those things for her just seemed like the right thing to do."

Forgeron was able to witness the progress.

"Mr. Joe made sure he had plenty of Sofia toys, trinkets, books, plush toys

and a special Sofia necklace to acclimate Eva to his classroom setting when school started. But over time, she no longer needed the necklace to go to school," she said. "For his students' birthdays, he honors their day with a special party in the classroom. For Eva's celebration, he went all out with Sofia the First decorations, a cupcake for her to make a wish and presents. She sat at the head of the table and was glowing with happiness when her classmates sang to her. At past birthday parties, she would run away, overwhelmed when family and friends sang for her. Seeing how she responded to the celebration and Mr. Joe's attention almost brought me to tears."

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Students enjoyed bags of popcorn as Jerabek Elementary School held its virtual Movie Night on Sept. 26. Families with students at Jerabek viewed the Walt Disney Pictures film "Up" from the safety of their homes. The event was the school's traditional kick-off and welcome back for its families. (courtesy of Laura Stephens)

Speech contest opens

Local high school students (boys and girls) are invited to participate in the American Association of University Women (AAUW) California speech contest.

The contest will be virtual, held via Zoom video conference software. The contest date is Jan. 30, 2021, with \$500 awarded to the first place winner and \$250 awarded to the second place winner. The local winner will have their record-

ed speech entered into the state semi-finals. Search on YouTube under "AAUW speech trek 2020" to see this year's speeches.

The speech topic for 2021 is "Has social media helped or hindered the breaking down of barriers for women and girls?" Registration deadline is Jan 25, 2021. For rules and more information, contact the AAUW Poway Penasquitos branch at aauwboard@gmail.com.

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TUTORING

Continued from Page 10

a topic, reserve a time with a group or private session with a tutor and submit a specific question about their homework once a week. Meanwhile, SRHS students who would like to be a tutor can sign up on the website.

"Right now, we have about 20 Marshall Middle School students signed up for H2N, and we are hoping more will sign up," Koganti said.

For now, Marshall is the only middle school in San Diego County that is using this tutoring model, which

functions more like a high school club than a business. Koganti and Srinivas hope that other schools would adopt something similar to help struggling students and families.

"We see ourselves reaching out to other middle and high schools in Southern California to incorporate a H2N club," Srinivas said. "We want this organization to help not just the Scripps Ranch community, but other surrounding communities as well."

Contact H2N at tutoring. h2n@gmail.com or visit h2n-tutoring.com.

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