

An 'Earth Day baby' Born into an eco-conscious family

By Cynthia Kurose

Emma Nguyen made her debut in to the world April 22, 2017, several days later than anticipated. Originally expected to be a Tax Day baby, she hung on until Earth Day, almost as if to make a statement about the family she was being born in to.

Her mother, Scripps Ranch resident Marites Nguyen, has always considered herself an environmentally-conscious person. A once cloth-diapered baby herself, she was happy to connect with her roots when she made the decision to use cloth diapers for her children, as well. At meal times, her family of five uses reusable cloth napkins, reducing their landfill impact. She is also a member of a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) group, from which she receives fresh, seasonal produce procured from local farms to feed her family.

As an admin for her

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Marites Nguyen picks a flower for her daughter, Emma, who has exhibited affection for nature since her first months of life. (photo by Cynthia Kurose)

LIVING IN HARMONY

In honor of Earth

Day, this issue's theme is

"living in harmony." Scripps Ranch News features people devoted to coexisting with the environment, helping others and living in peace.

— John and Jacqueline Gregory, Publishers

Sustainable Scripps Ranch

By Max Troja

Since 2009, Sustainable Scripps Ranch has been working with the Scripps Ranch Civic Association to foster growth and environmentally friendly lifestyles throughout the various Scripps Ranch neighborhoods.

Founding member Lynn Owens said their mission is "to build a sustainable community through education, advocacy and application of sustainable practices."

Whether it's in reference to water, energy or pollution, Sustainable Scripps Ranch is working to do more for the community.

"People in Scripps Ranch are naturally inclined to help, and they're naturally inclined to save," Owens explained.

To her, it only makes sense that the community is becoming more sustainable every day. But this organization did not come together overnight. Owens recalled the origins of the group, telling of a "desire for something closer to home," because



Lynn Owens (left) and Suha Chari, longtime members of Sustainable Scripps Ranch (photo by Ralph LoVuolo)

unlike the other sustainability initiatives in San Diego, Sustainable Scripps Ranch is one of the first to be based right here in the community.

"Everyone has good ideas," Owens said, "They just need to come together."

Come together they did. While the organization initially focused on water and landscaping, it has since expanded with other focuses

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Liz Sloan
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local Scripps Ranch Buy Nothing group, Nguyen fully embraces the concept of reusing and repurposing once-loved treasures received from neighbors, and gifting back to her community from her own abundance. Baby Emma's first-year wardrobe consisted primarily of items gifted to her through Buy Nothing, including a multitude of onesies, dresses, shoes and accessories once donned by other Scripps Ranch babies.

Emma "received so much clothes that we were able to share them with other baby friends in the community," Nguyen said. "We've gotten toys to keep her occupied and entertained at home and on family trips. It's great because it feels like she has sisters in the community."

For her first birthday, Emma enjoyed an intimate dinner with her immediate family "to celebrate her birth and being a family of five," Nguyen said.

Then, in order to allow friends to share in the fun, Nguyen planned a playdate for Emma at the park with light snacks and activities.

"We made art using plants and other biodegrad-

able materials. I also asked our friends to bring reusable containers and cups so we could limit the amount of items that go in the trash," she said.

As for presents for the birthday girl, Nguyen told friends that while none were necessary, if they did elect to bring gifts, she would "prefer hand-me-down items and non-battery operated toys or books."

While recounting some of the practices she and her family have adopted, Nguyen offered a list of things others could do immediately to start living a more earth-friendly life.

She suggested: "Partic-

LIVING IN HARMONY

‘I hope that
her love and wonder
for trees continues to grow. I hope
that her actions help encourage others in
protecting and preserving our environment and
limited resources. I hope that she grows up
believing in her own magic and
empowers others to
find theirs.’

– Marites Nguyen

ipate in your local Buy Nothing group, join a CSA, support eco-friendly businesses, buy from local businesses and minimize the carbon footprint associated with shipping, avoid using

disposable plastic straws, use reusable cloth napkins, and use reusable containers and dishes instead of single-use containers that end up in the landfill."

Nguyen regularly posts

photos of Emma on her Facebook page, followed by the hashtag "#earthdaybaby," affectionately reinforcing the sign under which her daughter was born, and also trying to emphasize her message with friends about adopting a lifestyle that is earth-friendly.

For her future, Nguyen hopes that daughter Emma will honor her "Earth Day baby" nickname and grow up to adopt earth-friendly attitudes and behaviors.

"I hope that her love and wonder for trees continues to grow. I hope that her actions help encourage others in protecting and preserving our environment and limited resources. I hope that she grows up believing in her own magic and empowers others to find theirs," Nguyen said.

SUSTAINABILITY

Continued from Page 1

including solar energy and even food waste.

"It's about sharing what we know with everyone else," Owens said.

Sustainable Scripps Ranch has been benefiting the community since its conception, with one central accomplishment being its exchange and dissemination of knowledge. "This is the stuff everyone cares about. They want to know more, and we can help them," Owens explained.

One way the organization came together is through its Sustainability Hack, the first of which just happened on April 15. Owens described it as "a community-oriented meet-and-greet." At these hacks, residents can bring food to share, but the focus is on the information.

"The hack is an opportunity; an opportunity to share ideas and technology for

LIVING IN HARMONY



Participants in the first Sustainability Hack, held April 15, pause for a photo outside the Scripps Ranch Community Center. (photo by Ralph LoVuolo)

time-saving sustainability," Owens said.

Sustainable Scripps Ranch plans to have more of these hacks in which members of the community can discuss how they live sustainably, while also getting to know one another.

Sustainable Scripps Ranch has other events planned for the future. Every month, it hosts Garden Shares, where

residents can share fruits, vegetables and anything else they have in excess, as a way of avoiding waste and sharing with the community. The organization also works in conjunction with the Scripps Miramar Ranch Library to offer movie showings of environment-related films and discussions. For more information, visit scrippsranch.org/ssr.

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Project promises retail, dining, entertainment

By Cynthia Kurose

The Watermark retail center will bring new options for shopping, dining and entertainment close to home for Scripps Ranch residents. Scheduled to break ground in the first quarter of 2019 and open in the fall of 2020, the center's future site is located on the southeast corner of Scripps Poway Parkway and Scripps Highlands Drive.

The new development will feature grocery retailer Whole Foods; a modern, 140-room Element Hotel by Marriott; a luxury theater with reclining seats and gourmet food options; chef-driven restaurants; coffee shops; bistros; and both national and local retailers.

According to Colton Sudberry, CEO and president of Sudberry Properties, the developer on the project, The Watermark is "not going to be like your typical shopping center."

He explained that parking would be largely structured, rather than expansive parking lots, in order to optimize space for "plazas and paseos and courtyards," throughout the center.

Additionally, there will be "a large green space for community events, concerts, holiday events and outdoor movies in the park," he said.

Adjacent to the site being developed is pharmacy benefit management company MedImpact. Preliminary grading work presently visible at the site is preparation for an additional office building that will be occupied by the company in the second quarter of 2019.

Long rumored between members of the community, discussions regarding how the site would be developed began between landowners and potential developers nearly a decade ago. Shifts in decisions about intended use, then land titling and rezoning, followed by identification, selection and execution of preleasing agreements with potential tenants have accounted for the lengthy process and delays.

With regard to which retailers and types of tenants that have been identified for the development, Sudberry explained that while they have a "merchandising mix that we strive to hit to have a good balance of restaurants and retail and entertainment," they also welcome resident input regarding things they would

like to see as part of the new center.

"Sudberry has done an outstanding job of working with and listening to the community," said Lorayne Burley, vice chair of the Miramar Ranch North Planning Committee (MRNPC).

The Watermark project was "introduced to our planning group when I first joined the board more than 10 years ago," she said.

According to Burley, "the majority of the community has always been in favor," however, the primary area of concern among residents surrounds traffic impact, including concerns for pedestrian and bike safety.

Scripps Ranch resident Anthony Eusebio explained that while he and his family are excited to have more local retail and entertainment options, he is concerned about traffic with the new development.

"It's so close to the freeway on-ramp and exit, and it's already so crazy there in the mornings and evenings," he said.

According to Burley, "Colton is trying to do everything he can to address traffic. He agreed to some traffic



A digital rendering of The Watermark San Diego reveals an inviting outdoor shopping experience, with upscale retail and dining options complemented by open courtyards and fountains. (image courtesy of Sudberry Properties)

mitigation measures that were not legally required of him, but Sudberry [Properties] realizes the importance of working with the community."

In a letter dated Oct. 1, 2013 from Sudberry Development to the Miramar Ranch planning group, Sudberry outlined 10 traffic mitigation measures the developer was making efforts to address. Included among these are: creation of a direct access bike path

to the project from the existing bike path located along I-15, lengthening of the southbound left turn pocket on Scripps Poway

Parkway turning on to Scripps Highlands Drive, the addition of pedestrian-generated red flashing

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LIVING IN HARMONY

Dedicated to helping others

By John Gregory

Scripps Ranch resident Lori Gold could do many things to enjoy her retirement; and she does. Gold has chosen to collect items that can be used by homeless people in downtown San Diego and she distributes these items on the streets in person a couple of times each month. It takes time, effort and even her own money, but she is glad and determined to carry out her mission.



Lori Gold

“Human beings should not be living like they are downtown. This should not be that way,” said Gold, adding she made the decision to pursue this cause in November 2017.

“I can do some good. I can collect and actually help people that are homeless and make their lives a little bit easier, a little bit better,” Gold said. “I talk to them. ... I give them some information also to help them facilitate getting off the streets.”

Locals drop off items at Gold’s house where she collects them in bins, sorts them and stores them in her garage until it’s time to deliver them. She said a few friends help her before they make each journey downtown to distribute the goods. Gold and her helpers make about 100 sand-

wiches and prepare drinks and snacks to distribute as well. They distribute them on downtown street corners or at the Alpha Project tent, which houses a few hundred homeless people.

The items include sleeping bags, tarps, blankets, clothes, shoes and hygiene items.

She does not have non-profit status and doesn’t work for an established charity. She’s a one-woman task force doing what she can to improve the lives of the

less-fortunate in this city. Gold, who said she has always believed in helping others, posts notices on social media boards such as Buy Nothing Scripps Ranch, asking for donations of items for her cause. Fortunately, many members of this community have responded enthusiastically to her requests, she said.

“I want to thank everyone in Scripps Ranch. They are all so kind and generous,” Gold said.

Anyone who wants to help, either by donating items or money or volunteering to sort items, make sandwiches or help distribute items, may contact Gold at lori.gold@att.net.

NEWS UPDATES

Fire safety expo

The Scripps Ranch Fire Safe Council will hold an expo in the park next to local Fire Station 37, 11640 Spring Canyon Road, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on May 5, National Wildfire Community Preparedness Day. The public is invited.

The event will include fire extinguisher service and training; information about smoke alarms by the Burn Institute; tours of the fire station; and a chance to meet the firefighters. Visit srfire-safe.org.

Free child safety class

USSD Bridge2breakthru karate school is holding a Free Child Safety Class with a Superhero for local children ages 4 and older on Sunday, April 29 from 1 to 2:30 p.m. at 9870 Hibert St., D-7, in the Trader Joe’s shopping center.

Captain America will be onsite, so parents are encouraged to take photos. The event will include raffle prizes, gift bags and balloons. Space is limited. Register at bridge2breakthru.com/events. Visit bridge2breakthru.com.

Girl Scouts Discovery Night

Scripps Ranch girls and their parents who want to learn more about opportunities to join local Girl Scout troops are invited to attend The Scripps Ranch Girl Scouts Discovery Night on Tuesday, May 8 from 7 to 8 p.m. at Dingeman Elementary School, 11840 Scripps Creek Drive. Those who can’t attend may visit sdgirlscouts.org/join to find or start a troop. Contact Tracy Browns at (619) 890-3897 or tbrowns@sdgirlscouts.org.

Welcome Club has a variety of activities planned in May

Everything from coffee klatches to trail hiking to nights at the theater keep Welcome Club members busy enjoying experiences with their Scripps Ranch neighbors. With more than 15 different interest groups, Welcome Clubbers take their pick of activities.

Each month the women who enjoy games meet to play Bridge, Pitch and Bunco. The Readers enjoy discussing their group’s selected books. Trail Walkers stretch their legs along the ranch’s many sylvan paths and gather for excursions along a beach or through a county park. The Theatre Group attends plays at the Scripps Ranch Theatre and has BYO gatherings beforehand.

Lake Miramar is the usual venue for the Bicycling group. They roll on the second Friday of each month.

Crafters gather regularly and create holiday decorations and other projects. They will meet next on May 21.

Gadabouts, a sociable group, has adventures that range from lunch

and a movie to visits to museums. May’s Gadabouts event will be a tour of Taylor Guitars’ manufacturing facility in East County.

TGI gatherings are evening experiences that include spouses and friends in enjoyable socials at homes here on the ranch. May 25 is the next TGI.

Welcome Club members meet at a member’s home for a morning of friendship and special treats each month. The Coffee Klatch draws an amiable crowd and generates a great deal of friendly chat. May’s event is slated for the 22nd.

May is a special month for the Welcome Club. The general meeting and election of new officers will be on May 14 at the Scripps Ranch Community Center. New ideas and new energy will be infused into this seasoned community group that has remained an asset of Scripps Ranch for more than 30 years.

Visit scrippsranchnewelcomeclub.com. Women interested in joining may contact JoAnn Farnen: jfarnen1945@att.net.

WATERMARK

Continued from Page 3

lights and “no turn on red” signage, and synchronization of traffic lights between the I-15 intersection with intersection lights of the development. According to the letter, “resolution of most of these issues will require the approval of the City and/or Caltrans, but we are willing to make a reasonable effort to obtain their approval.”

Sudberry explained that he and his company are “excited about bringing The Watermark” to Scripps Ranch.

“It’s been a long time in the works and it’s going to be a really fun project for the community. It will be a real destination and a place you want to go to on Friday and Saturday night just to hang out,” he said.

An official announcement by Sudberry Properties is expected this summer. For more information, visit watermarksandiego.com.

City continues with plan to repair roads

By Cynthia Kurose

Mayor Kevin Faulconer pledged, in 2015, to fix 1,000 miles of streets in five years. While that goal is currently tracking ahead of schedule, with 800 miles of repairs completed in fewer than three years, many Scripps Ranch residents remain curious about when the damaged roads around their homes will receive the attention they need.

Alma Do, a homeowner who lives near the top of Sunset Ridge Drive, expressed the frustration that both she and her husband share.

“Sunset Ridge Drive has horrible roads. My husband keeps asking when it will get fixed and not just patched up. As a busy road, it sees a lot of wear and tear and needs to get repaved,” Do said.

Discussions in online message boards in Scripps Ranch have also, for some time, referenced potholes and road damage that puts added stress on residents’ vehicles.

“There’s so much extra

wear and tear on our vehicles these days because of the uneven road conditions,” read a post by Denise Pollak last September.

More recently, Sylvia Garcia Borgo posted a more optimistic comment, trying to find the silver lining.

“I’ve tried to avoid the problem roads – the plus side is I’ve gotten to know the smaller streets of SR as I slowly weave through the neighborhood,” she wrote.

In a letter from Mayor Faulconer addressed to San Diegans on April 4, he acknowledged that “San Diego’s roads were neglected for far too long.”

While his letter cited the significant progress made toward his promised 1,000 miles of road repairs in five years, he also empathized, “I know those numbers may not mean much if you’re still waiting for your street to be fixed. We know we still have a lot of work to do. And that’s why we’re not slowing down,” he wrote.

Quinton Grounds, community representative for District 5 City Councilman Mark Kersey, explained how the prioritization works



LEFT: The north end of Sunset Ridge Drive reveals significant road damage, including cracking, uneven patches and loose gravel. RIGHT: The SDG&E transmission line project, scheduled for completion in June 2018, causes delays on Pomerado Road near Spring Canyon Road. (photos by Cynthia Kurose)

for which city streets receive attention first. The order in which streets are repaired is determined by the “Overall Condition Index (OCI), a number score that’s collected through a scientific evaluation of each and every street in the City,” Grounds wrote in an email.

The OCI is determined by a consulting firm that phys-

ically drives every road in the city with special sensors and visual-capture equipment on their trucks to assess the general condition of the road. This information, aggregated with data about street traffic, age and rate of maintenance, allows the experts to compile a score of 0-100, which places streets in categories of good, fair

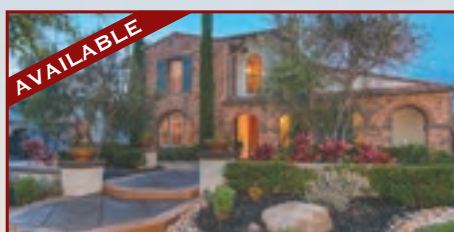
and poor, and also “helps the City prioritize their slurring and repaving efforts,” Grounds wrote.

According to Councilman Kersey, with more than 2,800 miles of road in San Diego, “you have to balance because there’s limited resources. For starters, slurry sealing is far less expen-

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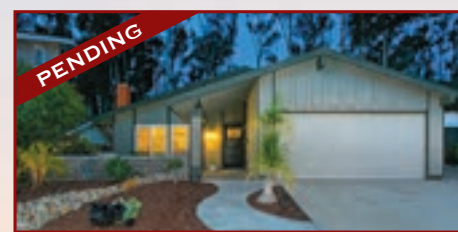
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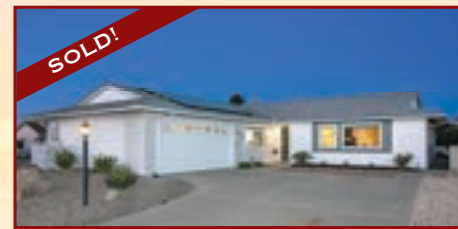
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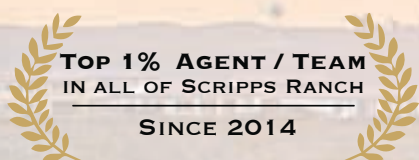
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Nonprofit provides kid-safe music

By Max Troja

One year ago, Scripps Ranch native Julie Rose was working behind a desk in an office. Today, she heads up her own nonprofit, known as the Playlist and Musical Research Foundation.

The nonprofit's purpose is to organize and distribute age-appropriate and positive music for use by the community, or, as she describes it, "to make Healthy Music easily available for teachers, students and families."

The nonprofit works to compile playlists of songs that are deemed "free from references to harmful behaviors like violence, addiction, racism, sexual harassment and poor language," and then distributes these playlists to be used in a variety of settings.

It was last year when Rose decided to start this nonprofit, but she's been working on this project for much longer than that.

"I have been analyzing music for years, mostly for personal use or when working with youth," she explained.

It wasn't until her youngest daughter complained about her school not having appropriate music on hand that she decided to do something about it. As Rose puts it, "It would be easier for me to ignore the issue, but I found this to actually be a secret irritation amongst many teachers and parents."

With that in mind, she was on a mission.

"I decided to figure out how best to get healthy music options to our teachers (and parents and youth) the easiest and cheapest way possible for them," she said.

From there, she left her office job and established the Playlist and Musical Research Foundation.



Playlist and Musical Research Foundation founder Julie Rose (left) with recording artist Connie Corn. (photo courtesy of Playlist and Musical Research Foundation)

"It was a difficult decision to leap outside of my comfort zone, but I felt compelled," Rose said.

But she could not do this alone. As she explained, the Scripps Ranch community as a whole has been an integral part of the foundation's progress so far.

"I have a great board of directors, two of which are Scripps Ranch residents: Carolyn Walker and Alexis Coberly," Rose said.

She describes them as instrumental in keeping the foundation on target, playing important roles in it achieving its mission. Furthermore, Rose has found friends in the community through collaborating on playlists for the foundation.

"My favorite collaborative experience was working with Connie Corn, a professional recording artist, Scripps Ranch resident and neighbor," she said.

"Connie was instrumental in helping me compile a Black History Month playlist that travels through history with classic songs in mostly chronological order ... all healthy music," Rose said.

In Rose's own words, "Every teacher I contact is grateful and excited about

what we are starting to achieve."

Gwen Smith, a Scripps Ranch local as well as a third-grade teacher, described the nonprofit as just what she needed.

"Teachers are busy," Smith explained. "We know music enhances learning, but we don't have the time to preview appropriate content and create the playlists we really want. This is the answer we need."

Moving forward, Rose said that the best way the community can help is through sponsorships.

"Starting a grassroots campaign costs money," she said. "In order to accomplish our goals, we need funding."

Currently, the Playlist and Musical Research Foundation is seeking corporate sponsors that would be included on their social media pages and other promotional materials. Rose implores anyone interested in helping the nonprofit reach out to her at julie.rose858@gmail.com, or connect with the foundation on Facebook at facebook.com/playlistfoundation. All Healthy Music playlists are on Spotify; enter julie.rose858 in the search bar.

ROADS

Continued from Page 5

sive. You can slurry seal for \$25,000-\$50,000 per mile. Whereas that same mile of asphalt overlay (repaving) costs half a million," he said.

Because a slurry seal is simply not effective for a road in truly poor condition due to years of neglect, "you have to make decisions about how you're going to allocate those resources," Kersey added. "You basically have to allocate to both. We're going to do maintenance as well as

overlay."

Kersey shared a bit of good news on the topic of resources for infrastructure, which, as chair of the Council's Infrastructure Committee, is one of his key priorities.

"The Mayor just released yesterday (April 11), for fiscal year starting July 1, we will have our largest capital budget ever, meaning infrastructure projects," he said. "Obviously, not all of that is road repair, but there's a good chunk of that in there."

While unrelated to the City-led road repair efforts,

the SDG&E "Sycamore to Penasquitos 230-kilovolt transmission line project" currently underway on Pomerado Road and Stonebridge Parkway is also a major point of concern among Scripps Ranch residents. According to the utility company, completion of the project, including repair of the road, is expected by June 30. Kersey confirmed that SDG&E is "absolutely on the hook for repaving the road" affected by the project.

Updated information on road repairs can be found at streets.sandiego.gov.

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LIVING IN HARMONY

Local woman collects items for refugees

By Max Troja

While the holidays are well over and it's nearly summertime, the giving season is never truly over. From Scripps Ranch, Peggy Abrom does her best to help the less fortunate by volunteering with others in the community, as well as the greater San Diego county, to collect and distribute donations for refugees who have recently relocated here.

As Abrom described it, she is working with "an informal group of volunteers organized on the Facebook group 'Helping El Cajon Refugees.'"

She explained that they work to "fill the gaps between what the refugee resettlement agencies provide and what the refugee families need."

While this group is not an official non-profit, the volunteers work closely and coordinate with various non-profits that assist refugees.

"The group does this by using social media to crowd-source," Abrom said. "We

look for donations for furniture, household items, clothing and sometimes food and funds."

"I knew the Scripps Ranch community was generous, but I had no idea HOW generous."

– Peggy Abrom

Abrom was inspired to join this initiative after a conversation with music minister Katherine Cavallo at the local St. Gregory the Great Catholic Church, who herself is very involved with local refugee aid.

"With the news of the worldwide refugee crisis over the past years, our family has long wanted to find a way to help," Abrom said. "My daughter Molly and I delivered items for [Cavallo] to refugee families in El Cajon one Saturday and we were hooked."

Since then, Abrom has been volunteering her time to collect and deliver donations because, as she

explained, "Coming from a community like Scripps Ranch, where we are blessed to have so much, I knew I could tap into the community to help these refugee families that have so little."

Since joining this cause, Abrom said that Scripps Ranch, as a community, has really come together to help, having an overwhelmingly positive impact on the initiative.

"I knew the Scripps Ranch community was generous, but I had no idea HOW generous," Abrom said.

The first post she made on social media about this cause requested donations for a newly-arrived family from Afghanistan with eight children. Within a few hours she had dozens of offers for every imaginable item.

"I was moved to tears at how sincerely loving and caring so many people are for complete strangers," she said.

Abrom makes use of the local Facebook pages like Buy Nothing Scripps Ranch to ask for donations and volunteers. She has found this to be a perfect way to reach



Peggy Abrom helps collect necessities to furnish and stock homes for refugees. (courtesy of Peggy Abrom)

the community. Now that the page has been divided, others have joined Abrom's efforts and collect items from Buy Nothing Scripps Ranch South, North and East to help contribute to the cause.

"Together, this community has literally fully furnished and outfitted about four refugee families' apartments and donated items to dozens more," Abrom said.

She said the group is always looking for "basic necessities one would need to furnish and stock a home from scratch: furniture, rugs, kitchen items, linens, clothing, school supplies, diapers, toiletries."

But it doesn't stop at donating. Abrom explained that one of the best ways volunteers can help is by assisting in the distribution of the donations.

"I would encourage people that have donated to take it one step further and deliver their items," she said.

Abrom described this as her favorite part of the process.

"Get out of your comfort zone and visit one of those sweet families, and build relationships with people from a different part of the world," she said.

Aside from joining the "Helping El Cajon Refugees" Facebook group, those interested may help in other ways. Abrom recommends contacting one of the formal resettlement agencies, such as the International Rescue Committee, or non-profits like Hearts for Refugees. Abrom said that if anyone wants to help directly, they can email her at pegabrom@gmail.com.

"I can proudly say no community in this county is as generous as Scripps Ranch," Abrom said.

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SCHOOLS

Two local schools earn CDS designation

State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson announced that Jerabek Elementary School and Miramar Ranch Elementary School were among 287 elementary schools honored under the 2018 California Distinguished Schools Program.

The program recognizes California elementary schools that have made exceptional gains in implementing academic content and performance standards adopted by the State Board of Education.

This program has returned after a three-year break and replaces the California Gold Ribbon Schools Program.

"These schools implement outstanding educational programs and practices that help California students realize their potential and put them on the path to achieve their dreams," Torlakson said. "Every day at these schools, teachers, administrators and classified employees, working with parents, apply their dedication, creativity and talents toward providing a great education for all their students."

Schools that applied were eligible based on their performance and progress on the state indicators as described on the California School Dashboard. Indicators include test scores, suspension rates and English learner progress.

The California Exemplary Districts, the Distinguished Schools, National Title I Distinguished Schools, Green Ribbon Schools, Civic Learning Award Schools and National Blue Ribbon Schools from 2017 will be honored in May during a ceremony at the Disneyland Hotel in Anaheim. The following day, educators from these schools will share their expertise and resources during a professional development day.

Bringing the hardware home

Student musicians in the Marshall Middle School Instrumental Music Program, under the direction of Cameron Brown, brought the hardware home from the Forum Music Festivals Judges' Invitational competition in Orange County on Friday, April 13, winning several honors.

The Marshall Middle School Advanced Band and Advanced Orchestra won the following awards:

Marshall Middle School won the middle school sweepstakes for the highest average score for a school competing in multiple divisions of the competition. "Sweepstakes" is the highest award given at musical competitions in which placements like first, second and third are given.

- Outstanding Middle School Band Instrumentalist Award was given to Gabrielle Sanchez for her performance on piano in "The Seal Lullaby."

- Advanced Band was awarded second place in the middle school concert band division.

- Advanced Orchestra was awarded second place in the



Marshall Middle School Instrumental Music Program Director Cameron Brown hoists the Sweepstakes trophy. (photo courtesy of Stephanie McDade)

middle school string orchestra division.

- A plaque commemorating the invitation to the event and thanking the groups for their performances.

The annual Forum Music Festivals Judges' Invitational is an invitation-only competitive music festival that not only gives ratings, but also placement awards to the top three groups in each division, as well as individual awards to featured performers and a sweepstakes award for both middle school competitors and

high school competitors. It's an honor to be invited, and not everyone walks away with a trophy, so even a third-place finish is a huge accomplishment.

To earn an invitation, each school must have received at least one "Gold" rating (their version of "Superior") at a Forum Music Festival in the past three years, as well as a judges' recommendation to be invited.

The 2018 Judges' Invitational featured 43 performing groups. There were 21 middle school groups and 22 high school groups. The judged divisions included concert bands, string orchestras, mixed choirs and chamber choirs. Each of these ensemble categories had a high school and a middle school division. There were six middle school concert bands and eight middle school string orchestras, including Marshall Middle School.

Later, the students attended an awards ceremony at Disneyland, and spent the rest of the day at the popular amusement park.

SCHOOL NEWS

Maven & Mason Exchange planned at Innovations

Innovations Academy has scheduled its Maven & Mason Exchange for Saturday, May 12, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the school, 10380 Spring Canyon Road. The public is invited to this urban-style artisan market featuring 50 local vendors specializing in handmade, boutique items. The event will include music, food and a unique shopping experience.

Hosted by Innovations Academy, the Maven & Mason Exchange is a school fundraising craft fair.

Both buyers and vendors are welcome. Admission will be \$2. Children 14 and under, and military personnel will be admitted free of charge. Vendor applications are available at <http://bit.ly/mavenandmason>.

School site update

Innovations Academy has an extended lease at its current site until June 30, 2019. The San Diego Unified School District intends to build the Scripps Mesa Joint Occupancy Project at the school's present site, 10380 Spring Canyon Road. The project involves the proposed relocation of Innovations Academy and construction of a mixed-use facility, including a 264-unit apartment complex.

According to the school's website, Innovations Academy Director Christine Kuglen was told by the district that the school will not be asked to leave until it has See **SCHOOL NEWS**, Page 9

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Grad Night preparations continue

By John Gregory

Two parent volunteers were recently spotted at a table in the Scripps Ranch High School (SRHS) quad selling tickets for the school's senior Grad Night. As the bell rang for lunch period, Grad Night Committee Chair Nina Salinas and Co-Chair/Treasurer Sandra Coimbra found themselves surrounded by a swirling parade of students pouring from classrooms as music blared from nearby speakers. These two volunteers took in the scene as they attended to their duty.



Scripps Ranch High School Grad Night Committee Chair Nina Salinas (left) and Treasurer/Co-Chair Sandra Coimbra sell Grad Night tickets at the high school. (photo by John Gregory)

The committee has done everything from gaining donations and sponsorships to making arrangements to selling See's Candies and holding restaurant fundraisers to fund the trip. Now, the committee members just want graduating seniors to sign up so they can enjoy the event.

Grad Night is a special event held each year to reward graduating seniors with a safe, sober, supervised event to celebrate their high school graduation. This year, the SRHS graduating class will be heading to Knotts Berry Farm for a day of excitement with fellow classmates on Saturday, June 9.

returning at about midnight or 1 a.m. the next morning. The journey is long, so part of the funds raised will go toward buying snacks the graduates can enjoy on the way. Tickets cost \$150. Some of the funds will also go toward Grad Night scholarships for seniors whose families cannot afford the cost.

Getting the kids to participate is the number one goal, Salinas said.

For more information, contact Nina Salinas at (858) 663-4062, or email ninasalinas@att.net or visit srhsfoundation.org.

"They get to ride all day. They get a buffet dinner. They get a DJ and dance," Salinas said.

The graduates will gather at the school and be bussed to the theme park at 10 a.m.,

SCHOOL NEWS

Continued from Page 8

a permanent home. Kuglen stated that she is reviewing sites in Kearny Mesa at this time.

Marshall Mustang Theatre presents 'Empowered'

"Empowered: How One Girl Scout Nearly Destroyed the World's Economy." Amaryllis is determined to win her Girl Scout troop's cookie-selling contest, but she'll need more than charm to win first prize (a unicorn) and avoid last place (which means getting kicked out of the troop). So, when sales droop, she naturally turns to the financial sector for advice. Soon, she's faking a terminal illness, franchising her methods and contracting with a payday lender to offer 30-year loans for cookies. This is a hysterical homage to Glengarry Glen Ross and a send-up of the wild excesses of the financial crisis.

Shows run through April 27 at 6 p.m. each night in Marshall Middle School's theater. Tickets are available online at bit.ly/2GONt0Q.

'Wizard of Oz'

Follow the yellow brick road to the Innovations Academy performances of the "Wizard of Oz!" Shows are scheduled at 6 p.m. on May 3, 4, 5 and a matinee at 2 p.m. on May 5. Visit IAPerformingArts.eventbrite.com for more information and to reserve tickets. If you'd like to support performing arts by donating baked goods, sign up at bit.ly/2IEef8o.

Hawk Variety Show

The Miramar Ranch Elementary annual HawkStar Variety Show will be held May 9, at 5:30 p.m. in the Scripps Miramar Ranch Library, just down the street from the school. Tickets for the Variety Show will be available starting April 27.

Let Scripps Ranch News know about your school's news and events, or request coverage at john@scrippsranchnews.com.

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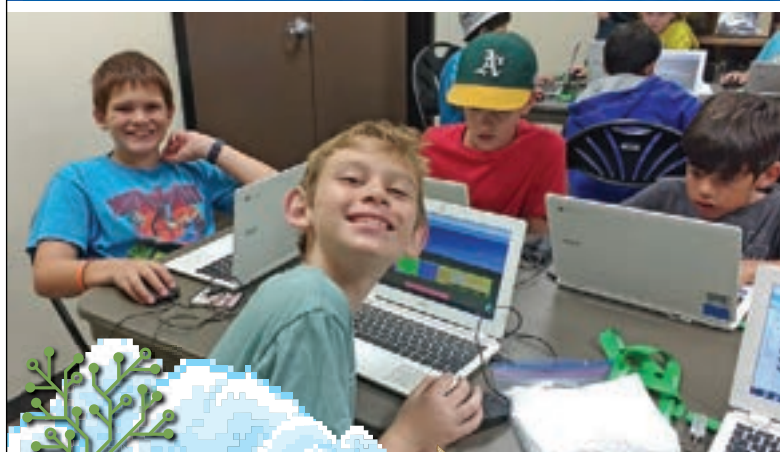
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SRHS Choir: Practice makes perfect

By Max Troja

Scripps Ranch High School has always offered a wide variety of experiences to its thousands of students. From college level classes to philanthropic club, to community volunteer opportunities, the school has numerous activities for all students. One such experience includes honing skills, working as a team and getting unique opportunities to perform in front of hundreds. This experience is the lauded Scripps Ranch High School choir program, a class of only 25 students who learn and perform a variety of songs together at different events and showcases.

In charge of this class is one very dedicated man, Russell Shedd. Along with leading the choir program, he is also the director of the band, the orchestra, the marching band and the jazz band at Scripps Ranch High School. He assists in any and all music-related endeavors that the high school takes on, including performances at graduation, as well as as-

sisting the theater department with musical accompaniment.

"Many of my students are also involved in the drama program as well," Shedd said, which emphasizes the interconnection between all entities in the Scripps Ranch High School performing arts community.

When it comes to the choir program, the old adage of "practice makes perfect" is more relevant than ever.

"We do all of our training in class," Shedd explained.

The class is not all about students who are already masterful singers, for Shedd, it's more focused on the passion, he said.

"Many students have a love of music but little training," he explained.

But that's never an issue with this program, because a big part of this program is training.

"We cover everything from basics of theory to voice use and diction," Shedd stated.

With this class, Shedd can teach anyone to sing, but what is important is whether they enjoy what they are learning. In his words, "Any student with a love (of music) can join choir. By the end of the year, they'll sound better and have fun doing it."

As a performing art, this choir class typically has performances.

"Most of our performances are at school or local," Shedd explained.

While normally the choir class would have had more performances this year, some school construction got in the way.

"This year, we had to move out of our building due to construction. So, we were not able to do other events," Shedd explained.

Now, everyone can look forward to the Scripps Ranch High School choir program's End of the Year Concert, taking place June 8 at 6 pm, with doors opening at 4 p.m. There will be food trucks, a dance floor and even a VIP section.

"It is an event in every sense of the word," Shedd stated.

For more information on this, and any other updates about the program, visit srhsmusic.com.

Students selected to compete at Science & Engineering Fair

By Arjun Suri

Six students from Scripps Ranch were selected to participate in the California Science and Engineering Fair (CSEF), which has been hosting future scientists and engineers since 1952. They are joining about 900 other students from 400 schools throughout the State of California from grades 6 through 12 on April 23-24 at the California Science Center in Exposition Park, south of downtown Los Angeles.

The local students participating include Patrick Ngo, Blake Scurry, Waleed Randhawa and Jessica McWilliams from Marshall Middle School; and Saeyeon Ju and Joonhyuk Lee from Scripps Ranch High School.

"The hardest part was actually looking for a science experiment," an excited Patrick Ngo said.

He is an eighth-grader at

Thurgood Marshall Middle School whose project involved renewable energy sources.

"After realizing how much energy I use every day and how inefficient single renewable energy sources are, I wanted to create a more reliable structure," he explained.

The students who qualified for CSEF did not get there without breaking a sweat. Their journey to the CSEF started at the Greater San Diego Science and Engineering Fair (GSDSEF). This fair, according to the GSDSEF website, provides an inspiring experience in science and engineering for tens of thousands of San Diego and Imperial County students, motivating them to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. This regional competition challenges students to go beyond

classroom studies to do independent research – to ask compelling questions, to design and implement innovative solutions, and to present and defend results to judges.

One of the pillars for inspiring these students to participate in the Science Fair is Elaine Gillum, a recently retired, dedicated and encouraging science teacher who makes sure students prepare diligently and do their absolute best.

"I've been doing this for 23 years," Gillum said. "I've learned so much. Doing a science fair project is lifelong learning. I have students come back from high school and college and say that doing the science fair prepared them for life, and they have used what they learned many, many times. I've been blessed to be a part of their lives, and that is really special."

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Principal shares pride in school's feats, plans

By John Gregory

A glance at Ellen Browning Scripps (EBS) Elementary School's exterior offers the impression that progressive activities are stirring within. Perhaps it's the building's design: it was built upward to originally house a middle school, although the lot was only large enough for an elementary school, according to Principal Liz Sloan. Eventually the new Marshall Middle School was completed and EBS moved into this present site, 11778 Cypress Canyon Road.

In this case, looks are not deceiving. There are many progressive activities underway at the school and more on the way. The building, coincidentally, plays a part. Since it was built with more room than the other local elementary schools, there is no lack of space. The school has an art room, a computer lab, a music room, a physical education room, and it retains one of the old middle school science rooms which is still used by the fourth and fifth graders.

"One of the things that I'm really excited about right now is that we're creating a makerspace, which is a type of engineering and construction laboratory where students do problem solving and create things," Sloan explained. "It also can incorporate a little bit of robotics."

A parent committee is in place working on the project in hopes of having it in place next fall. The school will order specialized furniture and some equipment. They have two Sprout computers which feature two-screen configuration with touch sensitive mats, which are perfect for design work. In addition, a 3D printer has been donated for the room.

One of Sloan's past concepts has also come to fruition this school year in the form of an after-school enrichment program, offering a set of classes following the end of regular classes on the campus.

Sloan, who came to EBS as principal about five years ago, has much to be thankful for, including her team, when it comes to accomplishments.

"This is probably one of the hardest-working faculties that I've ever seen," she said. "They really dedicate themselves to working together as a team to prepare for the students, in addition to collaborating with the

families and supporting the community."

EBS teachers spend a whole day working together as they participate in a Professional Learning Community session for one grade each month.

"One thing that's great about our staff is they're very collaborative and they plan everything together and they learn together," Sloan said. "So, there's a strong level of consistency across classrooms because the teachers have all worked together to plan lessons."

Sloan emphasized that collaboration and building strong relationships in all areas is vital to the success of the school.

"We really pride ourselves in involving the parents in everything that we do here at school," Sloan said. "The parents are an integral and vital part of the students' education."

To accentuate this point, she referred to a fact that EBS has an army of 650 verified and registered parent volunteers.

Sloan arrived at EBS when Common Core was being implemented, and it



Ellen Browning Scripps Elementary School Principal Liz Sloan is proud of the school's collaborative faculty and positive relationships with parents. (photo by John Gregory)

was her task to make sure it was executed smoothly. Sloan is rightfully proud of her work because the school was recognized by the State as a California Gold Ribbon School for exemplary implementation of Common Core and for teacher training in Common Core in 2016.

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High-schoolers Ramsey Esparza, 15, (left), Tyler Roche, 17, (center) and Hunter Smith, 16, (right) of the rock band Reminiscence pose for a photo with Esparza's dad's motorcycle in the Scripps Ranch neighborhood where they formed. (photo by Nadia Mishkin)

High school boys are making noise

By Nadia Mishkin

The local band Reminiscence is a trio of high-school boys who formed a rock band that had its humble beginnings in a Scripps Ranch living room. Now, they have made their way to big stages around San Diego, performing classic rock and alternative covers.

Recently, the band has been working on original material, and over spring break the members had the chance to start recording their first EP.

Robert Kaechele, who is one of their teachers at Poway High School, is helping them with the recording. Kaechele also happens to be one of the people who helped give one of the most famous bands to ever come out of San Diego its start: Blink-182.

Reminiscence covers classic rock bands like The Rolling Stones, The Doors and Johnny Cash, but the band members really love to play alternative hits from bands like Royal Blood and Highly Suspect, which have influenced the sound of the original music they are working on.

Scripps Ranch resident Ramsey Esparza, 15, plays bass and lead vocals, Hunter Smith, 16, is on lead guitar and supporting vocals, and Tyler Roche, 17, holds the beat on the drums and supporting vocals.

Reminiscence has played a number of live gigs, from small places like Kaminski's Sports Lounge in Poway to the Lunar New Year Festival at SDCCU Stadium and the Old Town Cinco de Mayo Fiesta, which



Reminiscence bandmates Tyler Roche (from left), Hunter Smith and Ramsey Esparza are lifelong friends. (photo by Nadia Mishkin)

they will be playing again this year. In January, the band got to play The House of Blues in downtown San Diego, a stage which has hosted big names including one of their favorite bands, Highly Suspect.

The three have known each other since kindergarten and they meet every week at Esparza's house for band practice.

"We're all really close," Esparza said.

Laura Esparza is bass-player Ramsey Esparza's mother, but all three of the members that make up Reminiscence refer to her fondly as their "mom-ager." They said she has been pretty instrumental in helping the boys get their first gigs.

"We all have really supportive parents," Esparza added.

"My mom got me started with guitar lessons when I was five," Smith explained.

Smith has been playing guitar for well over half of his life and has been taking lessons from the same teacher, Emmanuel Suyao from Poway Music Academy, for more than 11 years.

The trio has been around music all their lives. Esparza

will never forget when his father took him to a Motley Crue concert when he was nine years old.

The band's drummer, Roche, definitely has music in his blood. His grandfather, Howard Blank, is the drummer and founder of San Diego show band The Legends and was the original drummer for The Outsiders in the 1960s, and according to The Legends website, he is listed in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

While the three have a good amount of experience under their belts considering their young ages, it seems like this is only the beginning for the members of Reminiscence.

The band was scheduled to play a show at the Harley Davidson dealership on Morena Boulevard on April 20. They are set to play the Old Town Cinco de Mayo Fiesta on Sunday, May 6, at 11:30 a.m.

Those interested can follow their musical journey on their Facebook page where they post about upcoming shows and new material: facebook.com/Reminiscencethree/.

Brazilian jiu jitsu builds confidence and focus

By John Gregory

Small children take down larger kids, senior citizens train like maniacs and a couple of former San Diego Chargers learn new skills. It all takes part in a room lined with padded mats on the floors and mirrors on the walls. The Primal Jiu Jitsu Training Center at 9811 Mira Mesa Blvd. is not a big place, but it's huge on heart.

At first glance the owners, D. Davis and Chris Davis, seem to run the operation in a casual manner. But their approach has purpose. It's a non-threatening way that allows their jiu jitsu students to learn and thrive at their own comfort level.



ABOVE: Siblings Nicholas and Natalie Nguyen demonstrate the closed guard position. ABOVE, RIGHT: Amber Spencer puts Jason Gregory in a triangle choke. (photos by Jacqueline Gregory)

But make no mistake, some serious martial arts training takes place here. In fact, Primal Training Center has a competitive team as well as a black belt program.

"The personal philosophy as far as jiu jitsu and life is just don't quit," D. explained. "We have a sign up there: 'It doesn't get easier, you just get better.'"

Classes last about one hour each. Parents usual-

ly line the back part of the studio to watch. The first half starts with basic yoga to gain flexibility, conditioning and the ability to move, according to D. It includes stretching and learning new techniques.

The second part is practical use: grappling. This is when students are paired with others and practice their skills on one another. It's not unusual to see a small child take down a heavier opponent.

No punching, kicking or elbowing is allowed. Everything is controlled. The sport is 100 percent leverage-based, D. said.

The kids enjoy it and take it seriously, he explained.

"They just can't wait to get here," Chris said. "They come running. They love it."

Students wear the traditional white gi worn in many forms of self-defense, and there is a colored belt system to gauge progress.

Brazilian jiu jitsu is different from other forms of martial arts. Judo, for instance, is 90 percent throws, but Brazilian jiu jitsu is all about leverage and submission, D. explained.

"It's like chess with human body parts," he said.

Everyone who becomes a student at Primal Training Center starts with a period of 30 days in which they can try the classes. That's the first step. The second part is making sure the student

likes Brazilian jiu jitsu and the studio.

D. has advice for parents considering martial arts for their children: "Don't do it because it's for you. Do it for your kid. Make sure the kid likes it."

The studio offers classes for all ages and levels. There is a women's program. There is a full competition team. Among classes for kids are the Tot Program (ages 3-5), Tiny Piranhas (ages 6-10) and Juniors and Teens (ages 11-16).

There is even an executive class at 11 a.m. on Monday's Wednesdays and Fridays consisting mostly of executives from Scripps Ranch who can get away during lunchtime for a workout.

D. and Chris have one son attending Miramar Ranch Elementary School and have lived in Scripps Ranch for 11 years. Their studio has been in the same location 11 years also. Both are proud of the fact they have helped their students, especially children, gain better self-confidence, mental focus and the skills to defend themselves, plus the right words and temperament to deal with altercations. Chris added that many times a child's grades will improve; it's not just physicality.

"We've received a lot of personal messages from parents who are grateful for the skills their children have learned here," she said. "It helps them be at ease ... because they know their child can defend themselves."

For more information, visit primalbjj.com.



Chris Davis submits D. Davis with an arm bar at Primal Brazilian Jiu Jitsu Training Center. (photo by John Gregory)

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Area gymnasts place at Championships

Poway Gymnastics Level 8 gymnasts Katerina Adamec, Leiana Takeda, Morgan Johnston and Nylah White competed successfully at the USA Gymnastics Region 1 Championships from April 13 to 15 at the Reno-Sparks Convention Center in Reno, Nevada.

Adamec won the gold medal and the title of First Place Level 8 Regional Bar Champion with a score of 9.375, and finished ninth on floor with a score of 9.3.

Johnston won the silver medal and the title of Second Place Level 8 Regional Vault Champion with a score of 9.525, placed fifth on bars with a score of 9.375 and captured fifth place All-Around with a score of 37.25.



Poway Gymnastics Level 8 competitors (from left) Katerina Adamec, Nylah White, Leiana Takeda and Morgan Johnston (courtesy of Poway Gymnastics)

Takeda took ninth place in vault with a score of 9.2.

White took fifth place on vault with a score of 9.3 and ninth place on floor with a score of 9.35.

This Gymnastics Regional

Championship featured the very best gymnasts from California, Nevada, Utah and Arizona. Poway Gymnastics, 12850 Brookprinter Place, is home to several gymnasts from Scripps Ranch.



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SRHS track and field

Track and field season is in full swing as the Scripps Ranch High School track and field teams compete in challenges of speed, strength, stamina and distance. These photos show male and female athletes striving to gain an edge during a dual meet against University City High and Mira Mesa High on April 12.

Photos by *Ralph Lo Vuolo*



Siebham Kassem-Courtney



Julia Morales



Elijah Sowunmi

Falcons softball

The Scripps Ranch High School varsity softball team looks sharp and plays hard, providing plenty of action so far this season. These images capture the essence of their determined play against Mission Hills High.



Julia Folkl



Megan Fields



Megan Fields



Delaney Kelly



Lexi Osowski

SR Women's Athletic Club seeks new members

By Cynthia Kurose

The Scripps Ranch Women's Athletic Club (SRWAC) has been in existence for more than two decades, yet, it seems the organization is still relatively unknown among members of the community. Offering a mix of sports, socializing and service to the community, the non-profit is continually looking to attract more members.

According to SRWAC President Mary Lawler, the organization "was born out of the wives of Old Pros wanting their own social club. They formed SRWAC in order to have sports leagues in addition to social activities."

The group started out with soccer as its main league and has since expanded to include volleyball, basketball and co-ed softball leagues.

Erin Rowland is registrar for SRWAC softball and has been playing in the league with her husband for 20 years.

"It's a great way to get to know other people in

Scripps. It's been super fun," Rowland said.

Softball games at Sycamore Canyon Park are "like family night. Everyone is out there, they bring their kids, they all have their bikes, they're all playing together outside and they're so happy. And of course, the parents are having fun," she said.

While there is certainly room for spirited, friendly competition, according to Rowland, the leagues are generally more recreational and social in nature.

"It's super laid back. There are players from all skill levels," and often, conversation following games is more about "who is bringing drinks and snacks next time," she said.

SRWAC leagues run throughout the year, offering opportunities for local women to remain active during any season. Softball runs throughout the summer; soccer plays January through June, then August through December; and both basketball and volleyball play all year long. All sports meet on weekday evenings.

Part of what sets SRWAC



The SRWAC co-ed softball league will resume this summer and invites men and women of all ages and athletic abilities to join. (photo courtesy of SRWAC)

apart from other leagues, Lawler said, is that "people can sign up as individuals. In most other leagues, you need to be invited or already have formed a team. We also invite people of all athletic abilities to participate," she said.

Another differentiator the group is proud to claim is their service to the community. As a non-profit organization, once operating expenses have been accounted for, all remaining funds collected from membership

dues are spent on sponsoring high school sports teams, including softball, soccer, water polo, as well as youth sports in the community. Additionally, each April, the organization selects between two and four graduating high school senior female athletes to receive scholarships to help finance their higher education.

The organization also sponsors local events like the annual Symphony in the Park, and takes an active role in community fairs and the Scripps Ranch Fourth of July Parade.

"We're trying to do more activities and get more people to know about us," Rowland said. "There are a lot of athletically-minded women out there who maybe don't know about the organization, and we'd love for them to join."

Lawler shares Rowland's enthusiasm for recruiting more members, adding that she would also love for more members to become involved in organization leadership and join the SRWAC Board.

"We're always looking for more women to join the board and to come to our social events," she said. "We like to go to Sanctuary to have our board meeting, and have everybody come out and play pool and darts. A lot of us have been on the board for a long time and it's awesome when new people join. We welcome new blood and new ideas."

Annual membership dues for SRWAC are \$41.20 per year, and members are offered a discount for every sport they choose to play. More information is available at srwac.org.

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Wallaby joeys at the San Diego Zoo Safari Park

The Ione and Paul Harter Animal Care Center nursery at the San Diego Zoo Safari Park recently received a trio of new arrivals: three red-necked wallaby joeys. The female joeys, ranging in age from 5 to 6 months, are being hand raised until they are old enough to join the Safari Park's mob of wallabies.

"These wallaby joeys are mostly nocturnal and spend much of their day in their pouches, where they are most comfortable," stated Kimberly Millspaugh, senior keeper, San Diego Zoo Safari Park. "They come out for their bottle-feedings and some occasional playtime. They are aware of each other and tend to be a little curious of one another. We see them poke their heads out at each other and touch noses from time to time."

The wallaby joeys are drinking 3 to 5 ounces of a special marsupial formula, three to five times a day. They also are eating solid food, consisting of hay and marsupial feed pellets. They currently stand about a foot tall and weigh between 2 and 3 pounds each. They will continue to be bottle-fed for a few more months, with the amount of formula reduced and the amount



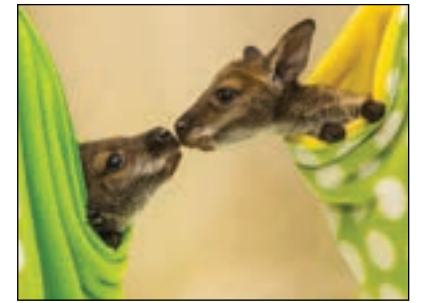
Red-necked wallaby joeys are being cared for at the San Diego Zoo Safari Park. (photo courtesy of San Diego Zoo)

of solid food increasing as they grow. When full grown, wallaby females can weigh between 26 and 35 pounds and reach a length of up to 3 feet from head to tail.

Wallabies are members of the kangaroo family, found primarily in Australia and on nearby

islands. Wallabies are listed as an animal of Least Concern on the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List of Threatened Species.

These wallabies will eventually join numerous other red-necked wallabies and gray kangaroos in an exhibit at the soon-to-open



(photo courtesy of San Diego Zoo)

Walkabout Australia. This one-of-a-kind walkabout experience will allow Safari Park guests to explore the unique habitats and species of Australia, learn how they interact with humans who share their world and discover the challenges they face in finding water, food and shelter in their environment.

Walkabout Australia will offer guests an opportunity for up-close animal interactions with unique species like the wallabies, kangaroos and wombats. The experiences are similar to those offered by zoos in Australia, which are a key part of their work to engage local communities in species preservation.

Guests visiting the Safari Park may get a chance to see the wallaby joeys resting in their pouches, playing or being bottle-fed at the Animal Care Center at Nairobi Station, between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. daily.



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SR Rec Center: More than meets the eye

By John Gregory

While Scripps Ranch is full of active families, it's possible that some are not aware of the many programs available at the Scripps Ranch Recreation Center, even though it's been an important part of the community for years.

The Recreation Center building is near the far back part of Scripps Ranch Community Park, 11454 Blue Cypress Drive, and is pretty much the headquarters for all the local parks in Scripps Ranch. Many sports leagues rent fields at the park throughout the year. The building itself hosts an abundance of activities; everything from a preschool to stretching classes to sports to crafts, for example. Still, Recreation Center Director Claudia Apodaca often worries that the center is overlooked.

"A lot of people don't know we exist because of the location," she explained. "They just think (the road) just ends at the top. They usually don't come through that



Director Claudia Apodaca

turnaround or they get lost or they don't realize there is a building here."

But there is a building and it has some interesting architecture, complete with what can be described as a tower, which is actually an empty space. The building's interior is bright and could be confused with an art gallery if it weren't for young children learning lessons in the preschool or adults playing pickleball in the gym.

Yes, there is a pickleball program and, according to Apodaca, it's the most popular program.

Apodaca, who has been at the center for nearly five years, said the biggest change she has seen is that more of the programs are staff-run, although many of



While some might overlook the Scripps Ranch Recreation Center, 11454 Blue Cypress Drive, there is plenty happening inside and on the adjoining fields. (photos by John Gregory)

the activities offered at the center are still provided by outside entities that rent the facilities.

"The staff has done more programs now. Before I started here, we didn't have staff-run programs," she said.

Besides pickleball, another newer program that has taken off is the Strength and Stretching class offered to people 18 years of age and older.

Other activities available

range from introductory sports for kids to karate to art to gymnastics and dance. Many day camps are available in the summer. The preschool classes will draw to a close soon, but parents should check for fall openings.

One staff-run event held nearly every month is Parents Night Out, usually held the second Friday of the month from 5:30 to 9:30 p.m. For \$15 per child, parents may drop off their kids

who will be supervised and treated to snacks and activities.

"The kids do arts and crafts. They have snacks, they have pizza, they do movies," Apodaca said. "So, it's just for parents to go out and run errands or go on a date while we're watching their kids. We have a really good turnout."

In addition, the Rec Center holds a few free community events each year. The annual Easter Egg Hunt, held in March this year, normally draws between 300 and 400 kids, Apodaca said. The center will hold its annual Halloween Carnival this year on Oct. 23.

The center also holds a couple of Movie in the Park nights each summer. This year the first will be June 15 featuring "The Lego Batman Movie." Pre-movie activities include a DJ, an Astrojump, face painting and food vendors. The second movie will be held in August.

To learn more about programs at the Scripps Ranch Recreation Center, visit bit.ly/2ygAhJ9 or call (858) 538-8085.

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Five ways to reduce stress

(StatePoint) Deadlines, responsibilities, bills: there are so many causes of stress in our lives. Unfortunately, stress can take a negative toll on one's health and wellness, particularly if it goes unaddressed for too long. Common effects of stress include headaches, stomach upset, anxiety, sleep problems and more, according to the Mayo Clinic.

This April, which is Stress Awareness Month, consider these strategies for relieving stress.

- **Aromatherapy:** Scent your home and workspace with stress-relieving scents like lavender, rosemary and peppermint. Whether you use candles, oils or fresh herbs, this is an easy way to immediately reduce feelings of stress.

- **Meditate:** Many experts agree on the benefits of meditation, from increased positive emotions to the relief of stress and anxiety.

- **Get outdoors:** Both exercise and nature can have stress-relieving properties. Combine the two with hiking, biking and water-based sports. Support your adventures with water-resistant wearable tech, like the WSD-F20 ProTrek Smart Outdoor Watch, which features functions like full color maps and GPS, app functionality to track progress, as well as sensor technology, allowing you to comfortably get off the beaten path and better appreciate your surroundings.



During Stress Awareness Month and beyond, consider adopting stress-reducing hobbies and habits. (copyright oneinchpunch/stock. Adobe.com)

- **Enjoy music:** Music can be an extremely powerful outlet for stress relief, particularly when you're getting creative and making it yourself. Have the means at home to play a variety of beautiful music so that you can de-stress any time you need. To faithfully reproduce the sounds of acoustic instruments like guitars, drums, basses, brass, wind instruments, you don't need an entire music studio full of separate instruments. The upgraded technology and sound quality found in digital pianos like Casio's CT-X700, which includes the new AiX SoundSource, reproduces subtle nuances and gestures specific to each sound.

- **Keep a journal:** Keeping a journal can be a good way of putting things in perspective and thinking through the short- and long-term problems and challenges that are causing you stress.



Identifying substance abuse can be challenging, particularly when it comes to the elderly. Addressing the issue quickly is critical. Start by asking the right questions. (copyright Halfpoint/stock. Adobe.com)

Substance abuse: A growing problem for the elderly

(StatePoint) Misuse and abuse of drugs and alcohol among the elderly is one of the fastest growing health problems in the U.S., according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), yet it can often be mistaken for normal aging behavior.

The statistics are alarming: according to The National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc., 2.5 million older adults have an alcohol or drug problem; while a SAMHSA

report shows that the use of illicit drugs, combining drugs with alcohol, and the nonmedical use of pharmaceuticals, results in an average of nearly 300 emergency room visits nationwide each day for those aged 65 and older.

"While family members may not feel equipped to identify an abuse problem, they are often the ones who can best spot changes in behaviors that could indicate one exists," said Kevin Middleton, Psy.D., Vice President, Behavioral Health, WellCare.

Dr. Middleton advises those with aging loved ones to be aware of the following.

- **Life changes can trigger abuse:** Retirement, the death of a spouse or dear friend, the loss of a pet and other significant life events are times when the elderly are most likely to begin misusing or abusing drugs and alcohol.

- **Signs of a potential problem:** Many older people will hide their problem out of shame, and while substance abuse can mimic symptoms of other diseases, always consider the possibility of abuse if there are any major changes in behaviors, such as loss of interest in hobbies, activities or socializing, as well as changes in appetite and sleeping habits. Other signs to be aware of are noticeable memory loss, slurred speech and confusion.

- **Seek help:** If you do suspect a substance abuse problem, contact his or her health care provider and discuss the best approach to getting appropriate treatment.

For more tips and information on managing substance abuse for aging parents, visit WellCare's blog at tinyurl.com/ycu6e7g2.

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Spring tips to start an exercise routine

(StatePoint) Spring is an ideal time to get active outdoors and kickstart a fitness regimen that can carry you into beach and pool season.

Need some motivation? Try out these ideas for getting started and sticking with the program.

Get social

A personal trainer can be expensive, but a friend is free and potentially just as motivating. Besides, a little friendly competition never hurt anybody. Find a buddy to join you

for runs and hikes, and with whom to hit the new HIIT class (high-intensity interval training) or spot you in the free weights section of the gym.

Joining an organized run crew, cycling club or other fitness group can be another great way to keep yourself inspired to move, as these meet-ups can be fun social events in addition to a great workout.

Give it a purpose

Find your motivation and dedicate your workouts to this purpose. One great way to do this is to sign up for a competitive athletic event that requires training. Whether that's an obstacle course, a triathlon or a 5k foot race, having such an event on your calendar will provide the daily motivation you need. Check out free training plans that can offer you guidelines for the best way to prepare for each type of event. Need further incentive? Use the event to raise money for a cause that matters to you.



From new friends to new gear, you can make getting active this spring easier with the right motivational elements. (copyright Halfpoint/stock.Adobe.com)

Gear up

New wearable technology is not only fun, it can help you analyze your daily movement and workouts. See how much progress you make with wearable devices like the GBA800 Training Timer, a water- and shock-resistant watch that comes equipped with

a three-axis acceleration sensor tracking your step count, a countdown timer that allows for up to 20 timer combinations, as well as 200-lap memory. With the download of the dedicated G-SHOCK Connected app to a smartphone, the watch can even track movement and support daily fitness. Employing a new algo-

rithm, the app displays a graph breaking down daily steps taken in each of five metabolic equivalent (MET) levels, from data based on your step count and walking pace. It also displays the exact location and time where the wearer's calories were burned, while measuring MET levels, making it useful for interval training.

ADVERTORIAL

Early Detection: When is the right time to undergo a skin cancer screening?

Most of us know that more sun exposure means higher risk for skin cancer, right? Well, there are also other, more specific factors that can also contribute to skin cancer.

- Fair skin (rarely tans but burns easily)
- History of bad sunburns as a child and teenager
- Family history of skin cancer
- Lots of moles and growths on body

If you are prone to sunburns and/or have a family history of skin cancer, then the latest I would recommend seeing a Dermatologist is at age 30.

The risk of skin cancer decreases if you're on the opposite end of the spectrum.

- Olive toned skin (rarely burns but tans easily)
- Avoids extended sun exposure now and as a child and teenager
- No family history of skin cancer
- Little to no moles or growths on body



Dr. Tess Mauricio

The most important rule when it comes to skin cancer prevention is to ALWAYS have a suspicious mole or growth evaluated by a dermatologist.

And remember your ABC-DEs when doing self-evaluation for what is suspicious: A - asymmetry (put an imaginary line in the middle of the mole or spot, the two sides should match, if not it is asymmetric) B - border (should be smooth and not jagged)

C - color (should be uniform and even)

D - diameter (should be smaller than a pencil eraser)

E - evolution (watch out for any symptoms like itching, burning, and especially bleeding)

I hope this helps to serve as a reminder to begin getting annual skin exams and regularly examine your moles and skin growths. You may end up saving your life.

Dr. Tess Mauricio is a Board-Certified Dermatologist. She is a graduate from Stanford University School of Medicine and is the founder of M Beauty Clinic by Dr. Tess. She currently has three clinics: Miramar, Chula Vista, and Beverly Hills. Dr. Tess grew up in San Diego and is a long time Scripps Ranch resident.

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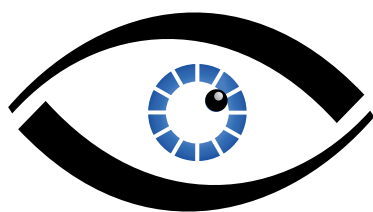
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Dr. Speziale earns outstanding honor

LIVING IN HARMONY

Scripps Ranch resident Alissa Speziale, MD, Gastroenterology, Sharp Rees-Stealy San Diego, has been named 2018 Physician of the Year by the Crohn's & Colitis Foundation, San Diego Chapter, for her efforts in the fight against inflammatory bowel disease (IBD).

She was honored at the Foundation's fourth annual Champions of Hope Awards Gala on Saturday, April 7, at the Kona Kai Resort & Spa.

Recognized for her extraordinary leadership and care supporting the local IBD community, Dr. Speziale has continued to serve on the Foundation's medical advisory committee and lecture at patient symposia on several health issues.

"It is a true honor to be recognized by an organization that is committed to changing and improving the lives of those who live each day with IBD. I'm just doing my part to help make a difference by supporting the mission of the foundation," Dr. Speziale said.

"We are privileged to have someone as dedicated to the well-being of our community as Dr. Speziale," said Carly Bazzett, executive director of the Crohn's & Colitis Foundation, San Diego Chapter. "As a health care provider, volunteer and military veteran, Dr. Speziale



Dr. Alissa Speziale with her husband, Chris Speziale, at the "Champions of Hope" gala. (photo courtesy of Crohn's and Colitis Foundation)

is a shining example of a compassionate community leader."

According to Bazzett, the foundation selects its Physician of the Year honoree each year through a process that involves its gala co-chairs and committee, in partnership with its board of directors and chapter medical advisory committee.

"They nominate and select a physician who has gone above and beyond for patients and families, has given back significantly to the IBD community in a volunteer capacity, and who exemplifies our values of uniting to care and cure," she said. "Dr. Speziale is all of these things and so much more."

In addition to her role at Sharp Rees-Stealy and commitment to the foundation, Dr. Speziale is a part of the

Naval Reserves Operation Health Support Unit. She was a volunteer internist at St. Vincent de Paul Community Clinic, where she provided medical care to more than 200 homeless individuals, and also served on the American College of Gastroenterology (ACG) Women's Committee.

Sharp Rees-Stealy Medical Centers offer multi-specialty care from a team that includes 2,800 staff members representing every allied health profession, in addition to more than 550 physicians who are members of the affiliated Sharp Rees-Stealy Medical Group. Sharp Rees-Stealy Medical Centers has 22 locations and accepts most health insurance plans. Sharp Rees-Stealy Medical Centers is part of Sharp HealthCare.

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Autism foundation gains special recognition

LIVING IN HARMONY

During National Autism Awareness Month, District 5 San Diego City Councilman Mark Kersey proclaimed April 10 to be "National Foundation of Autism Research Day" in the City of San Diego.

The National Foundation of Autism Research (NFAR), based in Scripps Ranch, serves children with autism and their families. More than 20 NFAR board members, families and supporters joined Councilman Kersey as he presented the proclamation. He specifically highlighted NFAR Tech, which provides technical training and employment skills to those with autism.

"I'm proud to recognize NFAR for giving these talented, sometimes overlooked individuals an opportunity to learn in an environment designed for their success," Kersey said. "Everyone deserves the chance to become self-sufficient and contrib-



Councilman Mark Kersey with NFAR leadership, board members and parents, presents a proclamation in City Council Chambers. (photo courtesy City Council District 5)

ute to the workplace in their unique way."

"At NFAR, we are dedicated to serving individuals with autism in our community," said Sharon Leon, NFAR executive director. "We are so honored and grateful to have been recognized by Councilmember Mark Kersey and the City for our efforts, and look forward to working with them on initiatives that continue

to improve the lives of those with autism in San Diego."

While many people on the autism spectrum have skills well suited for the technology industry, unemployment for those with autism is 85 percent. NFAR Tech is helping bridge that gap and has already helped place 30 internships and jobs within San Diego's technology industry. Learn more at nfar.org.

Think like a designer to update your home

HOMES



While making design decisions, don't worry about being "on-trend." If you stay focused on what styles speak to you personally, as well as the functionality your room needs to support, you'll create a space that feels uniquely yours. (StatePoint)

(StatePoint) Inspiration is everywhere. From a field of yellow sunflowers to unique geometric patterns in the tile of a train station, the littlest things can spark the innovation behind some of the world's most iconic products and designs.

More than half of Americans (51 percent) say the inspiration for creating a product is important to them when purchasing an item for their home, according to a recent survey from Moen conducted online by Harris Poll among more than 2,000 U.S. adults.

When updating your own home's décor, you can garner inspiration by discovering the creative influences of professional designers.

Think like a pro

Designers find inspiration just about everywhere. Pebbles in a stream sparkling in the sunlight have inspired smartphone interfaces, while talking computers on "Star Trek" have contributed to the creation of voice-controlled speakers.

Sometimes interior designers are inspired by consum-

ers themselves. For example, at Moen, a leading manufacturer of kitchen and bath fixtures, innovation is driven by what homeowners say they want and how they interact with products. When determining the sensor placement for new MotionSense Wave touchless faucets, their design team was inspired by the way hands move around the kitchen sink. The fixtures feature a single-sensor hands-free activation on the base's left side, allowing users to turn the faucet on and off with the wave of a hand. "We also draw creativity from furniture, tools, architecture, music and museums," said Steven Ward, Moen's director of global design.

Seek your source of ideas

Next time you're updating your bath or restyling your kitchen, act like a professional by venturing outside the box to get your creative juices flowing, whether it's turning to a favorite song or a piece of artwork. For example, 16 percent of Americans who have done a home design project look to

the outdoors for inspiration when planning home design projects, while 15 percent look to architecture. Maybe you're struck by the colors of the sunset in your family's summer beach vacation photos or the amazing brick pattern you saw wandering through a historic neighborhood. Consider what colors

and patterns grab you and evoke the feeling you want to have within your space. Once you find them, snap a photo and reference it as you're designing.

Curate inspiration

Of Americans who have done a home design project, 33 percent look to social me-

dia for inspiration. Create a design plan for your space, but make it easy by using a site like Pinterest. Create boards for color combinations, materials and textures to your ideal look. Many Pins are shoppable, making it simple to purchase your perfect home décor products with just a click.

Upgrade with smart technology

(StatePoint) From smart thermostats to remotely controlled showers, connected homes are all the rage for today's homeowners and those looking to make a purchase, providing easy opportunities to boost your profit when you sell.

Climate control

Consider installing a smart thermostat, which learns your temperature preferences and can save energy by turning heating and cooling on and off, based on the weather outside, your home's energy profile and more. Potential homebuyers will love the energy savings as well as the ability to control the thermostat from anywhere with their devices.

Bright lighting

Smart lighting dimmer and sensor systems allow you to turn lights on and off remotely with a smartphone, and can be customized to perform certain actions, such as slowly growing brighter as you wake up or turning off automatically when you leave your home – providing added convenience and customization.



By swapping just one or two items, like your thermostat or a builder-grade kitchen faucet, you can achieve a sleeker, smarter home. (StatePoint)

A hands-free faucet

Imagine the convenience of having a kitchen faucet turn water on or off, without a touch. Faucets with hands-free technology, such as Moen's MotionSense Wave single-sensor models, allow users to easily activate the faucet with the wave of a hand. Great for when your hands are too full or messy to turn on the faucet, the technology also minimizes the spread of dirt and germs, since there's no need to touch the faucet to start the flow of water. It's just the type of smart upgrade to attract house hunters of all ages and easy on the wallet,

with options available for less than \$300.

A digital shower

An updated bathroom is a huge selling point. If you're planning a renovation, enhancing your space with a digital shower can make a big difference for your family now and for future homebuyers. To provide the ultimate in personalization, select a system such as U by Moen, the first Wi-Fi/cloud-based digital shower on the market, which allows users to precisely set shower temperature and flow with an in-shower digital controller, or from the smartphone app.

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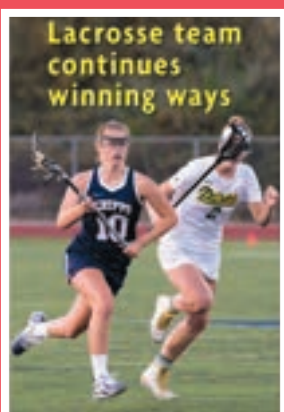
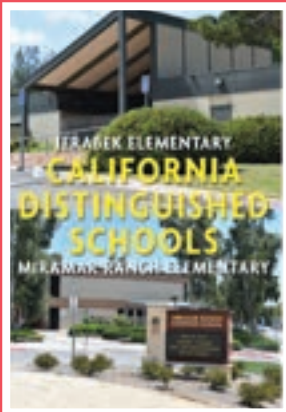
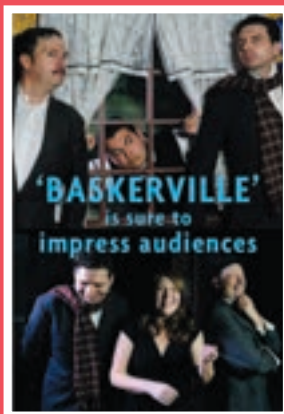
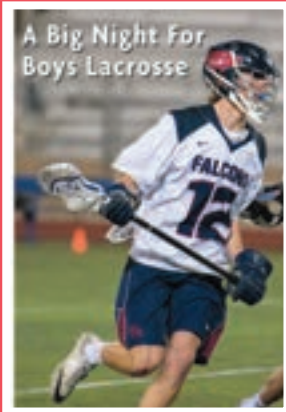
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'What's Next in Real Estate'

The largest real estate conference in San Diego on Friday, April 27 will feature a discussion of "What's Next in Real Estate" with two expert panels.

The Elevate Real Estate Conference and Expo at the San Diego Convention Center, presented by the Greater San Diego Association of Realtors® (SDAR), brings together more than 2,500 agents, brokers and other industry professionals for a day of networking, education and inspiration.

At the general session starting at 10 a.m., attendees will be treated to a keynote presentation by HGTV television host and award-winning Realtor® Egypt Sherrod, who will share her "Seven Smart Business Practices of a Successful Real Estate Agent."

The Elevate Real Estate Conference, held in the San Diego Convention Center, features more than 200 industry exhibitors, education breakout sessions on timely topics, plus raffles, giveaways and a happy hour to close out the day. Visit sdar-expo.com.



Rotary Club of Poway-Scripps members (from left) Karen Herrerros, Melanie Potter, Sonny Rai and Jan Kane (front) fill a bin during Scripps Ranch Clean-up Day on April 14. (courtesy of Rotary Club of Poway-Scripps)

Rotarians help remove junk

Members of the Rotary Club of Poway-Scripps were up to their necks in junk April 14 as they participated in the 2018 Scripps Ranch Clean-up Day. There was a lot of heavy lifting, stacking and tossing of items as the Rotarians helped residents

move junk from vehicles and into dumpsters. The community did a tremendous job removing debris and no longer useable items from their homes and yards and were able to fill three large dumpsters to help keep local neighborhoods clean.

ASID designers make house calls

Is your home looking tired, dated or disastrous? Are you ready to update, remodel or renovate, but don't know where to start? The American Society of Interior Designers (ASID) has a

solution to your design dilemma.

The San Diego chapter's 15th annual "Spring Spruce Up" fundraiser sends professional interior designers into people's homes, offices, yachts or any other location that could use some one-to-one professional interior design advice. Spring Spruce Up appointments are available now through the end of May for the affordable price of \$89 per hour (with a maximum of two hours).

"This popular event gives homeowners an opportunity to voice their real-life concerns, questions and ideas and get professional advice," said Reba Lemmons, president of the San Diego chapter of ASID.

"ASID has experts in all areas of design, such as space planning, staging, color selection, kitchen design, aging in place, art and furniture placement, outdoor rooms, historic preservation, media rooms, multigenerational living, universal design, window treatments and commercial design," she explained.

ASID designers volunteer their time during Spruce Up Hire a Designer and proceeds from the fundraiser support ASID's educational programs. Interior designers from throughout San Diego County are participating.

To discuss your specific needs, contact chairperson Beppie Mostert at (858) 243-0505. All appointments are pre-paid.



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LIVING IN HARMONY

Are your furnishings healthy?

(StatePoint) More consumers are interested in selecting products that are good for the planet and their families than ever before. While many understand what organic food is, confusion still exists when it comes to home furnishings. Simply put, what you bring into your home directly impacts the health and welfare of your family in terms of exposure to chemicals of concern, indoor air quality and comfort.



Your home is your refuge. Knowing the facts about what you choose to put into it can allow you to feel better, literally and in terms of your environmental impact. (StatePoint)

With the deluge of products claiming to be environmentally sustainable, it's important to know what to look for when furnishing your home. Here are some considerations to bear in mind.

• **Does it contain harmful chemicals?** While the EPA has phased out the use of some of the most potentially harmful chemicals, some chemical variations continue to be used in upholstery and fabrics. To get a sense of what's good and what may be bad, consult resources like the U.S. EPA's Chemicals of Concern List and the Living Future Institute's Red List. Remember that while some degree of chemical treatment may be needed to make fabrics fire-retardant or stain-repellent, in many instances, green manufacturers employ minimal chemistry or have found natural solutions to achieve these results.

• **Am I considering all the options?** Fortunately, top fabric and furniture manufacturers have developed more sustainable alternatives. For example, Milliken & Company recently launched Breathe by Milliken, an eco-elegant collection of fluorine-free performance fabrics available in both natural and recycled polyester fibers. Furniture retailers are offering sustainably-sourced, locally-made and organic furniture and fabric options, while big box retailers like Target have developed sustainability scoring requirements on products to help educate and empower consumers.

• **What's it made of?** Select natural fibers or materials like cotton or wood whenever possible. However, if you prefer man-made fibers, ask about items made from recycled or post-consumer materials. For example, Breathe by Milliken polyester fabrics are made from recycled plastic, and each sofa uphol-

stered in this fabric diverts 90-150 plastic bottles from landfills.

• **How long will it last?** Durability is sustainability. Whether wood, molded plastic or fabric, quality household items will remain in use, rather than in the landfill.

• **What happens when I'm done with it?** Opt for materials that consist of recycled or reused materials and/or those that biodegrade or can be easily recycled.

• **Have green claims been validated?** "Greenwashing," or making untrue or inaccurate sustainability claims, is

a pervasive problem across a range of industries. Opt for brands with third-party certifications. For example, products achieving GREENGUARD Gold certification have been screened to ensure they don't contain any of the more than 10,000 chemicals commonly known to pollute the air we breathe. Earning this certification means these fabrics meet the world's most rigorous chemical emission standards, improving indoor air quality and overall health. The Sustainable Furnishings Council is another excellent consumer resource.

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Scripps Ranch home sales

Sales of existing homes in San Diego County soared in March after a dreary January and February, according to housing statistics compiled through the Multiple Listing Service by the Greater San Diego Association of Realtors®.

Twenty-four single family homes in Scripps Ranch were sold in March, with 50 total sold in the first three months of 2018. The median price of single family homes sold in Scripps Ranch in March was \$1,077,500 and the average median price

is \$965,000 for 2018 so far. That's an incredible \$273,502 more than March 2017 and \$129,250 more than 2017 year to date.

There were 13 attached homes (condominiums or townhomes) sold in Scripps Ranch last month, with 38 total sold in 2018 year to date. The median price of attached homes sold in Scripps Ranch in March was \$530,000 and the median price for 2018 so far is also \$530,000. That's \$99,000 more than this time of year in 2017.

Lopez Group: 'Keepin' it Scripps'

By John Gregory

A small crowd gathered near the edge of Jerabek Park on St. Patrick's Day morning to warm themselves with coffee and hot chocolate, visit with neighbors and snack on croissants from the French Oven Bakery. This was one of the special neighborhood events hosted and organized by a friendly Scripps Ranch couple: Gustavo and Jenni López, along with Gail Faber, a local mortgage loan officer with EverBank.

Gustavo and Jenni run The López Group at eXp Realty.

"We just enjoy living here and love taking part in different activities with a lot of the friends and families that we meet," Gustavo said. "So, through real estate we have met a lot of people who have become good friends, not just clients. We enjoy doing a lot of things to give back and keep people aware of what's going on here in Scripps Ranch."



Jenni and Gustavo López are active realtors in Scripps Ranch who occasionally host gatherings to connect residents and promote local businesses. (photo by John Gregory)

The López Group likes to help locals connect with one another and help promote local businesses such as the French Oven and Faber, who helped publicize the event. Faber is a tireless volunteer with local schools and serves as the president of Ellen Browning Scripps Elementary School's Academic Fundraising Partnership.

"We just wanted to get local people together and have some fun," Jenni explained, adding that they were just "keepin' it Scripps."

"We do two to three client events a year and

a lot of it started out with previous clients and a few close friends," Gustavo said. "Now, it's graduated into something a little bit more. We figured that we've met so many great people, we'd like to make work feel a little more social, so we'll have a few impromptu gatherings like this."

Gustavo grew up in Scripps Ranch, and now this couple is involved in many local organizations. Gustavo started out in the real estate business as a single agent 12 years ago. He and Jenni eventually formed their own group.

"We really try and just focus on being the best advocates for our clients, whether they're buying or selling, and really doing things correctly," Gustavo said.

"It's kind of a boutique service," Jenni explained. "(We) maybe just go above and beyond a little bit more for people."

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