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Volume 20 Issue 48

Weekend Weather
See the forecast
Page 8

Police and Fire logs
See the calls for service.
Pages 2 & 3

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Essential: Bus Driver Nicole Honaker-Hwang

CLARA HARTER
SMDP Staff Writer

The Daily Press has launched a series of interviews with essential workers who are working bravely and diligently to keep the Santa Monica community functioning.

Nicole Honaker-Hwang is a motor coach operator for Big Blue Bus. She originally hails from Kentucky and served in the army for several years before moving to Los Angeles with her husband. The constant mask monitoring of her job can be stressful, but she appreciates every customer who stops to thank her and looks forward to seeing school children and tourists back on the bus one day.



Courtesy photo

AT WORK: Santa Monica bus drivers are still on the job.

HOW DID YOU FEEL COMING TO WORK THROUGHOUT THE PANDEMIC?

I remember when the lockdown very first happened it was really kind of scary. I remember a man had to come on the front of my bus with his walker and he thanked me and said 'well life goes on for me' as he still had to go to his dialysis appointment. I think that was the moment where it became clear to me that we are doing a really important job and people really need us. It's helped me keep looking forward, really hang in there, even though it can be stressful at times.

HOW HAS YOUR JOB CHANGED?

We are boarding people through our back doors with the exception of if someone needs assistance we help board them through the front doors. At the beginning it was a lot quieter, but as things got a little back to normal it has slowly become more busy. A lot of the customers are other essential workers. The main customers that are missing are students. We used to get a lot of students especially from Santa Monica College or the high schools, middle schools, even the elementary schools.

WHAT STEPS ARE BEING TAKEN TO PROTECT DRIVERS AND RIDERS?

In recent months most of our buses have gotten barriers so we as the driver are closed off with plexiglass at the front of our bus. We are being as safe as we can, but

SEE **ESSENTIAL** PAGE 11

Samohi alumnus goes for Grandmaster



Courtesy photo

CHESS: A Santa Monica resident is on the verge of a major accomplishment.

BRENNON DIXSON
SMDP Staff Writer

Danial Asaria beat his first grandmaster in a chess tournament when he was 15-years-old, and now the Samohi graduate is on his way becoming a grandmaster himself, thanks to a recent victory in last month's North American Junior U-20 Championship.

During the tournament in Charlotte, North Carolina last December, Asaria finished in first place with 8 wins in 9 games.

"As a result, I won the title of International Master; the title directly under Grandmaster," Asaria

SEE **GRANDMASTER** PAGE 6

Santa Monica to consider 'Hero Pay'

BRENNON DIXSON
SMDP Staff Writer

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors called on essential workers in grocery and drug stores to earn an additional $5 per hour in "hero pay" for the dangers they face amid the coronavirus pandemic recently and some Santa Monica City Councilmembers want to discuss a similar idea this Tuesday.

County supervisors discussed their hero pay proposal earlier this week when they shared how it would require national grocery and drug retailers, operating in unincorporated areas of the county, to provide a pay bump for front-line workers. Supervisors Hilda Solis

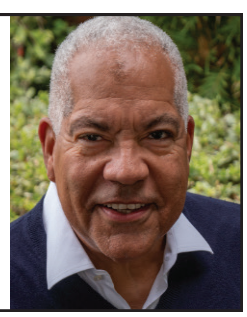
SEE **HERO PAY** PAGE 4



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Stalking 300blk Olympic Dr 12:50 a.m.
Burglary Now 300blk Montana Ave 3:22 a.m.
Overdose 3000blk Santa Monica Blvd 5:53 a.m.
Traffic Collision - No Injuries City Prop Involved 110 S/B / W/O 4th & 6th St Off Ramp 6:10 a.m.
Grand Theft 00blk Pico Blvd 7:14 a.m.
Encampment 1700blk Ocean Park Blvd 8:00 a.m.
Mark & Tag Abandoned Vehicle 1000blk Ashland Ave 8:10 a.m.
Encampment 200blk Marine St 8:30 a.m.
General Parking Problem 300blk Olympic Dr 8:32 a.m.
General Parking Problem 300blk Olympic Dr 8:32 a.m.
Panic Alarm 2900blk 11th St 8:47 a.m.
Stolen Vehicle Recovered 1500blk Arizona Ave 8:59 a.m.
Silent Robbery Alarm 300blk Pico Blvd 9:04 a.m.
Violation Of Preferential Parking Zone 1400blk 10th St 9:22 a.m.
Identity Theft 500blk Pier Ave 9:28 a.m.
Extortion Investigation 3000blk Exposition Blvd 9:35 a.m.
Burglary 200blk San Vicente Blvd 9:38 a.m.
Attempt Burglary 1300blk 4th St 9:39 a.m.
Petty Theft 1500blk 16th St 9:40 a.m.
Traffic Collision - No Injuries 14th St / Santa Monica Blvd 9:41 a.m.
Vehicle Parked In Alley 1000blk Yale St 10:15 a.m.
Auto Burglary 900blk 15th St 10:23 a.m.
Fraud 700blk 21st Pl 10:24 a.m.
Attempt Auto Theft 2200blk 20th St 11:00 a.m.
Auto Burglary 800blk 20th St 11:06 a.m.
Burglary 800blk 3rd St 11:08 a.m.
Vehicle Parked In Alley 200blk San Vicente Blvd 11:08 a.m.
Violation Of Preferential Parking Zone 500blk Strand St 11:10 a.m.
Violation Of Preferential Parking Zone 1200blk Stanford St 11:44 a.m.
Traffic Collision - No Injuries 4th St / Santa Monica Blvd 11:48 a.m.
Burglary 100blk Ocean Park Blvd 11:52 a.m.
Auto Burglary 700blk 4th St 11:56 a.m.
Burglary 1300blk Stanford St 12:15 p.m.
Petty Theft Just Occurred 2400blk Pico Blvd 12:40 p.m.
Traffic Collision - No Injuries 5th St / Idaho Ave 12:40 p.m.
Grand Theft Auto 1300blk 12th St 12:57 p.m.
Vehicle Parked In Alley 1500blk Ocean Ave 1:12 p.m.
Violation Of Posted Sign 3300blk Barnard Way 1:24 p.m.
Prowler There Now 1600blk Appian Way 1:36 p.m.
Mark & Tag Abandoned Vehicle 2800blk Arizona Ave 1:43 p.m.
Malicious Mischief 1400blk Olympic Blvd 1:44 p.m.
Encampment 1700blk Ocean Front Walk 1:49 p.m.
Encampment 500blk Wilshire Blvd 1:55 p.m.
Encampment Dorchester Ave / Urban Ave 2:03 p.m.
Person Down 2500blk San Vicente Blvd 2:19 p.m.
Exhibition Of Speed 26th St / Montana Ave 2:21 p.m.
Vehicle Parked In Alley 800blk California Ave 2:28 p.m.
Person Down 16th St / Santa Monica Blvd 2:35 p.m.
Found Property 1400blk 3rd Street Prom 2:41 p.m.
Fraud 300blk Olympic Dr 3:02 p.m.
Attempt Auto Theft 1900blk Euclid St #2 3:25 p.m.
Petty Theft 2800blk Lincoln Blvd 3:38 p.m.
Defrauding Innkeeper In Progress 100blk Broadway 3:39 p.m.
Hit And Run Misdemeanor Investigation 2200blk Marine St 3:40 p.m.
Traffic Collision - No Injuries Berkeley St / Santa Monica Blvd 4:00 p.m.
Vehicle Blocking Driveway 1000blk Cedar St 4:02 p.m.
Hit And Run Misdemeanor Investigation 25th St / Oak St 4:03 p.m.
Found Property 1400blk Lincoln Blvd 4:13 p.m.
Urinating/Defecating In Public 1600blk Appian Way 4:19 p.m.
Threats Report/Investigations 1900blk Pico Blvd 4:23 p.m.
Burglary 300blk Montana Ave 4:26 p.m.
Threats Report/Investigations 2900blk Santa Monica Blvd 4:52 p.m.
Malicious Mischief 2900blk Santa Monica Blvd 4:54 p.m.
Missing Person 300blk Olympic Dr 5:04 p.m.
Encampment 2200blk Delaware Ave 5:04 p.m.
Burglary 800blk 4th St 5:04 p.m.
Sexual Assault 300blk Olympic Dr 5:06 p.m.
Fraud 2600blk Pico Blvd 5:19 p.m.
Harassing Phone Calls 2000blk Cloverfield Blvd 5:47 p.m.
Fraud 1400blk 17th St 6:12 p.m.
Armed Robbery Just Occurred 700blk 9th St 6:19 p.m.
Petty Theft Just Occurred 1300blk Wilshire Blvd 6:25 p.m.
Malicious Mischief 800blk Hill St 8:17 p.m.
Drunk Driving Investigation 800blk Montana Ave 9:14 p.m.
Loud Music 500blk 7th St 9:17 p.m.
Overdose 17th St / Olympic Blvd 9:53 p.m.
Petty Theft Just Occurred 5th St / Santa Monica Blvd 10:12 p.m.
Encampment 1700blk Appian Way 10:22 p.m.
Auto Burglary 1400blk 2nd St 11:01 p.m.
Domestic Violence Just Occurred 1700blk Appian Way 11:05 p.m.

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Study suggests Pfizer vaccine works against virus variant

LAURAN NEERGAARD
AP Medical Writer

New research suggests Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine can protect against a mutation found in the two more-contagious variants of the coronavirus that have erupted in Britain and South Africa.

The study was preliminary and did not look at the two other major vaccines being used in the West — Moderna's and AstraZeneca's. But it was reassuring, given questions of whether the virus could mutate to defeat the shots on which the world has pinned its hopes.

"There's no reason to think the vaccines won't work just as well on these strains," said Dr. Frederic Bushman of the University of Pennsylvania, who tracks how the virus mutates.

The mutated version circulating in Britain has also been detected in the U.S. and numerous other countries. That and the variant seen in South Africa are causing global concern because they appear to spread more easily — although how much more isn't yet known.

Bushman, who wasn't involved with the Pfizer study, cautioned that it tested just one vaccine against one worrisome mutation. But the Moderna and AstraZeneca vaccines are undergoing similar testing, and he said he expects similar findings.

That's because all the vaccines so far are prompting recipients' bodies to make antibodies against multiple spots on the spike protein that coats the virus.

"A mutation will change one little place, but it's not going to disrupt binding to all of them," Bushman explained.

While scientists did not expect that a single mutation would completely upend efforts to stop the pandemic, it is still an important area of study because the coronavirus, like all viruses, constantly evolves. This study marks just the beginning of continual monitoring to make sure that all the vaccines being rolled out around the world continue to work.

The study looked at one modification to the spike protein that both variants share, called N501Y, that is believed responsible for the easier transmission. Pfizer and researchers from the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston conducted laboratory tests to see if that mutation could thwart the vaccine.

They used blood samples from 20 people who received the vaccine, made by Pfizer and its German partner BioNTech, during a large trial of the shots. Antibodies from those recipients fended off the virus in lab dishes, according to the study, posted late Thursday on an online site for researchers.

The findings have not yet been reviewed by outside experts, a key step for medical research.

But "it was a very reassuring finding that at least this mutation, which was one of the ones people are most concerned about, does not seem to be a problem" for the vaccine, said Pfizer chief scientific officer Dr. Philip Dormitzer.

Viruses constantly undergo minor changes as they spread from person to person.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the top U.S. infectious disease expert, told The Associated Press this week that the coronavirus variants don't appear to block vaccine-induced antibodies but that testing to be sure of that is underway in the U.S. and elsewhere.

British scientists have likewise said the variant found in the U.K. -– which has become the dominant type in parts of England — still seems to be susceptible to vaccines.

But the variant discovered in South Africa has an additional mutation that has scientists on edge, one named E484K. The Pfizer study found that the vaccine appeared to work against 15 additional possible mutations, but E484K wasn't among those tested. Dormitzer said it is next on the list.

South Africa has not started mass vaccinations.

If the virus eventually mutates enough that the vaccine needs adjusting — much like flu shots are adjusted most years — tweaking the recipe wouldn't be difficult for vaccines made with newer technologies. Both the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines are made with a piece of the virus genetic code that is simple to switch.

The coronavirus isn't changing as rapidly as other viruses such as flu or HIV, and its structure is more stable than the flu's, Bushman said, although that will need to be tracked.

"My guess is vaccination will stick longer and be more effective than it is for influenza," he said.

Meanwhile, U.S. health regulators said Friday they think there is a low risk that the new variants could hurt the accuracy of hundreds of COVID-19 tests on the market.

Food and Drug Administration chief Stephen Hahn said the agency has been monitoring the virus since the summer for any mutations that could skew testing results. So far, most tests that look for the virus's genetic code remain accurate, but the agency is also studying whether viral mutations could affect rapid tests that look for COVID-19 proteins, called antigens.

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DAILY FIRE LOG

SMDP STAFF CHOSE THE FOLLOWING FROM 38 CALLS ON JANUARY 7

EMS 1300blk 15th St 1:06 a.m.
Automatic Alarm 1200blk 15th St 1:38 a.m.
EMS 300blk Pico Blvd 5:00 a.m.
Odor Of Natural Gas 800blk Euclid St 5:33 a.m.
Automatic Alarm 1800blk Wilshire Blvd 7:24 a.m.
EMS 3000blk Santa Monica Blvd 7:35 a.m.
EMS 1200blk 6th St 7:54 a.m.
EMS Ocean Ave / Broadway 8:28 a.m.
EMS 2600blk Santa Monica Blvd 8:54 a.m.
EMS 34th St / Pico Blvd 9:45 a.m.
EMS 1000blk Wilshire Blvd 10:22 a.m.
Lock In/Out 3200blk Airport Ave 10:38 a.m.
EMS 900blk 5th St 10:44 a.m.
EMS 1900blk Santa Monica Blvd 11:09 a.m.
Traffic Collision With Injury 4th St / Santa Monica Blvd 11:48 a.m.
EMS 3000blk Main St 12:09 p.m.
EMS 3100blk Neilson Way 12:53 p.m.
EMS 900blk Wilshire Blvd 12:55 p.m.
EMS 1800blk 9th St 1:26 p.m.
EMS 500blk San Vicente Blvd 1:29 p.m.
EMS 1200blk 11th St 2:04 p.m.
EMS 2100blk Ashland Ave 2:53 p.m.
Broken Gas Main 2200blk Marine St 2:55 p.m.
EMS 1900blk Lincoln Blvd 3:18 p.m.
EMS 1600blk Santa Monica Blvd 3:35 p.m.
EMS 3rd St / Ashland Ave 3:37 p.m.
Automatic Alarm 2500blk 5th St 3:39 p.m.
EMS Main St / Ashland Ave 4:01 p.m.
EMS 1500blk Princeton St 5:29 p.m.
EMS 1100blk 7th St 6:06 p.m.
EMS 1300blk 17th St 6:06 p.m.
EMS 2000blk 14th St 6:34 p.m.
Automatic Alarm 1200blk 4th St 6:52 p.m.
EMS 1000blk Wilshire Blvd 7:34 p.m.
EMS 17th St / Olympic Blvd 9:53 p.m.
EMS 1500blk 15th St 10:12 p.m.
EMS 900blk 6th St 11:04 p.m.
EMS 1600blk Main St 11:31 p.m.

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California's $2 billion plan to reopen schools faces critics

JOCELYN GECKER
Associated Press

Most of California's 6 million public school students have not seen the inside of a classroom in 10 months. Gov. Gavin Newsom is hoping his $2 billion plan to resume in-person classes will get schools to reopen quickly.

Newsom's "Safe Schools For All" plan, officially introduced Friday as part of his 2021 budget, has already faced strong objections from teachers and many of the state's largest school districts. Critics say the plan's funding is not sufficient to ensure safety in California classrooms, as COVID-19 case rates and deaths skyrocket, and it risks deepening the inequities that the pandemic has already laid bare.

His plan for schools to start in-person learning by spring allocates $2 billion for coronavirus testing, personal protective equipment and increased classroom ventilation that would allow classrooms to reopen safely. It still needs approval from the state Legislature to take effect.

The plan includes a one-time payment of at least $450 per student for school districts that offer in-person instruction. It proposes a phased approach that prioritizes the state's youngest students and those with special needs, who have struggled the most during months of distance learning. Schools that serve low-income families, English learners and foster children could qualify for additional funding.

California was the first in the country to issue a statewide shutdown order in mid-March, and most of the more than 1,000 school districts have not resumed in-person classes since then.

Newsom said his recommendation was driven by increasing evidence that there are lower risks and increased benefits from in-person instruction, particularly for the

SEE **SCHOOLS** PAGE 11

HERO PAY

FROM PAGE 1

and Holly Mitchell introduced the proposal and said immediate action is necessary when one considers local infection rates and what workers have sacrificed while serving the public.

"Since the beginning of the pandemic, frontline grocery and drug retail workers have continued to show up to work despite the dangers of being exposed to COVID-19," Supervisor Hilda Solis said. "Because of their work on the frontlines, families throughout the county have been able to access food and medicine they need during this pandemic."

Given the nature of these jobs, grocery workers typically stay inside with large crowds every day, which puts them at heightened risk of contracting COVID-19, Solis added as she detailed how some retailers have experienced outbreaks while they handle a surge in demand during the pandemic.

"The companies themselves are thriving, while their workers who keep the stores open are struggling economically," Solis said, sharing that nearly half of low wage workers have reported having trouble paying their bills. "It's imperative for the county to act with urgency to ensure these workers are justly compensated for the unprecedented risks they encounter on the job during the pandemic," which is why grocery and drug retail stores with 300 or more employees nationwide and more than 10 employees per store site will have to provide all employees with hero pay.

The Hero Pay ordinance calls for an additional $5 per hour in wages and the temporary urgency ordinance will come back for a vote on January 26th. And while Solis knows these actions do not totally negate the economic pain caused by COVID-19, "it is my hope they bring relief to our residents," she said.

During its discussions this week, supervisors noted that the ordinance may not apply in incorporated L.A. County cities because of the county's jurisdictional limitations. So in order to make the hero pay ordinance consistent across the region, cities will be required to take action.

"And I'm preparing Santa Monica to be able to participate," Councilmember Kevin McKeown said Friday when he discussed why he asked for the item to be placed on an upcoming meeting's agenda.

"Even as I prudently shelter at home, I must make necessary trips to grocery stores and pharmacies. With every such visit, I'm reminded that market and drugstore employees are risking their health and their families to make sure Santa Monicans stay fed and healthy," McKeown said. "Frontline employees got bonus pay for accepting the obvious health risks back when the pandemic began, but that ended after the first spike in May. Now, the out of control transmission of COVID makes their work riskier than ever," and — don't forget — these are low-wage workers who are already hard-hit by the pandemic economy. But assuming "hero pay" temporarily will give both financial relief and grateful acknowledgment of their crucial service to local residents and their families.

McKeown added he worded his motion to be consistent with any such measures imposed in unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County because consistency will be important.

"The ordinance returning to the County Supes on the 26th may be even more specific, but so far the direction given Tuesday applies to companies that are large enough to be publicly traded or have at least 300 employees nationwide and more than ten employees per store. These are big employers," McKeown noted. "Under the County proposal as submitted so far, the big employers would absorb the cost," and Tuesday's motion, if successful, means that when a final emergency ordinance is enacted by the county, Santa Monica will already have approval to move forward in conjunction with its peers.

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Police officer's death intensifies Capitol siege questions

LISA MASCARO AND MATTHEW DALY
Associated Press

A police officer has died from injuries suffered as President Donald Trump's supporters stormed the Capitol, a violent siege that is forcing hard questions about the defeated president's remaining days in office and the ability of the Capitol Police to secure the area.

The U.S. Capitol Police said in a statement that Officer Brian D. Sicknick was injured "while physically engaging with protesters" during the Wednesday riot. He is the fifth person to die because of the Capitol protest and violence.

During the struggle at the Capitol, Sicknick, 42, was hit in the head with a fire extinguisher, two law enforcement officials said. The officials could not discuss the ongoing investigation publicly and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

His family said in a statement Friday that Sicknick wanted to be a police officer his entire life. He served in the New Jersey Air National Guard before joining the Capitol Police in 2008.

"Many details regarding Wednesday's events and the direct causes of Brian's injuries remain unknown, and our family asks the public and the press to respect our wishes in not making Brian's passing a political issue," the family said.

The rampage that has shocked the world and left the country on edge forced the resignations of three top Capitol security officials over the failure to stop the breach. It has led lawmakers to demand a review of operations and an FBI briefing over what they called a "terrorist attack." And it is prompting a broader reckoning over Trump's tenure in office and what comes next for a torn nation.

Protesters were urged by Trump during a rally near the White House earlier Wednesday to head to Capitol Hill, where lawmakers were scheduled to confirm Biden's presidential victory. The mob swiftly broke through police barriers, smashed windows and paraded through the halls, sending lawmakers into hiding.

One protester, a woman from California, was shot to death by Capitol Police, and there were dozens of arrests. Three other people died after "medical emergencies" related to the breach.

Despite Trump's repeated claims of voter fraud, election officials and his own former attorney general have said there were no election problems on a scale that would change the outcome. All the states have certified their results as fair and accurate, by Republican and Democratic officials alike.

Sen. Ben Sasse, R-Neb., said news of the police officer's death was "gut-wrenching."

"None of this should have happened," Sasse said in a statement. "Lord, have mercy."

Sicknick had returned to his division office after the incident and collapsed, the statement said. He was taken to a local hospital where he died late Thursday.

Trump did not personally comment on the officer's death, but a White House spokesman said the death of any police officer in the line of duty is "a solemn reminder that they run toward danger to maintain peace." Trump and the entire administration "extend our prayers to Officer Brian Sicknick's family as we all grieve the loss of this American hero," spokesman Judd Deere said.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said those responsible for Sicknick's death "must be brought to justice."

"The violent and deadly act of insurrection targeting the Capitol, our temple of American democracy, and its workers was a profound tragedy and stain on our nation's history," Pelosi said Friday. She ordered flags at the Capitol lowered to half-staff in Sicknick's honor.

Pelosi said Thursday that any remaining day with the president in power could be "a horror show for America." Likewise, Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said the attack on the Capitol was "an insurrection against the United States, incited by the president," and Trump must not stay in office "one day" longer.

Pelosi and Schumer called for invoking the 25th Amendment to the Constitution to force Trump from office before President-elect Joe Biden is inaugurated on Jan. 20. Schumer said he and Pelosi tried to call Vice President Mike Pence early Thursday to discuss that option but were unable to connect with him.

At least one Republican lawmaker joined the effort. The procedure allows for the vice president and a majority of the Cabinet to declare the president unfit for office. The vice president then becomes acting president.

Pelosi said if the president's Cabinet does not swiftly act, the House may proceed to impeach Trump.

Trump, who had repeatedly refused to concede the election, did so in a late Thursday video from the White House vowing a "seamless transition of power."

Two Republicans who led efforts to challenge the election results, Ted Cruz of Texas and Josh Hawley of Missouri, faced angry peers in the Senate. Cruz defended his objection to the election results as "the right thing to do" as he tried unsuccessfully to have Congress launch an investigation. In the House, Republican leaders Rep. Kevin McCarthy of California and Rep. Steve Scalise of Louisiana joined in the failed effort to overturn Biden's win by objecting to the Electoral College results.

With tensions high, the Capitol shuttered and lawmakers not scheduled to return until the inauguration, an uneasy feeling of stalemate settled over a main seat of national power as Trump remained holed up at the White House.

The social media giant Facebook banned the president from its platform and Instagram for the duration of Trump's final days in

SEE **CAPITOL** PAGE 6

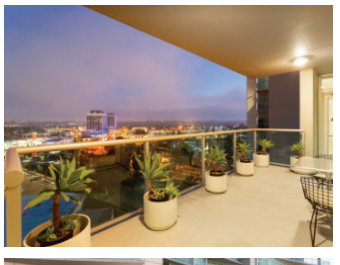
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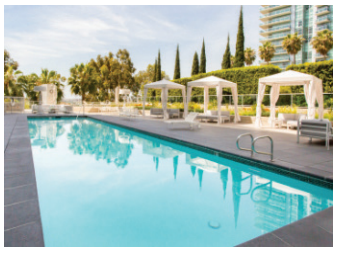
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GRANDMASTER

FROM PAGE 1

said in an interview where he shared he was also awarded one grandmaster norm, which you need three of in order to achieve the rank of Grandmaster. "This means that if I have two more excellent tournament performances, then I will be a Grandmaster."

However, with COVID-19 changing the way of life for nearly everybody in 2020, Asaria said the world of chess is no different so he is unsure when he will have an opportunity to play again. However, the experience from the junior championships will remain with him for life.

"With everything going wrong in the world, I was just lucky to play the game. This was definitely a different type of experience since it was during COVID, so, of course, everything changed," Asaria said, noting there were constant temperature checks, masks requirements and the event lacked the typical amount of intermingling that players usually enjoy. "I'll admit, I wasn't expecting much heading into the tournament. I was even behind from the beginning after an early loss."

Luckily, chess is a game where there's no elimination, according to Asaria. Instead, you play a total of nine rounds, and whoever gets the most points out of those nine rounds wins. "So, there's always a chance to come back," and he did thanks to eight straight victories in the competition.

It's rare for a 19-year-old to be so close to achieving the rank of Grandmaster, Asaria said. "On top of that, most grandmasters drop out of college and I haven't so that also puts me apart from the pack a little. I mean, I haven't even had a coach for the past four years."

Luckily, Asaria does have the chest community, which he has come to rely on.

"I was preparing the week before with one guy from Cuba, because we just became friends and we started playing over Skype. Then the next day, I connected with someone from North Carolina and a different country. That's a rewarding experience that I love about chess. We're separated lately but I can still connect with random people in random streets over this random game," Asaria said.

But practice isn't all fun and games. And residents will be reminded of the hit Netflix show Queen's Gambit when you hear how the



Courtesy photo

TITLE CHASE: Chess is having a moment in popular culture.

former Franklin Elementary School standout studies his chess books.

"Usually you get a textbook and there's a bunch of games and some commentary. You go through the games to understand it but I don't physically play the games. I go through all of them by just reading and picturing the games in my head," Asaria said. "I'm trying to really challenge myself to visualize where all the pieces are and why. I feel mental exercises like this really help me because they're super challenging but this prepares my mind for when I go into the tournament. I can out-calculate more people because I'll have this pattern recognition and this ability to hold the position in my mind and see things maybe they don't see."

Following his win in the North American Junior U-20 Championship, Asaria expects to be the official representative for the United States in the Pan American Championship, but that is up in the air due to the pandemic.

Until then, Asaria said he plans to partake in a national initiative with the Aga Khan Education Board/Youth and Sports Board to virtually teach free chess classes to Ismaili Muslim kids around the country.

Brennon@smdp.com

CAPITOL

FROM PAGE 5

office, if not indefinitely, citing his intent to stoke unrest. Twitter had silenced him the day before.

Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg said "the shocking events" make it clear Trump "intends to use his remaining time in office to undermine the peaceful and lawful transition of power."

U.S. Capitol Police Chief Steven Sund, under pressure from Schumer, Pelosi and other congressional leaders, was forced to resign. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell asked for and received the resignation of the Sergeant at Arms of the Senate, Michael Stenger, effective immediately. Paul Irving, the longtime Sergeant at Arms of the House, also resigned.

Sund had defended his department's response to the storming of the Capitol, saying officers had "acted valiantly when faced with thousands of individuals involved in violent riotous actions."

Washington Mayor Muriel Bowser called the police response "a failure."

Lawmakers from both parties pledged to investigate and questioned whether a lack of preparedness allowed a mob to occupy and vandalize the building. The Pentagon and Justice Department had been rebuffed when they offered assistance.

Black lawmakers, in particular, noted the way the mostly white Trump supporters were treated.

Newly elected Rep. Cori Bush, D-Mo., said if "we, as Black people did the same things that happened ... the reaction would have been different, we would have been laid out on the ground."

The protesters ransacked the place, taking over the House area and Senate chamber and waving Trump, American and Confederate flags. Outside, they scaled the walls and balconies.

Rep. Val Demings, D-Fla., a former police chief, said it was "painfully obvious" that Capitol police "were not prepared."

Associated Press writers Mary Clare Jalonick, Zeke Miller, Alan Fram, Padmananda Rama and Michael Balsamo in Washington contributed to this report.



LA, Congress take divergent paths after COVID test warning

BRIAN MELLEY AND MATTHEW PERRONE
Associated Press

Los Angeles will continue using a coronavirus test that federal regulators warned may produce false results while Congress, which has used the same test, is seeking an alternative.

The different responses Thursday followed a Food and Drug Administration alert to patients and health care providers that Curative's test, which is used in some of the nation's largest cities, could particularly produce false negatives. Those faulty results pose the biggest risk from a health perspective because people who are erroneously told they don't have the virus can unknowingly spread it.

The warning comes as California copes with its worst surge of the pandemic and some of the highest levels of COVID-19 in the country. Hospitals in Los Angeles and across the southern half of the state are overwhelmed with patients, oxygen used for treatment is running low and ambulances sometimes wait hours to unload patients.

Curative, a California startup company, said in a statement it was working with the FDA to address concerns and would provide additional data to address test limitations and precautions highlighted by the agency. The company said its test was the most clinically sensitive available at scale and its performance had not changed.

The FDA offered no information on what triggered the warning Monday, but it appeared to be about the test's accuracy for people who don't exhibit symptoms of COVID-19, such as fever, sore throat and fatigue.

Dr. Clemens Hong, who oversees coronavirus testing for Los Angeles County, said the company's initial emergency use authorization from the FDA was based on a limited study of subjects with coronavirus symptoms. The company later performed a clinical study involving asymptomatic subjects but the FDA balked at approving use for people without symptoms.

"They actually feel that those data don't support the use of the (test) in asymptomatic individuals and there's a little bit of a disagreement between Curative and the FDA," Hong said.

Mayor Eric Garcetti, who embraced Curative and opened testing to everyone last spring when tests were in short supply elsewhere, stood by the company Thursday. He said a third of all positive test results in the city have been in people without symptoms.

"That's 92,000 people who otherwise might not have known, might have been spreading," he said. "That has helped us predict those surges in hospitalizations and deaths as a result. To me that proof is in the pudding."

Admiral Brett Giroir, the Trump administration's top testing official, said Thursday that his Department of Health and Human Services is working with the office of the congressional physician to find an alternative test for use on Capitol Hill.

Curative was founded just a year ago by British wunderkind, Fred Turner, then 25, who was making sepsis tests and pivoted to the coronavirus when the pandemic struck.

He developed an easy-to-use method that collected a specimen by swabbing the inside of the mouth after coughing. The test didn't require the nasal swabs that were in short supply and had created a bottleneck at a time when more testing for COVID-19 was desperately needed.

The company's test was given emergency use authorization by FDA and was one of the few approved at the time that relied mainly on saliva or oral fluids.

Curative tests are also used in Chicago and Houston.

The Houston Health Department, which only helps Curative locate and promote its test sites in the city, was not planning to end its partnership with the company, said spokesman Scott Packard. The department noted that the FDA did not recommend discontinuing the tests and said all tests are susceptible to false results.

The FDA in its warning said that to reduce the risk of false-negative results, the Curative tests should be performed according to their instructions, which state that it is for use in people displaying symptoms of COVID-19.

Despite such instructions, top federal health officials have given their blessing to use many FDA-cleared tests to screen people without symptoms, in an effort to slow the silent spread of the disease. Experts estimate anywhere between 40% to 60% of people infected do not show any symptoms, despite carrying similar levels of the virus as those with full-blown COVID-19 illness.

Giroir stressed that the test should only be used according to its FDA-authorized label.

"We are always open to new data from Curative to show it can be effective in other situations, but right now my colleagues at the FDA have made the conclusion that it needs to be used on-label," said Giroir.

The FDA has previously flagged accuracy concerns with several other COVID-19 tests, including a rapid test that was frequently used at the White House last year. The agency generally discloses few details as it investigates accuracy.

Suzanne Sandmeyer, a professor of biological chemistry at the University of California, Irvine, questioned why the FDA had issued such a warning without more information that could be useful to the public.

"It's disappointing they couldn't be more specific because it might be discouraging for people who might be planning to be tested, especially if it's the major test in LA right now," Sandmeyer said.

Hong wouldn't discuss the data he had seen but said the percentage of false negatives

SEE **COVID** PAGE 11

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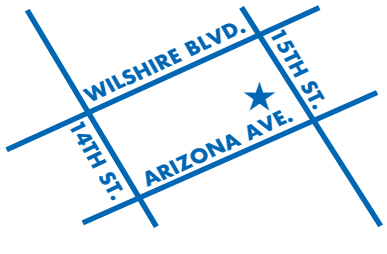
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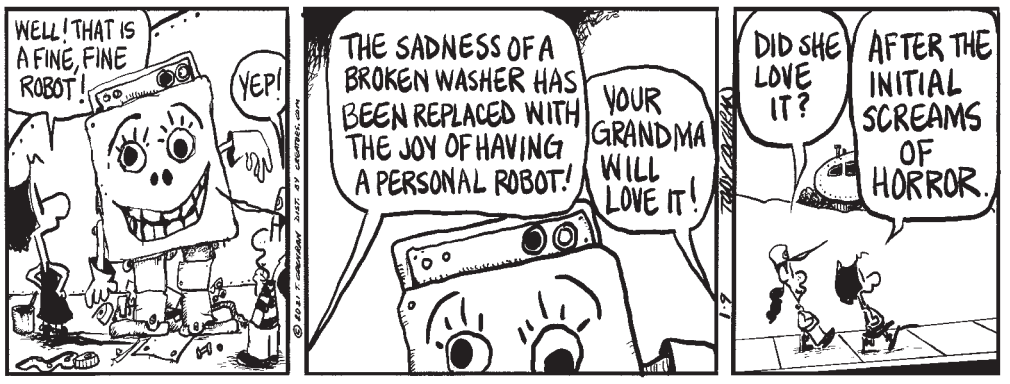
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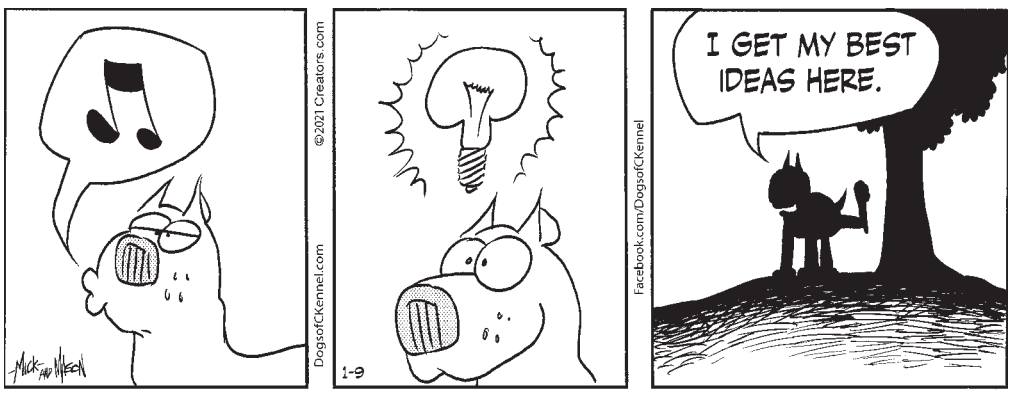
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By TONY COCHRAN



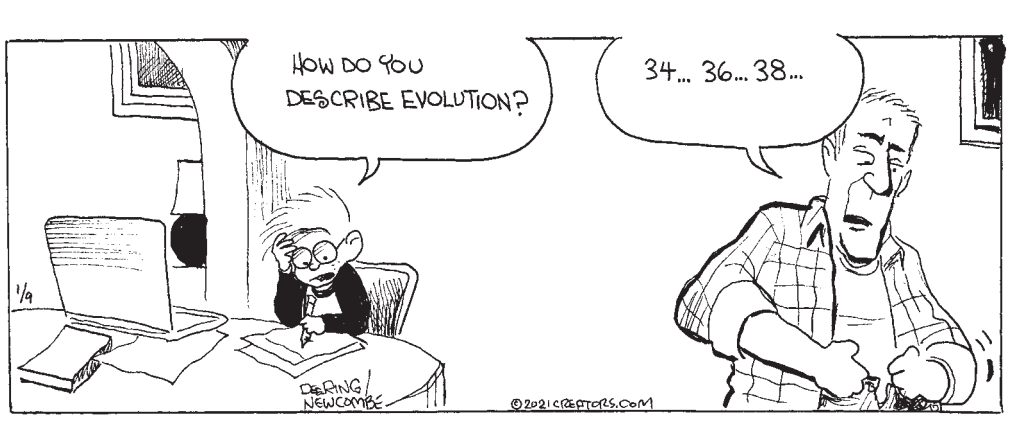
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Zack Hill

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Heathcliff

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Strange Brew

By JOHN DEERING





SURF FORECASTS

WATER TEMP: 57.7°

SATURDAY - **FAIR TO GOOD** - SURF: 4-5ft Chest to head high occ. 6 ft
Nice size NW swell tops out. Wind looking best in the morning.

SUNDAY - **FAIR TO GOOD** - SURF: 3-5ft+ Waist to head high
Easing NW swell keeps good size in the water.

WEATHER

Saturday: Sunny, with a high near 67.
Saturday Night: Mostly clear, with a low around 52.
Sunday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 67.

Date	Day	Time (LST/LDT)	Predicted (ft)	High/Low
2021/01/09	Sat	05:42 AM	6.08	H
2021/01/09	Sat	1:05 PM	-0.68	L
2021/01/09	Sat	7:28 PM	3.48	H
2021/01/09	Sat	11:58 PM	1.97	L
2021/01/10	Sun	06:29 AM	6.46	H
2021/01/10	Sun	1:51 PM	-1.24	L
2021/01/10	Sun	8:20 PM	3.69	H
2021/01/11	Mon	12:50 AM	2.02	L
2021/01/11	Mon	07:15 AM	6.71	H
2021/01/11	Mon	2:35 PM	-1.57	L
2021/01/11	Mon	9:04 PM	3.84	H
2021/01/12	Tue	01:39 AM	2.00	L
2021/01/12	Tue	07:59 AM	6.79	H
2021/01/12	Tue	3:18 PM	-1.67	L
2021/01/12	Tue	9:47 PM	3.93	H
2021/01/13	Wed	02:26 AM	1.97	L
2021/01/13	Wed	08:41 AM	6.69	H
2021/01/13	Wed	3:59 PM	-1.56	L
2021/01/13	Wed	10:28 PM	3.97	H
2021/01/14	Thu	03:11 AM	1.97	L
2021/01/14	Thu	09:23 AM	6.41	H

DAILY LOTTERY

POWERBALL
Draw Date: 1/6
1 20 22 60 66
Power#: 3
Jackpot: 470 M

MEGA MILLIONS
Draw Date: 1/5
20 43 51 55 57
Mega#: 4
Jackpot: 510 M

SuperLotto PLUS
Draw Date: 1/6
4 29 33 34 44
Mega#: 21
Jackpot: 10 M

Fantasy 5
Draw Date: 1/7
4 10 26 33 39

Daily 3
Draw Date: 1/7
EVENING: 3 5 3

Draw Date: 1/8
MIDDAY: 8 4 5

Daily Derby
Draw Date: 1/7
1st: 02 - Lucky Star
2nd: 08 - Gorgeous George
3rd: 05 - California Classic
Race Time: 1:42.03

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TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (JANUARY 09)

You create loveliness in your personal environment, not because you're an artistic elitist but because you have taste and style that naturally shines through you. Keep working on the things that look good to you, as your senses are supernaturally attuned to make wonders happen for yourself and others. Gemini and Aries adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 3, 33, 22, 14 and 18.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). As much as you want a situation, territory or person to be yours, some things can't be owned. Nevertheless, it won't hurt to put your stamp on it and see what happens. Perhaps, the unownable thing can be borrowed for a while.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). If you're in need of support, then ask for it. You don't like to be in the down position, but maybe you are thinking of it in a limited way. "Help me" is an opportunity for someone. Are you willing to give someone an opportunity?

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). One way to show someone you like them is to tease them. Teasing requires knowledge of a person. It requires that you know someone enough to know what's going to snag and engage their attention. You'll play it like a master.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). Who is curious enough? That is the burning question of the day because so much will go unexamined. Stuff that ruins the world for humans goes unexamined every minute. Who is curious enough to solve it?

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). You like drama and can spot it from a mile away. The question is if you should become a part of it or just be a spectator? Should you make it your own? Only you know the answer.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Maybe it boils down to work ethic. You see something amazing and beautiful and now you must decide if it is good enough for you to throw down your energy and effort to make it a part of your own personal scenery.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). You're proud of how little you want from others, but consider that sometimes asking for help is actually a gift. People need to feel useful. What they do for you gives something back to them.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). You always have a choice about on whom to spend your attention. To give to the one that demands it is, in all its urgency, still a choice. Think twice and then love your decision.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Rainbow illusions will drive the day. It's not that the pot of gold doesn't exist; it's that the end of the rainbow, being illusory, is an unquantifiable number. Set your goals on more tangible figures.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). You love. You don't agree. That's OK. Love doesn't come with the implicit agreement-only package. It does come with a tolerance package that suggests you'll work things out in time.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). You get to be the person you want to be because you A) thought it out, and then B) tried it on in your own private way and later C) projected it onto the world. Keep it up. You're on to something.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). You're not someone who lets everything blend into the scenery of life. You're focused on what matters. When you see that something's wrong, call it out and make sure that others see it, too.

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD



Sudoku

Fill in the blank cells using numbers 1 to 9. Each number can appear only once in each row, column, and 3x3 block. Use logic and process of elimination to solve the puzzle.

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S SUDOKU

3	7	6	8	5	4	2	1	9
5	9	4	6	1	2	3	7	8
1	8	2	7	9	3	4	5	6
8	3	5	9	4	1	7	6	2
2	1	7	5	8	6	9	3	4
6	4	9	2	3	7	1	8	5
7	5	8	1	2	9	6	4	3
9	6	3	4	7	5	8	2	1
4	2	1	3	6	8	5	9	7

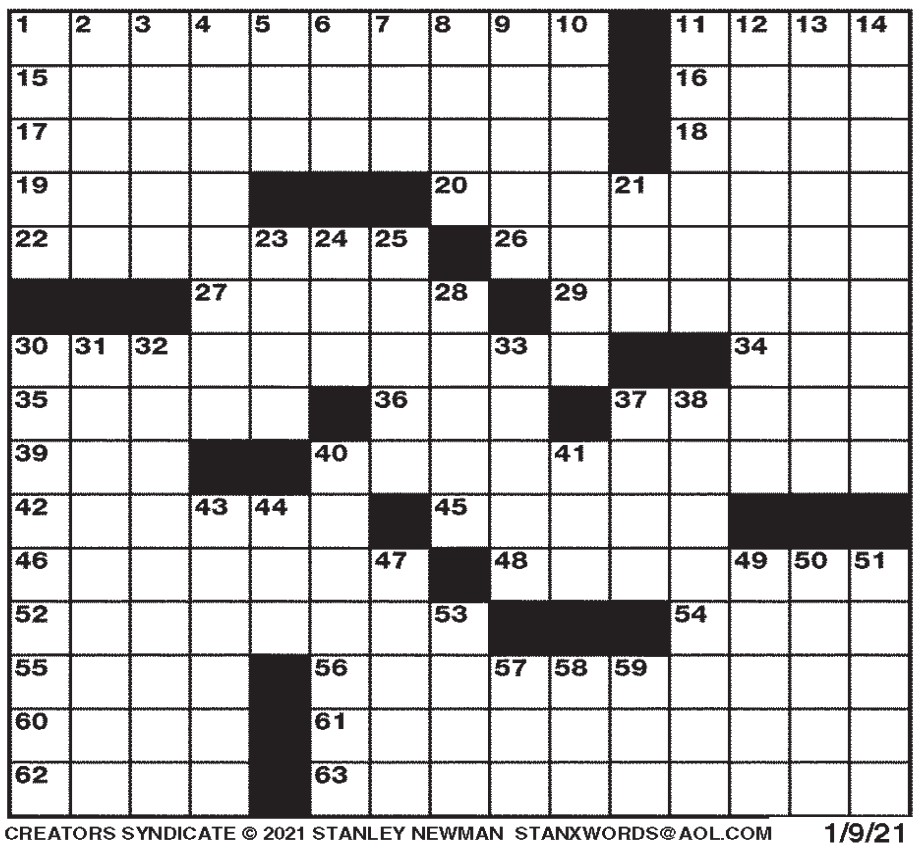
3	6		1				4	
	7			4	6		5	
9						6		1
	1			8				5
				2				
6				7			9	
1		8						4
	3		4	1			2	
	2				3		8	9

Newsday Crossword

THEMELESS SATURDAY by Andrew Bell Lewis
Edited by Stanley Newman
www.stanxwords.com

ACROSS
1 Devices with virtual keys
11 Beatnik's show of empathy
15 Musical instrument that can emulate whale calls
16 Sensibly composed
17 Determined to get it done
18 *Nouveau-Mexique*, for one
19 Tanning salon array
20 Hoop group
22 Straw beds
26 "Zealot" apostle
27 Emancipation Proclamation, e.g.
29 Best imaginable results
30 One in a Rubik's race
34 Platform for 40 Across
35 "Are we good?"
36 NYY rival
37 Do not exist
39 Media Player file format
40 Group game with Yoshi and Luigi
42 "Let's see who's faster!"
45 Worked on a board
46 Put together early
48 Annual *People* cover word
52 Existentialist's void
54 Half hexadeca-
55 Novel minimizer
56 Bug out
60 Trick's conclusion
61 Mandate for maturity
62 Antique letter opener
63 Compounds in fertilizer

DOWN
1 Aerial attack
2 Passing fancy
3 For any reason
4 Hypnogram reading
5 Pushup muscle, informally
6 Platters weighing only 120 g
7 Sounds of surprise
8 Ersatz screwdriver
9 Household openers
10 What Julius Caesar once was
11 Reply to a back-seat driver's warning
12 Analytics expert
13 Very soon
14 Starts slinging mud
21 Recipe reduction
23 Revolutionary movement
24 Quirk
25 Inspirational assistance
28 Alpine towers on the way out
30 Bite
31 "A great volcano of a man who sang fire," per Bono
32 Pivotal place
33 Name related to Ilie
37 Maximal ascendancy
38 Heyday for voice actors
40 Certain supplemental coverage
41 Come up short
43 Metaphor for fading
44 Once-popular middle name
47 Son of Cain
49 Wow factor
50 Show place
51 Ones with thick spines
53 Preferred, in a phrase
57 Onetime FDR employer
58 Dashiki, for instance
59 "How do you figure THAT?"



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Binary Puzzle

Each cell should contain a zero or a one. No more than two similar numbers below or next to each other are allowed. Each row and each column is unique and contains as many zeros as ones.

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S PUZZLE

0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	1
0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1
1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0
0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	1
1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1
0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	1
1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0
1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	0
0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	1
1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0
1	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0

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	0					0				0	0
			1					1			0
	0	0				0		1	1		



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FIND THE WORDS

This is a theme puzzle with the subject stated below. Find the listed words in the grid. (They may run in any direction but always in a straight line. Some letters are used more than once.) Ring each word as you find it and when you have completed the puzzle, there will be 19 letters left over. They spell out the alternative theme of the puzzle.

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The Top End

T	D	N	E	P	O	F	E	M	D	A	R	W	I	N
S	A	U	E	B	Y	T	U	A	E	B	L	S	T	T
U	I	D	M	F	T	O	U	R	L	H	E	T	E	G
D	N	A	L	S	I	E	L	L	I	V	L	E	M	O
C	T	K	P	P	N	R	T	I	O	B	C	N	P	R
A	R	A	R	E	G	O	E	N	P	Y	A	R	E	G
I	E	K	A	C	H	M	O	A	S	L	P	J	R	E
R	E	T	W	T	A	A	P	I	N	L	E	C	A	S
N	A	S	N	A	M	W	E	N	U	U	S	S	T	A
S	C	A	S	C	B	O	B	E	N	T	T	U	U	N
W	A	V	E	U	A	L	P	H	A	O	E	N	R	E
I	M	L	D	L	L	R	H	S	P	L	W	I	E	W
M	P	E	I	A	M	P	I	R	T	I	A	Q	G	E
G	R	I	T	R	Y	T	A	D	T	O	R	U	U	R
D	I	R	T	Y	M	U	S	E	U	M	T	E	H	F

Alpha
Arid
Balmy
Beauty
Cairns
Camp
Cape
  Stewart
Daintree
Darwin
Dirty
Dust
Fire
Frewena
Gorges
Grit
Huge
Ingham
Jabiru
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Museum
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SCHOOLS

FROM PAGE 4

youngest students. It comes amid increased pressure from parents and politicians to reopen campuses.

To qualify, school districts must submit a COVID-19 safety plan by Feb. 1, with approval from local health authorities, and commit to regular testing, all students and teachers wearing masks and for officials to put their phased-in approach in writing. Schools would reopen classrooms by mid-February for students in transitional kindergarten through second grade and children who are homeless, in foster care and without access to computing devices or high-speed internet. Schools would resume in-person classes for third through sixth graders by mid-March.

But it says schools will only qualify to reopen in counties where the seven-day average coronavirus case rate is at or below 28 per 100,000 residents. That means students in the most highly populated and hard-hit counties, such as Los Angeles, Fresno and elsewhere, may have to wait longer to return to in-person learning than students in other areas with lower infection rates.

Earlier this week, the superintendents of seven large California school districts wrote a joint letter to Newsom that voiced support for the additional funding but said the plan "does not address the disproportionate impact the virus is having on low-income communities of color," particularly in the urban school districts that serve nearly a quarter of California's 6 million students.

The seven superintendents — representing the state's four biggest districts of Los Angeles, San Diego, Fresno and Long Beach as well as Sacramento, Oakland and San Francisco — wrote that Newsom's plan was not helpful enough for their urban districts that serve a large percentage of students from poorer neighborhoods hard hit by the virus. They called for more defined rules around PPE and vaccinations.

While it calls for a "safe school environment" that includes masks, social distancing, and better ventilation, it leaves the details of creating that safe environment up to the state's 1,000 districts which would create "a patchwork of safety standards."

"It also reverses a decade-long commitment to equity-based funding," the superintendents wrote, saying that the plan is likely to wind up funneling money into wealthier districts and exacerbate inequities.

Public education accounts for roughly 40% of all state general fund spending. The amount of money school districts receive fluctuates annually based on a complicated formula outlined in the state Constitution that is based on revenues, per capita personal income and school attendance.

ESSENTIAL

FROM PAGE 1

we do have to sometimes ask that people put on their masks. There are some people that don't want to wear them or aren't wearing them or are wearing them improperly. We have to stay focused but it can be stressful at times, because other customers can get upset about that.

WHAT ARE YOU MOST LOOKING FORWARD TO DOING AGAIN WHEN THE PANDEMIC ENDS?

I'm most looking forward to traveling back home to see family when I feel like it's safe. I was able to go visit early last year before the pandemic. I'm really grateful for that because my mom had been sick and I was able to be there for her before all this. I'm looking forward to going back and being there for her again.

DO YOU FEEL APPRECIATED AS AN ESSENTIAL WORKER?

I would say I do feel appreciated most of the time. A lot of my customers thank me every day, especially those that require a little assistance. I always try to be really patient and make sure they get on and off safely. In the beginning of the pandemic one of my customers came up to me and specifically thanked me for risking my life. At the beginning of this I didn't really know the severity of the virus. It just stopped me and I thought 'wow am I doing that?' It was really nice to be acknowledged and appreciated.

Clara@smdp.com

COVID

FROM PAGE 7

was very small and would not lead the county to immediately stop using the test. He wasn't concerned that bad test results were leading to the exponential spread of the virus in the county.

"When you have as much infection as we do in LA County, ... the risk of encountering someone in the community that is positive is really high," he said. "That's what's causing the spread. It isn't the rare false negative or an occasional false negative test."

Perrone reported from Washington, D.C. Associated Press reporter Christopher Weber contributed.

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