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The Santa Monica Film Festival makes a triumphant return this weekend

CLARA HARTER
SMDP Staff Writer

Cinephiles should prepare their popcorn, because whether they are attending in person at the Laemmle or streaming from home, they will not want to miss the stellar line up of independent films at the upcoming Santa Monica Film Festival.

The festival, now in its 16th iteration, is spearheaded by Santa Monica native David Katz, who is a director and producer with a passion for helping emerging filmmakers get their movies in front of an audience.

"I understand the struggle to make a film and have experienced it on many levels," said Katz. "And while it's one thing to get a film made, it's another thing to get it seen, so that's why film festivals are important to the filmmaking circuit and what it takes to have a successful career."

This year there are 53 official selections in the festival, including feature length films, documentaries and short films. Eight of the selections will be screened in-person at the Laemmle Santa Monica Film Center on Jan. 15, and all of them will be available for streaming on xolo.org from Jan. 15 to Jan. 31.

To make the festival as accessible as possible this year, Katz is offering residents a complimentary all-screening pass, which can be redeemed by using the promo code "smdp" to

SEE **FILM** PAGE 7



Courtesy image

FILM: The local film festival will have options for live viewing and through an online partnership.

Judge's ruling provides lifeline to opponents of PS3 redevelopment

The decision will again delay demolition of a downtown parking structure that the city wants replaced with affordable housing



Matthew Hall

PARKING: A proposal to demolish the structure was paused by a judge.

EMILY SAWICKI
SMDP Staff Writer

On Tuesday night, Santa Monica City Council voted after a long hearing to enter into an agreement with developer EAH, Inc., to replace Parking Structure 3 (PS3), located on 4th Street between Arizona Avenue and Santa Monica Boulevard, with an affordable housing complex.

Less than 48 hours later, a ruling out of LA County Superior Court put the project on ice, with Judge Mitchell L. Beckloff issuing a preliminary injunction delaying demolition of the three-story structure until a court hearing can be scheduled for later in 2022.

THE PROJECT

With a goal of providing supportive housing to some of the 230-or-so unhoused individuals on Santa Monica's Service Registry, the City has spent the last few years working to construct more

SEE **PS3** PAGE 11

Pico mural and block party to breathe new life into the historic neighborhood

CLARA HARTER
SMDP Staff Writer

There's a party on Pico this weekend and the whole neighborhood is invited.

At the center of the event is a brand new, impossible to miss, two-story tall mural celebrating the rich history of the neighborhood and what the Pico Improvement Organization (PIO) hopes will be a bright future for the business district.

The block party will take place from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. on Jan. 15 in front of the new mural at Pico Blvd and Urban Street. It was painted by local muralist Marcel Blanco and commemorates several local legacy businesses while adding to the growing collection of street art along Pico Boulevard.

"It just feels like amidst a lot of

SEE **PICO** PAGE 6



Courtesy photo

MURAL: There's a block party planned this weekend to celebrate the new mural on Pico.



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DAILY FIRE LOG

SMDP STAFF CHOSE THE FOLLOWING FROM 23 CALLS ON JANUARY 12

EMS 1900Blk Cloverfield Blvd 8:07 a.m.
EMS 800Blk 10th St 8:15 a.m.
EMS 600Blk 11th St 8:41 a.m.
EMS 900Blk 26th St 9:20 a.m.
EMS 2700Blk Montana Ave 10:52 a.m.
EMS 900Blk 9th St 11:10 a.m.
EMS 700Blk 18th St 11:20 a.m.
EMS 1300Blk 15th St 11:20 a.m.
EMS 1300Blk 20th St 11:49 a.m.
EMS 1500Blk Stanford St 12:08 p.m.
Automatic Alarm 900Blk 2nd St 12:14 p.m.
EMS 1900Blk 20th St 6:13 a.m.
Automatic Alarm 1300Blk 3rd Street Prom 7:15 a.m.
Odor Of Natural Gas 1500Blk Berkeley St 7:55 a.m.
EMS 1100Blk Arizona Ave 12:19 p.m.
EMS 1100Blk 7th St 12:25 p.m.
EMS 1400Blk 17th St 1:03 p.m.
EMS 1900Blk Pico Blvd 1:04 p.m.
EMS 1500Blk 5th St 1:12 p.m.
EMS 1300Blk 3rd Street Prom 1:41 p.m.
EMS 1400Blk 17th St 1:59 p.m.
EMS 2000Blk Santa Monica Blvd 3:53 p.m.
EMS 900Blk Lincoln Blvd 7:49 p.m.

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

11th Street

SMC Barrett Gallery to Host "Art + Transformation"

The Santa Monica College (SMC) Pete & Susan Barrett Art Gallery will host the "Art + Transformation" exhibition January 14 through March 1. The exhibition – presented in conjunction with the Prison Arts Collective (PAC) – is part of a collaborative, multidisciplinary project involving students and faculty in the SMC Art Department and SMC Dance Department.

The exhibition features a free walkthrough and dance performance, and the project also includes weekly discussions, programs, and activities. Details about the walkthrough, dance performance, and other activities are listed under the exhibition name at smc.edu/Barrett.

The project culminates in The Broad Stage's Heartbeat Opera Series production of Beethoven's Fidelio. The 90-minute adaptation of Beethoven's opera pitting corruption against courage, hate against hope features five singers, seven instrumentalists, and a recorded chorus of more than 100 incarcerated singers. Fidelio will be performed February 26 at 7:30 p.m. and February 27 at 4 p.m. Information and tickets for Fidelio are available at thebroadstage.org.

"This exhibition is an opportunity to engage the Santa Monica community at large in dialogue in and around the power of art to transform, the issues of mass incarceration in our society, social justice, healing, along with the ability to build and lean into community for growth and change," said SMC Professor and Barrett Gallery Co-Director Emily Silver. Special art activities will be held in the gallery every Tuesday throughout the exhibition.

Barrett Gallery exhibition viewings are free and available by appointment only, which can be scheduled by sending email to SILVER_EMILY@smc.edu. Proof of vaccination is required upon arrival at the gallery, and masks are required at all times.

The "Art + Transformation" exhibition and related activities were made possible with the generous support of Freya and Mark Ivener. The Heartbeat Opera Series is sponsored by Laurie and Bill Benenson and Susan Stockel.

The Prison Arts Collective, headquartered at San Diego State University, considers art to be a human right and believes in "the capacity of art to cultivate community and positive change." The organization works to establish partnerships between prisons and colleges and universities to expand access to the "transformative power of art to people experiencing incarceration." PAC is a project of Arts in Corrections, part of an initiative of the California Arts Council and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR).

The SMC Pete & Susan Barrett Gallery is located at the SMC Performing Arts Center, 1310 11th Street (at Santa Monica Boulevard), Santa Monica. Entry is through the Performing Arts Center's courtyard.

More information is available by visiting smc.edu/barrett or calling 310-434-3434.

SUBMITTED BY GRACE SMITH, SMC

City of Santa Monica

CITY OF SANTA MONICA
NOTICE INVITING BIDS

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that bids will be received by the City of Santa Monica until 3:00 p.m. on the date indicated at which time they will be opened and posted for:

BID #4420 BUS CNG FUEL SYSTEMS REPAIR.

Submission Deadline is January 26, 2022 at 3:00 PM Pacific Time.

Bids must be submitted on forms supplied by the City of Santa Monica. Bid packages containing all forms, specifications, terms and conditions may be obtained on the **CITY'S ONLINE VENDOR PORTAL**. The website for this Notice of Inviting Bids and related documents is: ProcureNow (https://secure.procurenow.com/portal/santa-monica-ca). There is no charge for bid package and specifications.

DAILY POLICE LOG

SMDP STAFF CHOSE THE FOLLOWING FROM 255 CALLS ON JANUARY 12

Living In A Vehicle 500Blk Ocean Ave 12:01 a.m.
Traffic/Vehicle Stop 300Blk Broadway 12:27 a.m.
Petty Theft 5th St / Colorado Ave 12:50 a.m.
Loud Music 800Blk Maple St 5:33 a.m.
Loud Music Lincoln Blvd / Hill St 6:12 a.m.
72 Hour Psychiatric Hold 1900Blk 20th St 6:14 a.m.
Theft Of Recyclables 2500Blk Euclid St 6:16 a.m.
Burglary Investigation/Walk Through 1400Blk Ocean Ave 6:32 a.m.
Petty Theft 2nd St / Arizona Ave 6:39 a.m.
Burglary 600Blk Pico Blvd 6:58 a.m.
Encampment 2500Blk Barnard Way 7:11 a.m.
Violation Of Preferential Parking Zone 800Blk Cedar St 8:15 a.m.
Violation Of Posted Sign 2700Blk Pico Blvd 8:21 a.m.
Death Investigation 800Blk 10th St 8:24 a.m.
Animal Related Incident 7th St / Michigan Ave 8:34 a.m.
Traffic Collision - No Injuries City Prop Involved 600Blk Santa Monica Blvd 8:37 a.m.
Burglary 2000Blk Olympic Blvd 8:41 a.m.
Petty Theft 300Blk California Ave 8:50 a.m.
Encampment 900Blk Ocean Ave 8:57 a.m.
Mark & Tag Abandoned Vehicle 1200Blk Hill St 9:12 a.m.
Mark & Tag Abandoned Vehicle 900Blk 9th St 9:13 a.m.
Grand Theft 2100Blk California Ave 9:15 a.m.
Traffic Hazard Pacific Coast Hwy / Moomat Ahiko Way 9:19 a.m.
Traffic Hazard 1500Blk 4th St 9:32 a.m.
Fraud 1400Blk 6th St 10:10 a.m.
Assault Now 400Blk Broadway 10:11 a.m.
Red Zone Violation 1000Blk Washington Ave 10:27 a.m.
Traffic Collision - No Injuries 1500Blk 2nd St 10:33 a.m.
Animal Related Incident 22nd St / Carlyle Ave 10:33 a.m.
Petty Theft 1400Blk 2nd St 10:58 a.m.
Assault W/Deadly Weapon 4th St / Colorado Ave 10:59 a.m.
Grand Theft Neilson Way / Bicknell Ave 11:01 a.m.
Violation Of Preferential Parking Zone 900Blk Harvard St 11:11 a.m.
Fraud 600Blk Grant St 11:13 a.m.
Found Property 1400Blk 2nd St 11:13 a.m.
Traffic Collision - No Injuries City Prop Involved 2600Blk 14th St 11:18 a.m.
Traffic Collision - Unknown Injuries 4th St / Montana Ave 11:52 a.m.
Violation Of Preferential Parking Zone 700Blk Washington Ave 11:58 a.m.
Traffic Control Request - Level 1 5th St / Montana Ave 12:00 p.m.
Auto Burglary 1300Blk 9th St 12:04 p.m.
Overdose 1500Blk Stanford St 12:11 p.m.
Arson 1400Blk 4th St 12:22 p.m.
Traffic Hazard 21st St / Wilshire Blvd 12:35 p.m.
Grand Theft 1200Blk Georgina Ave 12:40 p.m.
Violation Of Posted Sign 1800Blk 20th St 12:45 p.m.
Burglary 1200Blk 6th St 12:50 p.m.
Traffic Collision - No Injuries City Prop Involved 300Blk Olympic Dr 12:57 p.m.
Fraud 1300Blk Franklin St 1:15 p.m.
Missing Person 300Blk Olympic Dr 1:25 p.m.
Traffic Hazard Lincoln Blvd / Wilshire Blvd 1:30 p.m.
Hit And Run Felony Investigation 1000Blk Lincoln Blvd 1:52 p.m.
Fraud 800Blk 5th St 1:54 p.m.
Vehicle Blocking Driveway 800Blk 11th St 1:59 p.m.
Mark & Tag Abandoned Vehicle 1900Blk California Ave 2:05 p.m.
Traffic Hazard 1200Blk 5th St 2:36 p.m.
Burglary 1400Blk 7th St 2:41 p.m.
Grand Theft 1700Blk Ocean Ave 2:45 p.m.
Violation Of Preferential Parking Zone 1500Blk 16th St 2:58 p.m.
Indecent Exposure Now 300Blk Wilshire Blvd 3:09 p.m.
Hit And Run Misdemeanor Investigation 18th St / Arizona Ave 3:15 p.m.
Fraud 1100Blk 4th St 3:26 p.m.
Mark & Tag Abandoned Vehicle 2300Blk 33rd St 3:41 p.m.
Expired Registration 700Blk Washington Ave 3:49 p.m.
Mark & Tag Abandoned Vehicle 500Blk California Ave 3:54 p.m.
Oversize Vehicle Violation 1500Blk Pacific Coast Hwy 3:57 p.m.
Lost Property 300Blk Santa Monica Pier 3:58 p.m.
Mark & Tag Abandoned Vehicle 800Blk 6th St 4:05 p.m.
Petty Theft 400Blk Wilshire Blvd 4:25 p.m.
Assault W/Deadly Weapon 1700Blk Ocean Ave 4:28 p.m.
Grand Theft 1800Blk Pearl St 4:49 p.m.
Hit And Run Misdemeanor Investigation 900Blk Lincoln Blvd 5:12 p.m.
Petty Theft 1500Blk Maple St 5:12 p.m.
Mark & Tag Abandoned Vehicle 1100Blk Hill St 5:15 p.m.
Burglary 2600Blk 5th St 5:31 p.m.
Found Property 1400Blk 3rd Street Prom 5:37 p.m.
Traffic Hazard 900Blk Pacific Coast Hwy 5:50 p.m.
Urinating/Defecating In Public 800Blk 2nd St 6:04 p.m.
Loud Music 1500Blk 7th St 6:23 p.m.
Threats Report/Investigations 1400Blk Wilshire Blvd 6:40 p.m.
Animal Related Incident 2200Blk 22nd St 7:11 p.m.
Loud Music 2400Blk Barnard Way 7:30 p.m.
Animal Related Incident 1000Blk Princeton St 7:30 p.m.
Domestic Violence Now 1300Blk Santa Monica Blvd 7:38 p.m.
Found Senile Person 700Blk Palisades Beach rd 7:40 p.m.
Battery 1500Blk 7th St 7:47 p.m.
Traffic Hazard 17th St / Ocean Park Blvd 8:00 p.m.
Loud Music 3300Blk Barnard Way 8:28 p.m.
Mark & Tag Abandoned Vehicle 2400Blk Oak St 9:03 p.m.
Grand Theft Auto 800Blk Montana Ave 9:10 p.m.
Arson 800Blk 2nd St 9:23 p.m.
Threats Report/Investigations 1600Blk Ocean Front Walk 9:35 p.m.
Oversize Vehicle Violation 1000Blk Ozone Ave 9:43 p.m.
Urinating/Defecating In Public 1100Blk Lincoln Blvd 10:02 p.m.
Fight 2500Blk Main St 11:01 p.m.
Speeding 17th St / California Ave 11:03 p.m.
Battery 12th St / Wilshire Blvd 11:25 p.m.
Loud Music 400Blk Washington Ave 11:54 p.m.

COVID-19 pill rollout stymied by shortages as omicron rages

MATTHEW PERRONE
AP Health Writer

Two brand-new COVID-19 pills that were supposed to be an important weapon against the pandemic in the U.S. are in short supply and have played little role in the fight against the omicron wave of infections.

The problem, in part, is that production is still being ramped up and the medicines can take anywhere from five to eight months to manufacture.

While the supply is expected to improve dramatically in the coming months, doctors are clamoring for the pills now, not just because omicron is causing an explosion of cases but because two antibody drugs that were once the go-to treatments don't work as well against the variant.

"This should be a really joyous time because we now have highly effective antiviral pills," said Erin McCreary, a pharmacist and administrator at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. "Instead, this feels like the hardest and most chaotic stretch of the pandemic."

The pills — and other COVID-19 drugs, for that matter — are being carefully rationed, reserved for the highest-risk patients.

"January is going to be a terrible month with a million cases a day," said University of North Carolina virologist Dr. Myron Cohen. "Most people will do perfectly well, but we have to select out the people who won't and give them the drugs we have available."

The Food and Drug Administration authorized the two pills from Pfizer and Merck late last month based on studies showing they cut the risk of severe disease and death when given shortly after symptoms appear. They are the first COVID-19 treatments patients can take at home, and thus could reduce the burden on hospitals.

The U.S. didn't make the kind of mass purchases in advance that it did with vaccines.

Pfizer's pill, Paxlovid, is considered far superior to Merck's, but because of the six to eight months it takes to manufacture, the company says it can supply only about 250,000 courses of the treatment by the end of this month.

The U.S. has ordered enough Paxlovid to treat 20 million people, but the first 10 million orders won't be delivered until June.

White House COVID-19 coordinator Jeff Zients said this week that the government collaborated with Pfizer to help speed up development of the pill by several months, and that officials continue to work with the company to look for ways to boost production.

Pfizer said it is adding capacity: "We expect to use our strong manufacturing capabilities and our extensive supplier network to continue to improve output rapidly."

Merck's pill, molnupiravir, was produced in greater advance quantities. It takes six months to manufacture, though the company says that can be compressed to five months if necessary.

But final testing showed the drug was far less effective than Pfizer's pill and carried significant risks, including the potential for birth defects when taken by pregnant women. As a result, it is considered the last-choice option under federal guidelines.

Merck said it has delivered 900,000 courses of the drug and is on track to ship all 3 million ordered by the U.S. by the end of the month.

Since last month, the government has sent states enough Pfizer pills to treat 164,000 people, allocating them by population. That approach is coming under fire from some states with heavier caseloads.

The amount allocated to New York — enough to treat about 20,000 people — is insufficient, said Health Commissioner Dr. Mary Bassett.

"We need more of these drugs in order to make them alter the course of the pandemic and reduce hospitalization," she said.

State guidelines generally recommend doctors give priority for the drugs to those at the highest risk, including cancer patients, transplant recipients and people who have lung disease or are pregnant. New York's guidelines also recommend prioritizing certain racial and ethnic minorities, given their higher rates of severe illness and death.

States are distributing the pills differently.

In Michigan, all initial shipments went to 10 pharmacies in the hardest-hit areas. Pennsylvania, Maryland, Texas and many other states have distributed the pills more widely, so that at least one pharmacy in each county carries the drug.

Despite the strict prescribing guidelines, some patients have been able to get the pills through luck and persistence.

Craige Campbell, a website manager from Desert Hot Springs, California, began leaving messages with his doctor immediately after testing positive for COVID-19 and developing a 101-degree fever. Despite having no underlying health conditions, he was soon able to get a prescription.

The only pharmacy dispensing the drug was more than an hour's drive away, so Campbell had a friend pick it up for him.

"I felt a bit privileged in a way," he said. "The odds that it would land in my plate in the right amount of time were pretty extraordinary."

At the same time, there is a shortage of antibody medications, the infused or injected drugs that can head off death and hospitalization. Only one of them, from GlaxoSmithKline, appears effective against omicron, and it, too, is being rationed.

Federal officials are limiting shipments of it to about 50,000 doses per week. This week, the government announced it is buying 600,000 more doses, on top of 400,000 purchased in November.

At the UPMC hospital system in

SEE **PILL** PAGE 4



CRIME WATCH BY DAILY PRESS STAFF

Crime Watch is culled from reports provided by the Santa Monica Police Department. These are arrests only. All parties are innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

ON WEDNESDAY, DEC. 29 AT 1:06 A.M.

Officers responded to the 2300 block of 27th St. regarding a Suspicious Person. Upon arrival, the resident of the home told police that he heard footsteps on his rooftop. SMPD Officers searched the exterior of the property and located an individual sitting on the roof of the house. Jeremy Emmanuel Gonzalez was arrested for Prowling and transported to the Santa Monica Police Department jail.

Letter to the Editor

Jim Hayes Send comments to editor@smdp.com

Re: Time to go electric, SMDP, 1/13/22

Perhaps Mr. Scott is not looking around as he drives the streets of Santa Monica. Teslas are parked on every block it seems, and they seem very reluctant to obey stop signs, but that is another matter.

We have an owner in our building with a Tesla Model 3. They inquired about getting a charger so we helped research it. We got estimates of around $30,000 to either do the upgrades to the building electricals necessary or to bring in a separate circuit with sufficient capacity for charging an electric car. Needless to say, the owner declined to pursue it.

While my wife and I were driving up the Pacific Coast Highway through Malibu, California last week, we got stuck in traffic next to a Tesla Model 3 which had license plates from Ohio. I laughed to myself and told my wife, "When that guy's at home, that's a "coal-fired Tesla."

Electric cars are not "zero emission" vehicles by any means. They may be "zero emissions right here," but in reality they are "remote emission vehicles," dependent on power plants supplying electricity through the grid. In California, we have a good contribution from solar, wind, hydroelectric, even some geothermal and one aging nuclear plant, but the biggest source of electricity in the US is still fossil fuel power plants, including lots of coal-fired ones.

And that Tesla Model 3 is hauling around 1054 pounds of batteries everywhere it goes, including about 12 pounds of lithium and 40 pounds of cobalt, elements obtained by less than environmentally-friendly mining.

The Teslas sold last year - around 930,000 - used about 4 billion batteries. The battery units they used, if stacked up would form a pyramid about half the size of the Great Pyramid at Giza and weigh almost 1 billion pounds - half a million tons. Does anybody have a plan to dispose of these or recycle the toxic waste they represent in a decade or so?

Jim Hayes, Santa Monica

Super Bowl organizers say game is staying in Inglewood

GREG BEACHAM
AP Sports Writer

With the Super Bowl just one month away, preparations are in full swing for the return of the NFL's premier event to the place where it all started.

And both NFL officials and local organizers say the championship game isn't leaving the Los Angeles area.

The NFL has no plans to move the Super Bowl to Arlington, Texas, or anywhere else despite the recent rise in COVID-19 cases and the accompanying health precautions in California, several officials confirmed Thursday at SoFi Stadium during a media event held to mark one month before the 56th edition of the Super Bowl on Feb. 13.

"All of our plans for Super Bowl week remain fully in place for a month from today," said Katie Keenan, the NFL's senior director of event operations. "We're working along with everyone here, with the LA County Health Department, to make sure all of our events are being held safely."

The first Super Bowl was held at the Coliseum in downtown Los Angeles in January 1967. The 56th edition will be held for the first time at Los Angeles Rams owner Stan Kroenke's 2-year-old stadium, which opened in the summer of 2020 just south of Los Angeles with a unique indoor-outdoor design that includes both a translucent roof and significant air flow from the open ends above the low-slung bowl.

A media fuss was raised earlier this month when the NFL explored the feasibility of using the Dallas Cowboys' AT&T Stadium as a backup site for the Super Bowl, ostensibly in case coronavirus rules in California were to prevent the league from staging a Super Bowl here.

The NFL immediately confirmed that it finds backup sites for the Super Bowl every year, and it had no serious concerns about its ability to hold the game in Inglewood.

Several California universities have sharply limited fan attendance at indoor sporting events in January after a series of coronavirus-related postponements. But those decisions were made by the universities rather than by state mandate, and Southern California's professional sports teams haven't followed suit, with the Rams and Chargers welcoming full houses in January.

Kevin Demoff, the Rams' chief operating officer, noted that SoFi has had extensive coronavirus safety protocols in place for all 17 regular-season games played at the stadium by the Rams and the Chargers. Those precautions are still in place Monday night for the first playoff game in the stadium's history when the fourth-seeded Rams (12-5) host the Arizona Cardinals (11-6).

"I don't think anybody has ever wavered on being able to play this game here and play it safely," Demoff said. "We've had an amazing, safe environment all year. We are fortunate this is an outdoor facility where the air gets in. We feel this building is very safe. People who come to our games have learned to be safe, and we are doing everything we can to be safe."

PILL
FROM PAGE 3

Pennsylvania, the staff can treat fewer than 1,000 patients per week with antibodies, down from as many as 4,000 earlier in the pandemic.

Doctors and nurses around the U.S. have developed complex means of deciding who should get the scarce medications, based on patients' symptoms, their underlying medical risks, where they live and whether they are healthy enough to travel for an infusion.

"What do we have on hand?" is the first question, said University of Maryland Medical Center's Dr. Greg Schrank. "Among those therapies, what's the most effective and how can we direct it to the people that we know are of greatest risk?"

The increasingly complicated treatment picture comes as exhausted, frustrated hospital workers try to manage rising admissions.

As of Sunday, nearly 128,000 Americans were in the hospital with COVID-19, surpassing the all-time high of around 125,000 last January. While fewer COVID-19 patients now require intensive care, the surge is pushing hospitals to the breaking point.

Considering that threat, Pfizer's pill arrived just in time, Schrank said.

"It's not going to turn the tide on the total number of cases, but it could really help dampen the impact on hospitals," he said.

AP Writers Bobby Calvan in New York and David Eggert in Lansing, Mich. contributed to this story.

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AWARD WINNER
AWARD WINNER
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OPINIONS EXPRESSED are those of the writer and do not necessarily reflect those of the Santa Monica Daily Press staff. Guest editorials from residents are encouraged, as are letters to the editor. Letters to the Editor can be submitted to letters@smdp.com. Receipt of a letter does not guarantee publication and all content is published at the discretion of the paper. All letters and guest editorials are subject to editing for space and content. All submissions must include the author's name, address and phone number for the purposes of verification.

Tech companies spend millions on California political gifts

DON THOMPSON
Associated Press

Gov. Gavin Newsom solicited donations totaling nearly $227 million from Facebook, Google, Blue Shield and other private California companies and organizations to combat the coronavirus pandemic and help run parts of his administration, according to a report Thursday by the state's political watchdog agency.

"Behested payments" are contributions solicited by an elected official to be given to another individual or organization. They are less regulated than campaign contributions and grew 10-fold from 2019, Newsom's first year in office, and 2020, when the pandemic arrived.

Facebook contributed nearly $27 million to the Democratic governor's causes, mostly for gift cards to nursing home workers. Blue Shield of California gave $20 million toward homeless programs. Those companies were the two top donors, said the Fair Political Practices Commission, which oversees and enforces California's campaign finance and political ethics laws.

Listed beneficiaries include the governor's office for $42.5 million and the Governor's Office of Emergency Services for $26 million. There was also money supporting California's Alzheimer's Task Force, Newsom's California Climate Action Corps initiatives, a California Climate Day of Action, and consulting services for the administration's Master Plan for Aging.

While California limits the amount of gifts and campaign contributions to politicians, there are no limits on behested payments. They are reportable only if they are made at the suggestion of a public official to someone else for a legislative, governmental or charitable purpose, and only if payments from a single source reach $5,000 in a calendar year.

"Unprecedented times, call for an unprecedented response," Newsom spokesperson Daniel Lopez said in a statement.

He said the governor "has been committed to utilizing the innovative spirit of our private sector" and is "leveraging that strength to help improve the lives of all Californians."

There is no suggestion that Newsom or his donors acted improperly. But critics say that while the payments don't directly benefit the politician, they can indirectly curry favor.

For instance, former Gov. Jerry Brown repeatedly sought contributions from casinos, labor unions, wineries, insurers and major corporations to benefit the Oakland Military Institute charter school he founded in 2001 when he was mayor of the city.

Despite the nature of such behested payments, Lopez said hundreds of companies including Facebook and Blue Shield reached out to the governor's office, not the other way around.

Campaign watchdogs fall into two camps on behested payments, said Loyola Law School professor Jessica Levinson, former president of the Los Angeles Ethics Commission.

Some believe such contributions "are the devil's work, and they're clearly a loophole around contribution limits and people just give them to curry favor with elected officials," she said.

She tends to fall into the second camp, that money will inevitably flow through politics and would otherwise go to campaign accounts or independent expenditure committees.

"So if people are going to try and curry favor with elected officials, which they will, then let's at least have that money go to a good cause," she said.

She said the big issue is having the payments be transparently disclosed, so voters can make informed decisions on the donations and outcome.

"Not every behested payment is nefarious, but every behested payment deserves scrutiny," said Jonathan Mehta Stein, executive director at the good government group California Common Cause. "And the explosion of behested payments recently certainly creates a perception among the public that corporations and players in state politics are using this as an avenue to get around our pay-to-play rules."

Blue Shield and Facebook, now Meta, each said they were proud to help Californians during an unprecedented pandemic.

Aside from the governor, behested payments can be made on behalf of numerous local and state officials, including lawmakers and statewide officeholders.

Several other states including Alabama, Florida, Hawaii, Maryland, New Mexico and New York limit or prohibit such solicitations to benefit third parties, according to California's ethics panel.

Newsom mentioned some of his contributors in his near-daily news conferences in the early stages of the pandemic, providing publicity for some donors.

Ethics commission spokesman Jay Wierenga said requests for donations can take various forms and don't have to come from the governor himself. They could begin with a casual request by a governor's aide at an event or with a formal solicitation letter, and the nature of that request doesn't have to be disclosed, just the result.

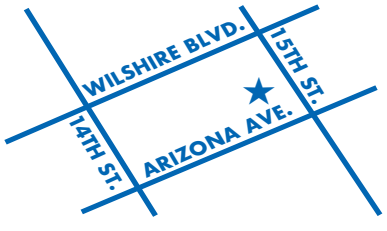
Payments made at Brown's request topped out at less than $11 million in 2018, his last year in office, and Newsom's at about $12 million in 2019 when he took over and sought money to pay for his inauguration festivities and various governor's task forces.

Newsom kicked such donations into an entirely new gear in 2020.

In 2019 there was one contribution topping $1 million. The next year there were 50. Contributions between $500,000 and $1 million jumped from three to 18.

The overall amount of state behested payments in 2020 was more than 30 times

SEE **GIFTS** PAGE 11

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It makes a difference!

PICO

FROM PAGE 1

struggle (during the pandemic), Pico really keeps trying to progress and we're doing important things where we're thriving, we're beautifying and we're continuing to up our game in terms of our attractiveness," said Dana Moorehead, PIO Merchant Engagement Director.

The event is expected to be quite a community gathering with City Councilmembers, Mayor Sue Himmelrich, City Manager David White and a range of Pico merchants all set to be in attendance.

The block party will also mark the triumphant return of Unurban Cafe, a 26-year-old Pico business owned by Pam Stollings that shuttered its doors at the start of the pandemic.

"With that new mural going up, it just gave her inspiration to open up and start her business up again," said Moorehead, adding that attendees can expect to enjoy Unurban's homemade chili and a range of other treats at the event.

Other highlights include a performance by the award winning local dance group Ballet Folklorico and music from DJ Henry Helix. After almost two tough pandemic years for local stores, Moorehead said she hopes the event will kickstart a successful year of business for merchants old and new.

"It's such a diverse street and we have some of the oldest businesses in Santa Monica: we have Santa Monica College, which came about in 1929, Rae's Diner in 1958 and McCabe's Guitar Shop in 1958," said Moorehead.

The mural contains nods to all three of these longstanding businesses by including the guitar from the McCabe's logo, the mid-century Rae's Diner sign and the SMC logo.

"This vibrant, placemaker sign celebrates our diverse merchants and community in the Pico District, from Centinela all the way to the beach," said Sharon Town Lee, PIO Chair. "We are delighted to offer neighbors and visitors of all ages the opportunity to enjoy our fantastic Pico hospitality."

The project is one of several initiatives the PIO is running to beautify, unite and enrich the business strip along Pico Boulevard.

While the area is a longstanding site for businesses it is much more spread out than other commercial districts such as Main Street or Montana Avenue. Therefore, the PIO is looking at ways to unify the street and encourage residents to explore different parts of the business district.

The over 20 vibrant murals painted by Beautify Earth muralists are one example of this. Another, is PIO's new "door to adore" initiative where the organization is encouraging businesses to paint their doors in the bright official colors of Pico: purple, orange, blue and pink. Lastly, the team is working on beautifying the freeway off ramp on Pico by planting a new garden around it.

More information on the block party and these projects can be found at https://picopassport.com/

Clara@smdp.com

A Film about the Life of
'Abdu'l-Bahá
and Service to Humanity

Exemplar

BAHÁ'Í FAITH



Join us on **Saturday January 15, 2022 at 12:00 PM** Pacific time for the viewing of an extraordinary film about the life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and service to humanity.

The film, ***Exemplar***, commemorates the 100th Anniversary of the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the son of Baha'u'llah, founder of the Baha'i Faith. 'Abdu'l-Bahá made lasting contributions to Racial Justice during His visit to North America in 1912. He inspired thousands who heard Him speak of the Oneness of Humanity.

'Abdu'l-Bahá continues to be a perfect example of how to live a spiritual life in a practical way.

"You must manifest complete love and affection toward all mankind. Do not exalt yourselves above others, but consider all as your equals, recognizing them as the servants of one God."

--'Abdu'l-Bahá

Join Zoom Meeting on **January 15, 2022, at 12:00 PM PDT.** Meeting ID: 851 9194 0526 Password: 834 706

FILM

FROM PAGE 1

register for tickets at santamonicafilmfestival.eventbrite.com.

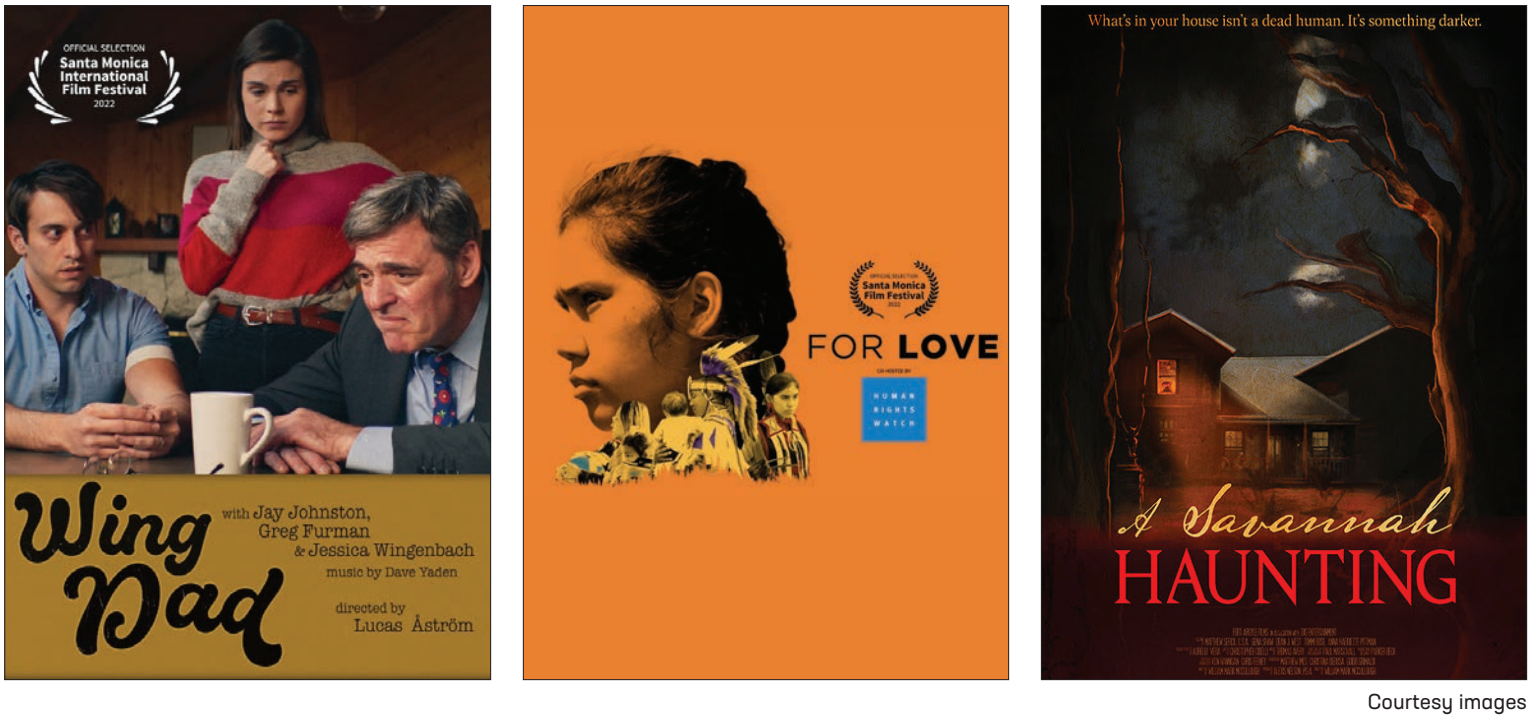
The films featured in the festival span a breadth of topics and represent artists from a range of diverse backgrounds. Highlights include the heartbreaking documentary on Canadian Indigenous children "FOR LOVE;" a unique horror movie called "A Savannah Haunting;" and a feature comedy called "Wing Dad," which is about the struggles to maintain a small business during the pandemic.

The festival is co-hosted by Human Rights Watch as the organization is seeking to raise awareness about the abuses faced by Indigenous children through the screening of "FOR LOVE."

This documentary sheds light on the atrocities inflicted on Indigenous peoples by the Canadian child welfare system. It discusses both the horrors of the past and the means that indigenous people are using to regain control of their children to preserve their families and traditions for future generations.

"We are honored that they (Human Rights Watch) have come in to co-host the event," said Katz. "They're helping to make sure that the world is informed about the indigenous people in the story that 'FOR LOVE' exposes."

Katz said he is also particularly excited for the screening of "A Savannah Haunting," which is a horror film based on supernatural experiences that the writer/director and his family claims to have experienced in their home in Savannah for decades. According to Katz, the filming caused so many frightening



Courtesy images

FESTIVAL: The local event includes films from several genres that organizers hope will appeal to all kinds of viewers.

incidents that the crew almost quit during production. Another interesting aspect about the movie is that it was produced by Santa Monica resident Alexis Nelson.

"It's important to the Santa Monica Film Festival that we always have a selection of films that are produced or directed or written or made by Santa Monica residents," said Katz. "Making a film is a communal effort, so when you get it done it's something that should be celebrated within your community."

Another exciting part of the festival is that it will mark the world premiere of the movie "Wing Dad." This comedy was made by a husband and wife filmmaking team and tells the tale of a neurotic coffee shop owner trying to keep his business afloat while being paid a visit by his semi-famous alcoholic father.

The festival features films and shorts across all types of genres and is designed to have something that will appeal to any kind of moviegoer.

"This is a film festival produced by filmmakers for the community and it's something that we're excited to be in our 16th year," said Katz. "We're looking forward to going back to some normality in the future, but we're excited to have branched out to have an online aspect this year as it's really giving us an opportunity to reach a larger audience."

More information is available on all of the films and screenings at www.santamonicafilmfestival.com/

Clara@smdp.com

PARDEE
PROPERTIES

shovel-ready development opportunity, steps to beach

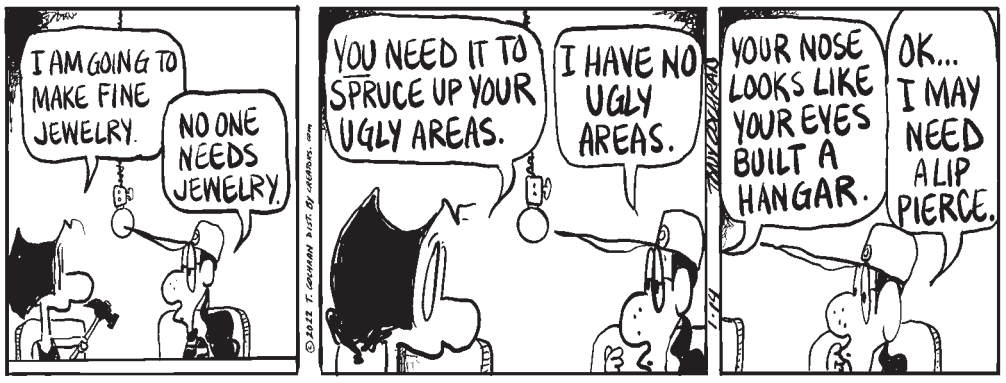
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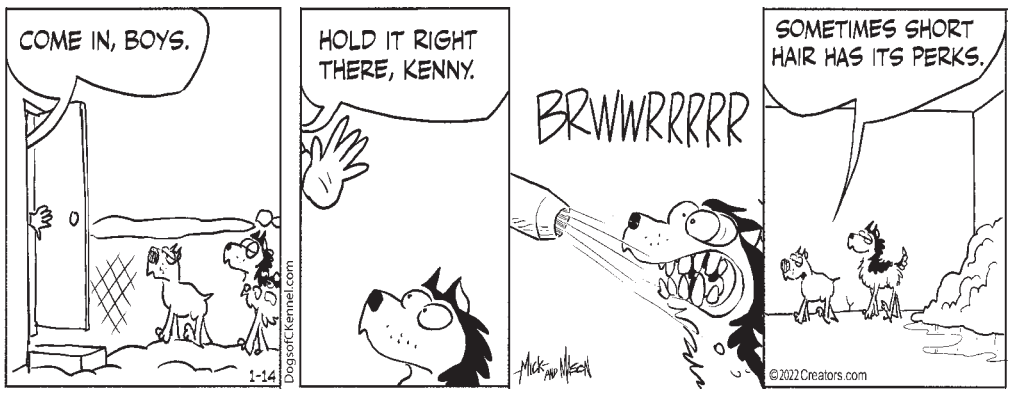
Agnes

By TONY COCHRAN



Dogs of C-Kennel

By MICK & MASON MASTROIANNI & JOHNNY HART



Zack Hill

By JOHN DEERING & JOHN NEWCOMBE



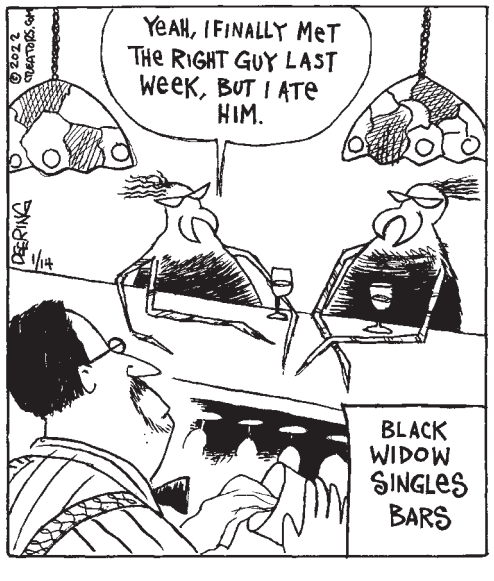
Heathcliff

By PETER GALLAGHER



Strange Brew

By JOHN DEERING





SURF FORECASTS

WATER TEMP: 57.6°

FRIDAY - **FAIR** - SURF: 3-4ft+ Waist to shoulder high
More WNW swell to fill in through the day with surf pulsing back up some. Pretty good potential for light wind. Stay tuned, the fun should continue.

SATURDAY - **FAIR** - SURF: 3-4ft Waist to chest high
New, longer-period WNW swell builds in all day. Light wind most of day. Shape at the points improve later morning with dropping tide. Potential for breezy offshore flow.

WEATHER

Friday: Partly sunny, with a high near 67. East southeast wind 5 to 10 mph.
Friday Night: Mostly cloudy, with a low around 51. West wind 10 to 15 mph.
Saturday: Mostly cloudy, with a high near 70. North northeast wind 10 to 15 mph.

Date	Day	Time (LST/LDT)	Predicted (ft)	High/Low
2022/01/14	Fri	12:17 AM	2.49	L
2022/01/14	Fri	06:39 AM	5.52	H
2022/01/14	Fri	2:10 PM	-0.43	L
2022/01/14	Fri	8:49 PM	3.40	H
2022/01/15	Sat	12:56 AM	2.47	L
2022/01/15	Sat	07:13 AM	5.71	H
2022/01/15	Sat	2:40 PM	-0.64	L
2022/01/15	Sat	9:17 PM	3.48	H
2022/01/16	Sun	01:31 AM	2.39	L
2022/01/16	Sun	07:46 AM	5.87	H
2022/01/16	Sun	3:10 PM	-0.77	L
2022/01/16	Sun	9:44 PM	3.53	H
2022/01/17	Mon	02:04 AM	2.29	L
2022/01/17	Mon	08:18 AM	5.97	H
2022/01/17	Mon	3:40 PM	-0.83	L
2022/01/17	Mon	10:12 PM	3.58	H
2022/01/18	Tue	02:37 AM	2.21	L
2022/01/18	Tue	08:50 AM	5.98	H
2022/01/18	Tue	4:10 PM	-0.82	L
2022/01/18	Tue	10:42 PM	3.63	H
2022/01/19	Wed	03:13 AM	2.15	L

DAILY LOTTERY

POWERball calottery
Draw Date: 1/12
12 21 22 30 33
Power#: 24
Jackpot: 48 M

calottery MEGA MILLIONS
Draw Date: 1/11
2 3 19 52 58
Mega#: 16
Jackpot: 325 M

SuperLotto PLUS calottery
Draw Date: 1/12
10 33 35 39 47
Mega#: 22
Jackpot: 8 M

calottery Fantasy5
Draw Date: 1/12
13 19 28 35 38

calottery Daily 3
Draw Date: 1/12
EVENING: 2 3 5
Draw Date: 1/12
MIDDAY: 8 3 9

Daily Derby calottery
Draw Date: 1/12
1st: 06 - Whirl Win
2nd: 04 - Big Ben
3rd: 05 - California Classic
Race Time: 1:44.23

Although every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of the winning number information, mistakes can occur. In the event of any discrepancies, California State laws and California Lottery regulations will prevail. Complete game information and prize claiming instructions are available at California Lottery retailers. Visit the California State Lottery web site at http://www.calottery.com

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TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (JANUARY 14)

Your ambitions will be matched by your ability to realize them. For the next five weeks, the right moves will seem obvious. Make long- and short-term plans while this insight is going strong. You're undeniably attractive, so hopefully you won't mind being pursued. If you do, you'll have to bear the bother of being adored. Virgo and Sagittarius adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 1, 12, 8, 30 and 48.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). If you want to know what someone says about you when you're not in the room, just listen to what they say about others. They'll speak of you in the same manner. You take this principle to heart and speak kindness.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). You wish that you could see what another person sees during the day and feel how this person feels. Your curiosity and empathy allow you to get a glimpse and feel a tinge of what it must be like.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Being too rigid in your rules for living will only set the stage for failure. You can keep your high standards and still leave margins for error, impulse, desire and the unknown.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). In the early stages of a goal, it will help to have a coach or accountability partner. After a few wins, you will no longer need the outside help. Self-discipline isn't so hard, really. You tell yourself what to do and then you do it.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). People aren't telling the whole story. There's more you should know. If you ask directly, you're unlikely to get the truth. Press gently and observe or wait for unguarded moments to reveal more.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). It is lucky to know where temptation lives. Don't even go down that street or you'll find yourself knocking on the door. Once you're in temptation's living room, it will seem impolite to turn down the offerings.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Can you believe in faeries without believing in ogres? Once you open the door to a world, all of it rushes forward to greet you, the good, the bad and the ugly.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Invite others to help you. One good friend can make all the difference to your productivity. Companionship will turn a daunting task into some fun.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). It will feel good to lose self-consciousness and join the group mind for a moment. You'll help others do this too. You have a way of relaxing people and making them feel safe.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Your affection for someone grows and grows. It's only obvious to the keenest of observers, and most people are too busy with their own scene to fall into that category.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Spiritual generosity comes very easily to you and there's more power in your kindness than you might expect. A smile, a compliment or a little time with your positivity lifts hearts and improves days.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). The fish who keeps his mouth shut doesn't get caught. Right now, dear Pisces, it's better not to share too much, as it will make you unnecessarily vulnerable.

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

A	B	C	S	■	T	Y	R	O	■	H	E	R	O	N
B	L	O	C	■	R	U	I	N	■	U	M	A	M	I
S	O	D	A	■	A	C	C	T	■	M	A	G	I	C
■	B	A	R	O	F	C	H	O	C	O	L	A	T	E
■	■	■	F	I	F	A	■	■	U	R	L	■	■	■
■	O	M	A	N	I	■	H	A	R	M	■	C	U	D
B	R	I	C	K	C	H	E	E	S	E	■	U	N	O
A	B	L	E	■	■	E	R	R	■	■	G	O	B	I
T	I	E	■	S	L	A	B	O	F	B	A	C	O	N
S	T	Y	■	P	O	T	S	■	L	E	N	O	X	■
■	■	■	A	O	L	■	■	S	I	N	G	■	■	■
C	H	U	N	K	L	I	G	H	T	T	U	N	A	■
H	O	N	D	A	■	D	R	A	T	■	P	E	R	P
A	U	D	E	N	■	L	A	K	E	■	O	R	C	A
P	R	O	S	E	■	E	Y	E	D	■	N	O	S	Y

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

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

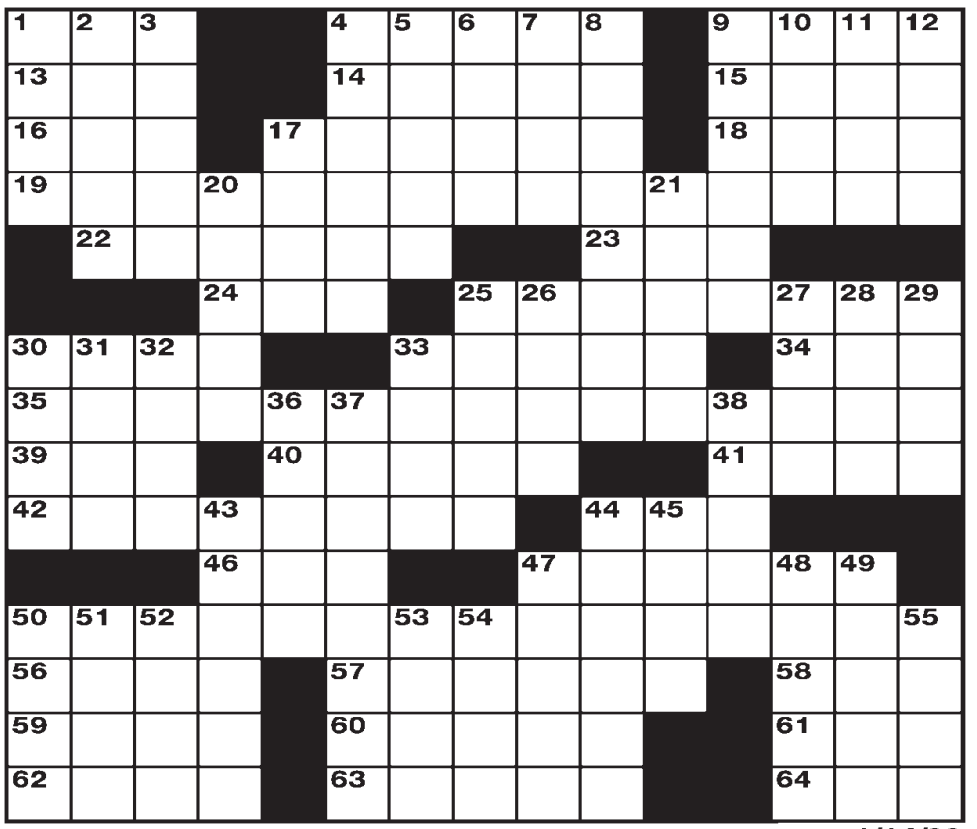
	3	1			8			
	8			2		9		4
	4	9		3			2	
		5			4			9
			5		6			
8			7			4		
	1			6		5	4	
9		3		7			6	
			3			1	9	

Newsday Crossword

COLD FRONTS by Matthew Sewell
Edited by Stanley Newman
www.stanxwords.com

ACROSS
1 "Brown" beverage
4 Me, at the moment
9 New cadet
13 Pernicious charm
14 Loosely
15 Noon or midnight
16 Mountaineering tool
17 Syllabus demarcation
18 Southern Thanksgiving side
19 Point needing resolution
22 Model's concern
23 Bouncer of kid lit
24 Conniving sound
25 Made a spectacle of
30 100 Hamiltons
33 Baton indications
34 Encouraging word
35 Mysterious maritime region
39 Scythe's ambit
40 Burned up
41 Precedential decree
42 Made over, maybe
44 Bit of snark
46 Inferior
47 Frustration exclamation
50 Kindred spirits
56 Skin lotion ingredient
57 Product of Columbia
58 Florida State athletic rival
59 Basel brush-off
60 Harsh, as criticism
61 Certain bird watcher's remark
62 Successor of Mao
63 Racing form data
64 What's heard in the three longest answers

DOWN
1 Barrie's inspiration for Hook
2 Tony line
3 Apply intensely
4 "Piece of cake!"
5 Apron mark
6 Fertile Crescent land
7 Mobile Justice app provider
8 Alfa Romeo sister make
9 Quantum optics particle
10 Adversary of the Avengers
11 It's worth more than a pound
12 Smoothie add-in
17 "Sure, whatever"
20 Book after Micah
21 Anti-jazz musician, c. 1925
25 Lavishly entertained
26 Sort of shortening
27 Wearables
28 First name of the First Lady of Song
29 Chasmic
30 Lifting machine
31 "Take it from me!"
32 Tolkien beasts
33 Package held by wire
36 Mount Karpinsk and neighbors
37 School papers
38 Hound
43 Unseen, perhaps
44 Unfashionable ones
45 Reserves for times to come
47 Psyched up
48 What a snapper must use
49 Take apart
50 Get together
51 Drink served with a spoon straw
52 Barrel collection
53 Well-scrutinized areas
54 Confidently put forward
55 Lighthearted growl



CREATORS SYNDICATE © 2022 STANLEY NEWMAN STANXWORDS@AOL.COM 1/14/22

What's Up Westside

out and about in Santa Monica

FRIDAY | JAN 14

COURTYARD & SPLASH PAD OPEN
The Annenberg Community Beach House gated area, including the courtyard and splash pad, are open to the public daily 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. Please note, from September - May hours are subject to change with short notice. Check the Beach House website calendar or call (310) 458-4904 to confirm.

MLK INTERFAITH FREEDOM CELEBRATION (VIRTUAL PROGRAM)
For information and registration, contact the Santa Monica Area Interfaith Council: office@mtolivelutheranchurch.org or minister@ciop4justice.org. To be held at Mt. Olive Lutheran.

SATURDAY | JAN 15

DOWNTOWN FARMERS MARKET
Arizona Ave. (between 2nd & 4th)
8 a.m. - 1 p.m.

PICO FARMERS MARKET
Pico Blvd. & Cloverfield Blvd.
8 a.m. - 1 p.m.

NOTABLE BOOKS DISCUSSION GROUP
A community-led book club, focusing on books which have won major prizes or are otherwise notable. Contact jeff.schwartz@santamonica.gov for the Zoom link. 11 a.m. - 12 p.m.

ANNUAL MLK HOLIDAY CONCERT
John Adams Middle School Performing Arts Center, 1630 Pearl Street, 2 - 3:30 p.m. https://www.mlkjrwestside.org/ or www.smsymphony.org

SUNDAY | JAN 16

MAIN ST. FARMERS MARKET
2640 Main St. (In The Victorian Parking Lot) 8:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

MONDAY | JAN 17

37TH ANNUAL REV. DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. CELEBRATION
Come join the 37th annual celebration of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The festivities will include music by the Linda Alvarez Trio and spoken word by Get Lit: Words Ignite, who will also receive a Community Light Award. Education awards will be presented to local students and a Lifetime Achievement Award will be presented to longtime community activist, LaVerne Ross. 9 a.m. Free. Visit https://www.mlkjrwestside.org for more information.

MAIN LIBRARY BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP
Join a community-led discussion of books selected by the group. Contact jeff.schwartz@santamonica.gov for the Zoom link. 7 - 8:30 p.m.

CANCELED: Architectural Review Board Meeting is canceled.

TUESDAY | JAN 18

SPECIAL ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD MEETING
The Architectural Review Board established in 1974, acts "to preserve existing areas of natural beauty, cultural importance and assure that buildings, structures, signs or other developments are in good taste, good design, harmonious with surrounding developments, and in general contribute to the preservation of Santa Monica's reputation as a place of beauty, spaciousness and quality."

WEDNESDAY | JAN 19

REGULAR MEETING PLANNING COMMISSION
CITY TV: Cable Channel 16
LIVE STREAM: https://www.youtube.com/user/Citytv16santamonica or https://www.smgov.net/video
TELECONFERENCE: https://primetime.bluejeans.com/a2m/live-event/rrduxyqy
DIAL-IN NUMBER: 1 (415) 466-7000 (US), PIN 1249662 #

DOWNTOWN FARMERS MARKET
Arizona Ave. (between 4th & Ocean)
8 a.m. - 1 p.m.

LIVE BAND KARAOKE AT HARVELLE'S
Come Sing With The Band. The famous "Live Band Karaoke" show comes to Harvelle's every Wednesday at 9 p.m. $2 Tacos $4 PBR Beers $6 Well Drinks. Harvelle's Blues Club, 1432 4th Street

For help submitting an event, contact us at
310-458-7737 or submit to events@smdp.com

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 16 letters left over. They spell out the alternative theme of the puzzle.

© australianwordgames.com.au 5359

Road safety

B C L O S E D N O E N E P O D
U E L I S E T U E Z O D T F E
S R O T M D N S W E I V S A S
E A T R B I K E I S S S P P G
S M Y A E B T H N L Y W E P O
K P E T N A T R S T C A E R D
S C B S D R O W R N Y Y D O S
S T O P O H A A I E O I C A M
M S E N A L I S Y G U N A C A
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PS3

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affordable housing within city limits.

The Service Registry includes homeless people who fall into four categories: formerly housed Santa Monicans who became homeless, unhoused people who work in Santa Monica, homeless individuals who are known to have lived on Santa Monica's streets for at least five years, and homeless individuals who rely most on 9-1-1 and other emergency services on a regular basis.

"The most effective way to stretch our limited affordable housing dollars is to create affordable housing on city owned land. The conclusion recognizes that buying private land is by far the largest city expense in the creation of affordable housing," Community Services Director Andy Agle explained during the Tuesday, Jan. 11, City Council Meeting. He went on to say PS3 was selected for the housing project in 2019 because it was owned by the city and already slated for demolition.

On Tuesday, Council heard three different proposals for the project, which would provide housing for people on the Santa Monica Service Registry as well as other affordable units not set aside for currently unhoused people.

For the units set aside for formerly homeless individuals, an array of services included "personal case management, benefits counseling, mental health counseling, health care, substance use services, money management and legal assistance provided directly and through partner agencies," the proposal from frontrunner EAH, Inc., stated.

In a unanimous, 7-0, vote, council members selected EAH as the developer for the project. But when it came to the homeless services portion, there was less than unanimous enthusiasm for proposed partner The People Concern (TPC). A handful of residents who called in to the virtual meeting during the three-hour hearing cited concerns over TPC's track record in the community.

Council Member Oscar de la Torre questioned whether EAH's contract locked in TPC as a partner.

"I want a robust assessment," de la Torre said. "And to marry yourself right now, you know, to one social service provider? I think it's a disservice to that assessment. So, I want to have that robust assessment."

Council Member Gleam Davis said she was open to further assessing the details of services but would not agree to a decision blocking TPC from the project.

"I just don't want staff's takeaway to be from this that they need to necessarily go look for another social services provider; they can evaluate the social services that need to be provided and then evaluate who the best entity is to provide those," Davis replied. "I'm fine with that. But I just want to make sure that this isn't misinterpreted as giving direction to sever the people's concern and go look for somebody else."

In the end, council agreed to make evaluating the social service provider one of the key factors as the project moved forward into the next project phase, which will include community input on design and other priorities.

When it came to design, EAH Development Director Steven Spielberg described the proposal, which includes either 120 or 150 housing units with ground floor retail and underground parking.

"For the ground floor, we're proposing a full service grocery store with ample subterranean parking and an additional space for a local nonprofit," Spielberg described. "While we're flexible and open to what Council and the community feels is the best fit, we believe that grocery is the perfect complement for the families and formerly homeless individuals that will be living upstairs. A market provides healthy food options, job opportunities and a basic need to others in the downtown area."

Spielberg also said grocery stores had proven to be resilient businesses during the pandemic, mentioning Sprouts and Grocery Outlet as two potential tenants.

"While parking is not required, we felt it was important to include ample parking for both residents and retail," Spielberg continued, adding, "Also, while we believe that providing space behind the grocery store to a local nonprofit is a great idea, we've heard that a police substation may be desired. We've already had talks with the Santa Monica Police Department about creating something that would work for them as well as the future residents in the project."

THE LAWSUIT

The Council hearing took place at the same time LA Superior Court was considering a request from local property owners that could throw the whole project into jeopardy.

The Santa Monica Bayside Owners Association (SMBOA) filed a lawsuit in mid-2021 requesting courts block the demolition of PS3. SMBOA argued the city was relying on an inadequate environmental impact report and was not in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act, commonly known by its acronym, CEQA.

On Thursday morning, Judge Mitchell L. Beckloff announced his decision to delay the demolition as the court case progressed.

In court documents, Beckloff wrote the decision to hold off on demolition was based on two factors: the likelihood of SMBOA's arguments prevailing in court and the potential harm suffered by either party in the interim. In other words, Beckloff had to weigh which would be more harmful: demolishing PS3 before the case was finished working its way through court, or holding off on demolition until SMBOA's lawsuit was decided?

The documents also laid out both sides' arguments.

SMBOA's was two-fold — first, that the demolition would render the lawsuit moot and second, that many residents and stakeholders rely on PS3 as parking for their business and employees.

"Admittedly, it would be difficult to ascertain with specificity the damage to local businesses — if any — from the loss of parking," Beckloff wrote. "However, Petitioner's failure to submit any evidence of any real, immediate, concrete harm from the demolition is problematic."

Santa Monica's legal team, Beckloff wrote, argued that "the City's prior actions have resulted in a net increase in parking supply given the improvements to Parking Structure 6, which created new, additional parking spaces, even with the demolition of PS3."

The City's legal representatives argued the delay in demolition would create harm for the project moving forward, but Beckloff determined if the parking structure were to be demolished before SMBOA's complaints were heard, the group would be "left with no remedy … as the court cannot require the City to reconstruct a demolished parking lot." In other words, moving forward with demolition would be a greater harm to SMBOA than delaying would be to the City.

However, Beckloff's decision added, "Nothing in this order is intended to require the City to continue to operate PS3 during the pendency of these hearings."

City representatives were not able to respond to questions by Daily Press deadline, but provided a statement acknowledging the ruling. According to the City, a final decision is not expected until April.

The opponents will appear in court next on Jan. 28.

"The court intends to set trial on the petition on an expedited basis on Jan. 28, 2022, at the trial setting conference," the decision stated.

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GIFTS

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higher than the 2016 amount. Substantial increases also occurred in reporting at the local level, the commission said.

The soaring use shows "the continued importance of transparency in making sure our elected officials are accountable for the vast amounts being raised, even if they are going for very worthwhile efforts," said commission Chairman Richard Miadich.

So the commission now requires officials to disclose any ties they may have to a non-profit receiving the money, and if the person making the payment is involved in a proceeding before the official's agency.

That increased disclosure is a good step, said Mehta Stein, but he said the Legislature should flatly prohibit solicitations that benefit an office-holder's spouse or other relative.

Among other donors, Google gave $10 million toward California's COVID-19 public health awareness campaign, while Fox, YouTube, TikTok, Twitter, Snapchat, Spotify, Netflix, Pandora, Comcast, ABC and NBC were among those contributing lesser amounts.

Blue Shield's $20 million went to support Project Homekey, Newsom's program to use vacant hotels, motels and other unused properties as permanent supportive housing for residents without a place to live.

Tens of millions more from Kaiser Foundation, IKEA US Community Foundation, the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative and individual donors Reed Hastings and Tom Steyer all went to California's COVID-19 Response fund.

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