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Guest commentary
Hate has no place in Santa Monica.
Page 4

Gun arrest
Man facing charges for illegal guns and shooting at a house.
Page 5

Main Street vacancies skyrocket as merchants fight through economic hardship





Clara Harter

FOR LEASE: Main Street, like the entire city, is facing a growing vacancy problem for retail.

CLARA HARTER
SMDP Staff Writer

There's an eerie quiet hanging in the air on Main Street with over 35 retail spaces advertised for lease, according to a Daily Press count.

As businesses enter the 10th month of the pandemic, remaining merchants face an uphill battle with 25 percent restrictions on retail capacity alongside the loss of outdoor dining and associated foot traffic.

Local business association leaders believe the area will bounce back to a vibrant commercial center when restrictions ease. The reopening of outdoor dining on Friday will certainly help. But for many businesses the question is, will it be enough?

"We are really struggling, we used to have a very steady flow of traffic all the time. The second shutdown definitely hurt us a lot. Now it's good to even see five people coming into the store in one day," said Joshua Jackson Wilson, one of two remaining employees at The Closet Trading Company.

Many stores appear closed but are actually 'on pause' as they await the return of outdoor dining, lease renegotiations, government relief, or easing of restrictions. This further decreases the number of visitors in the area and has a knock-on effect for businesses that remain open.

"The biggest thing is the restaurants closing because now there's no foot traffic to speak of. There's also a problem with vacancies on both sides of my store which further hampers my sales," said Linda Oppenheim, Owner of Arts & Letters.

Even without counting temporary closures, Main Street has suffered major casualties including the loss of 41-year-old institution Enterprise Fish Co, the closure of large Coffee Bean and Muji stores, and the shutdown of small boutiques like Mohawk, Bollman Hats, and Pamela Barish.

For the businesses keeping their doors open, survival is measured day-by-day.

"It's extremely difficult to stay open. We've maybe seen a 40 percent decrease in clientele since outdoor dining closed," said Matthieu Thouvard, Owner of The Place to Be bakery. "I'm here at 2:30 a.m. every day to bake everything fresh. At the end of the day, I'm giving lots of leftovers to shelters, but I would prefer to sell them, because I'm working very early for not so much money."

The Main Street Business Improvement Association and Ocean Park Association believe outdoor dining will be the biggest driver of short-term economic recovery and are developing plans to reopen and expand Main Street's Al-Fresco program.

"We were one of the first places in LA to get outdoor dining and that's because as soon as the shutdown happened, we immediately knew exactly what the remedy was going to be not just for restaurants, but also for the general liveliness of the street," said MSBIA Executive Director Hunter Hall.

MSBIA's proposed 'Al-Fresco 2.0' program would close certain restaurant dense blocks of Main Street Friday through Sunday and allow restaurants to spread tables out into the street. This would increase both the number of tables available and distance between diners.

In the immediate future the two associations are emphasizing actions individuals can take to support merchants.

"It comes down to what we can do day-to-day to help in little ways that add up to a lot: pick up your order yourself because more of the revenue will go to the restaurateur, leave a good tip, tell your friends to shop local," said OPA President Marc Morgenstern.

While current conditions are dire, Morgenstern and Hall said they believe Main Street will recover in time and remain a bustling and

SEE **MAIN STREET** PAGE 11

Outdoor dining to reopen in L.A. County

CLARA HARTER
SMDP Staff Writer

With Governor Newsom rescinding state stay-at-home orders on Monday, L.A. County officials announced that outdoor dining and personal care services will reopen.

The restriction rollbacks come amidst the promising news that the statewide surge in cases is slowing down. Average daily cases peaked in L.A. County at over 15,000 on Jan. 8 and dropped by over 50 percent to 7,238 on Jan. 20.

LA County now returns to the color coded system in the most restrictive purple tier. However, the system does allow for the immediate opening of indoor personal care at 25 percent capacity, outdoor private gatherings of up to three households, and hotels for tourism.

On Friday County Health Officials will release an order allowing outdoor dining to reopen with occupancy limits. This order will also require non-essential businesses to close between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m. to discourage late night gathering.

"Please don't take this news to mean that you can return to a life of normalcy," said County Supervisor Hilda Solis. "Masks, physical distancing and limiting activities are still key to getting out of this pandemic until we can get everybody vaccinated."

Solis urged residents to avoid gathering for the upcoming Super Bowl as large sporting events have significantly contributed to Covid surges in the past.

Community transmission remains high in Los Angeles with 6,642 new cases reported on Monday — more

SEE **REOPEN** PAGE 11

Santa Monica preps for Black History Month

BRENNON DIXSON
SMDP Staff Writer

The City of Santa Monica is ready to celebrate Black History Month this February with a number of events that will be held in a COVID-conscious manner.

In 2020, city and community leaders partnered to host the inaugural "Celebrating Black Excellence Community Mixer" on the Third Street Promenade, which provided residents and tourists an opportunity to talk with others while they enjoyed treats from various vendors and a traditional West African Dance and Drum performance.

Because of COVID and the need to stay home, this year's roster of events will be held virtually but the activities will still highlight the history, diversity and achievements of Santa



Courtesy photo

BLACK HISTORY MONTH: Last year's inaugural "Celebrating Black Excellence Community Mixer" on the Third Street Promenade provided residents and tourists an opportunity to talk with others while they enjoyed treats from various vendors and a traditional West African Dance and Drum performance.

SEE **BLACK HISTORY MONTH** PAGE 11

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Citywide

Man charged for illegal gun ownership

The Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office has filed charges against Jason Scott Walsh, a 32-year-old white male, for discharging a firearm in a grossly negligent manner into an inhabited dwelling, along with additional charges.

On January 9, 2021 at approximately 9 p.m., officers from the Santa Monica Police Department responded to a report of possible 'shots fired' near the 400 block of 19th Street. A resident called 9-1-1 after hearing a "popping" sound and finding what he believed to be a bullet hole in the wall of his garage. Officers arrived and while speaking to the resident, they heard two additional muffled sounds coming from the residence just east of them on 20th Street. Officers responded to the 400 block of 20th Street and contacted Jason Walsh, who lives directly behind the residence where they began their investigation.

Officers conducted a protective sweep of Walsh's residence in the 400 block of 20th Street, to ensure there was no one in need of medical assistance. During the check, officers did not locate any victims, however, did observe a firearm silencer/suppressor, which is illegal to own or possess in California. Officers contacted detectives from the Criminal Investigations Division (CID), who responded

and eventually obtained a search warrant to search Walsh's residence. During the service of the search warrant, detectives located the following:

- A loaded AR-15 style assault rifle with an attached suppressor
- (2) 9mm handguns, one of which was loaded with and attached suppressor
- An ammunition re-loading device used for manufacturing ammunition
- Various unassembled assault rifle parts.

Detectives also located several spent bullet casings inside the home. Upon further investigation, Detectives discovered Walsh was on probation and had an outstanding felony warrant for his arrest.

Walsh was subsequently taken into custody and the case was presented to the District Attorney's Office. On January 12, 2021, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office reviewed the case and charged Walsh with the following crimes:

- 29800(a)(1) PC, Possession of a firearm with outstanding felony warrant; and possession of firearm by felon (2 counts)
- 30605(a) PC, possession of an assault weapon
- 33410 PC, Possession of a silencer
- 246.3(a) PC, Negligent discharge of a firearm

Bail for Walsh was set at $35,000. The Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives was notified of the arrest and will review the incident for possible federal charges.

Anyone with any information related to this investigation is encouraged to contact the Detective D. Haro at (310) 458-8432 or the Criminal Investigations Division at (310) 458-8451.

SUBMITTED BY LIEUTENANT RUDY FLORES



US virus numbers drop, but race against new strains heats up

JONATHAN DREW AND MICHAEL KUNZELMAN
Associated Press

Coronavirus deaths and cases per day in the U.S. dropped markedly over the past couple of weeks but are still running at alarmingly high levels, and the effort to snuff out COVID-19 is becoming an ever more urgent race between the vaccine and the mutating virus.

The government's top infectious-disease expert, Dr. Anthony Fauci, said the improvement in numbers around the country appears to reflect a "natural peaking and then plateauing" after a holiday surge, rather than the arrival of the vaccine in mid-December.

The U.S. is recording just under 3,100 deaths a day on average, down from more than 3,350 less than two weeks ago. New cases are averaging about 170,000 a day after peaking at almost 250,000 on Jan. 11. The number of hospitalized COVID-19 patients has fallen to about 110,000 from a high of 132,000 on Jan. 7.

States that have been hot spots in recent weeks such as California and Arizona have shown similar improvements during the same period.

On Monday, California lifted regional stay-at-home orders in favor of county-by-county restrictions and ended a 10 p.m. curfew. The shift will allow restaurants and churches to resume outdoor operations and hair and nail salons to reopen in many places, though local officials could maintain stricter rules.

Elsewhere, Minnesota school districts have begun bringing elementary students back for in-person learning. Chicago's school system, the nation's third-largest district, had hoped to bring teachers back Monday to prepare for students to return next month, but the teachers union has refused. Illinois announced that more counties will be able to offer limited indoor dining.

"I don't think the dynamics of what we're seeing now with the plateauing is significantly influenced yet — it will be soon — but yet by the vaccine. I just think it's the natural course of plateauing," Fauci told NBC's "Today."

Ali Mokdad, a professor of health metrics sciences at the University of Washington, said that a predicted holiday surge was reduced by people traveling less than expected, and an increase in mask wearing in response to spikes in infections has since helped bring the numbers down.

Caitlin Rivers, an epidemiologist at the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, said too few people have been vaccinated so far for that to have had a significant impact on virus trends. She said she can't predict how long it will take for the vaccines' effects to be reflected in the numbers.

Rivers said she is concerned that the more contagious variants of the virus could lead to a deadly resurgence later this year.

"I think we were on track to have a good — or a better, at least — spring and summer, and I'm worried that the variants might be throwing us a curveball," she said.

Nationwide, about 18 million people, or less than 6% of the U.S. population, have received at least one dose of vaccine, including about 3 million who have gotten the second shot, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Only slightly more than half of the 41 million doses distributed to the states by the federal government have been injected into arms, by the CDC's count.

The virus has killed over 419,000 Americans and infected more than 25 million, with a widely cited University of Washington model projecting the death toll will reach about 569,000 by May 1.

And health experts have warned that the more contagious and possibly more deadly variant sweeping through Britain will probably become the dominant source of infection in the U.S. by March. It has been reported in over 20 states so far. Another mutant version is circulating in South Africa.

The more the virus spreads, the more opportunities it has to mutate. The fear is that it will ultimately render the vaccines ineffective.

To guard against the new variants, President Joe Biden on Monday added South Africa to the list of more than two dozen countries whose residents are subject to coronavirus-related limits on entering the U.S.

Most non-U.S. citizens who have been to Brazil, Ireland, Britain and other European nations will be barred from entering the U.S. under the rules re-imposed by Biden after President Donald Trump had moved to relax them.

Fauci said scientists are already preparing to adjust COVID-19 vaccines to fight the mutated versions.

He said there is "a very slight, modest diminution" of the effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines against those variants, but "there's enough cushion with the vaccines that we have that we still consider them to be effective" against both.

Moderna, the maker of one of the two vaccines being used in the U.S., announced on Monday that it is beginning to test a possible booster dose against the South African variant. Moderna CEO Stephane Bancel said the move was out of "an abundance of caution" after preliminary lab tests suggested its shot produced a weaker immune response to that variant.

The vaccine rollout in the U.S. has been marked by disarray and confusion, with states complaining in recent days about shortages and inadequate deliveries that have forced them to cancel mass vaccination events and tens of thousands of appointments.

New York Mayor Bill de Blasio said shortages are preventing the city from opening more large-scale vaccination sites.

"Here you have New York City ready to vaccinate at the rate of a half-million New Yorkers a week, but we don't have the vaccine to go with it," de Blasio said. "A lot of other places in the country are ready to do so much more."

Associated Press writers around the U.S. contributed to this report.

DAILY POLICE LOG

SMDP STAFF CHOSE THE FOLLOWING FROM 217 CALLS ON JANUARY 24

Loud Music 400blk California Ave 12:18 a.m.
Exhibition Of Speed 1400blk Idaho Ave 12:23 a.m.
Hit And Run Misdemeanor Investigation 2300blk Arizona Ave 3:32 a.m.
Rape Report 2100blk Lincoln Blvd 4:07 a.m.
Traffic Collision With Injuries Cloverfield Blvd / Olympic Blvd 6:27 a.m.
Auto Burglary Report 200blk 15th St 6:50 a.m.
Out Of Order Traffic Signals 2nd St / Broadway 7:32 a.m.
Abandoned Vehicle 2000blk 19th St 8:00 a.m.
Death Investigation 1900blk Georgina Ave 8:02 a.m.
Battery Just Occurred 1400blk Ocean Ave 8:39 a.m.
Covid 2400blk Montana Ave 8:55 a.m.
Covid 1100blk Wilshire Blvd 9:08 a.m.
Violation Of Temporary No Parking Signs 1500blk 6th St 9:26 a.m.
Alcohol & Beverage Code Violation 300blk Olympic Dr 9:32 a.m.
Found Property 400blk Hollister Ave 9:54 a.m.
Burglary Investigation/Walk Through 300blk Santa Monica Blvd 10:06 a.m.
Found Property 2200blk Pico Blvd 10:17 a.m.
Auto Burglary Report 1500blk Georgina Ave 10:41 a.m.
Mark & Tag Abandoned Vehicle 2300blk Idaho Ave 10:45 a.m.
Encampment 1600blk Ocean Ave 10:54 a.m.
Assault Just Occurred 2100blk Ocean Park Blvd 11:09 a.m.
Violation Of Preferential Parking Zone 3300blk Barnard Way 11:21 a.m.
Panhandling Main St / Ocean Park Blvd 11:33 a.m.
Violation Of Posted Sign 3300blk Barnard Way 11:34 a.m.
Overdose 6th St / California Ave 11:45 a.m.
Handicap Zone Violation 2600blk Barnard Way 11:49 a.m.
Urinating/Defecating In Public 1100blk 17th St 11:51 a.m.
Vehicle Blocking Driveway 500blk Washington Ave 11:53 a.m.
Grand Theft Auto Report 900blk Idaho Ave 11:55 a.m.
Burglary Report 100blk Wilshire Blvd 12:04 p.m.
Attempt Burglary Report 1400blk 5th St 12:06 p.m.
Construction Noise 800blk 18th St 12:55 p.m.
Assault Just Occurred 400blk Wilshire Blvd 12:56 p.m.
72 Hour Psychiatric Hold 700blk Euclid St 1:24 p.m.
Loud Music 3rd Street Prom / Wilshire Blvd 1:39 p.m.
Fraud Report 1700blk Ocean Ave 1:59 p.m.
Petty Theft Just Occurred 300blk Colorado Ave 2:02 p.m.
Encampment Centinela Ave / Pico Blvd 2:08 p.m.
Red Zone Violation 1400blk 24th St 2:08 p.m.
Petty Theft Just Occurred 500blk Wilshire Blvd 2:16 p.m.
Traffic Collision - No Injuries 1000blk Pacific Coast Hwy 2:33 p.m.
Loud Music 3rd Street Prom / Wilshire Blvd 2:34 p.m.
Construction Noise 800blk 18th St 2:34 p.m.
Petty Theft Just Occurred 400blk Santa Monica Blvd 2:38 p.m.
Violation Of Posted Sign 1300blk 17th St 2:44 p.m.
Injured Person 2700blk Barnard Way 3:05 p.m.
Smoking Violation 7th St / Broadway 3:11 p.m.
Theft Of Recyclables 34th St / Ocean Park Blvd 3:15 p.m.
Petty Theft Just Occurred 2000blk Ocean Ave 3:29 p.m.
Mark & Tag Abandoned Vehicle 1300blk 17th St 4:04 p.m.
Abandoned Vehicle 1500blk Pacific Coast Hwy 4:23 p.m.
Found Property 800blk Palisades Park 4:35 p.m.
Loud Music 2200blk Virginia Ave 4:46 p.m.
Mark & Tag Abandoned Vehicle 1000blk 6th St 4:49 p.m.
Attempt Burglary Just Occurred 1300blk Palisades Beach Rd 4:53 p.m.
Violation Of Posted Sign 700blk Taft Way 4:55 p.m.
Traffic Collision - No Injuries 1700blk Wilshire Blvd 4:57 p.m.
Petty Theft Report 1100blk 7th St 5:16 p.m.
Grand Theft Report 2400blk Oak St 5:36 p.m.
Construction Noise 1900blk Stewart St 6:09 p.m.
Loud Music 1700blk Ocean Ave 6:39 p.m.
Overdose 1500blk 16th St 6:56 p.m.
Drunk Driving Investigation Ocean Ave / Montana Ave 7:28 p.m.
Encampment 1000blk 22nd St 7:47 p.m.
Loud Music 900blk 12th St 7:51 p.m.
Loud Music Appian Way / Marine Ter 7:55 p.m.
Loud Music 1700blk Ocean Front Walk 8:20 p.m.
Drunk Driving Investigation 800blk Pacific Coast Hwy 9:16 p.m.
72 Hour Psychiatric Hold 800blk Broadway 9:35 p.m.
Battery Just Occurred 1400blk Berkeley St 10:41 p.m.
Lost Property 2200blk Wilshire Blvd 10:44 p.m.
Hit And Run Misdemeanor Investigation 2nd St / Wilshire Blvd 10:52 p.m.

DAILY FIRE LOG

SMDP STAFF CHOSE THE FOLLOWING FROM 21 CALLS ON JANUARY 24

EMS 2200blk Colorado Ave 5:41 a.m.
EMS Cloverfield Blvd / Olympic Blvd 6:27 a.m.
EMS 1700blk Ocean Ave 6:49 a.m.
EMS 1100blk 7th St 8:08 a.m.
EMS 1900blk Lincoln Blvd 8:15 a.m.
EMS Lincoln Blvd / Olympic Blvd E 8:25 a.m.
EMS 900blk 3rd St 8:46 a.m.
Automatic Alarm 100blk Wilshire Blvd 9:37 a.m.
Elevator Rescue 1300blk 4th St 9:59 a.m.
EMS 2800blk Lincoln Blvd 10:10 a.m.
EMS 1800blk 17th St 11:08 a.m.
EMS 2nd St / Santa Monica Blvd 2:35 p.m.
EMS 2700blk Barnard Way 3:06 p.m.
EMS 3100blk Neilson Way 3:41 p.m.
Automatic Alarm 600blk Santa Monica Blvd 4:45 p.m.
EMS 2400blk Hill St 4:51 p.m.
EMS 100blk Ocean Park Blvd 6:43 p.m.
EMS 1500blk 16th St 6:56 p.m.
EMS 2900blk Pennsylvania Ave 7:20 p.m.
EMS 500blk Lincoln Blvd 9:16 p.m.
Electrical Fire - No Fire Visible 2700blk 6th St 11:34 p.m.

Dominion Voting Systems sues Giuliani over election claims

COLLEEN LONG
Associated Press

Dominion Voting Systems filed a defamation lawsuit on Monday against Donald Trump's personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani, who led the former president's efforts to spread baseless claims about the 2020 election.

The lawsuit seeks more than $1.3 billion in damages for the voting machine company, a target for conservatives who made up wild claims about the company, blaming it for Trump's loss and alleging without evidence that its systems were easily manipulated. Dominion is one of the nation's top voting machine companies and provided machines for the state of Georgia, the critical battleground that Biden won and which flipped control of the U.S. Senate.

The company faced such a mountain of threats and criticism that one of its top executives went into hiding. The suit is based on statements Giuliani made on Twitter, in conservative media and during legislative hearings where the former mayor of New York claimed the voting machine company conspired to flip votes to President Joe Biden.

Dominion's lawsuit, filed in federal court in the District of Columbia, is among the first major signs of fallout for the former president's allies and the failed effort to subvert the 2020 election that ended with a Jan. 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol by a pro-Trump mob that claimed the election had been stolen.

"For Dominion — whose business is producing and providing voting systems for elections — there are no accusations that could do more to damage Dominion's business or to impugn Dominion's integrity, ethics, honesty, and financial integrity," the lawsuit says. "Giuliani's statements were calculated to — and did in fact — provoke outrage and cause Dominion enormous harm."

There was no widespread fraud in the election, which a range of election officials across the country including Trump's former attorney general, William Barr, have confirmed. Republican governors in Arizona and Georgia, key battleground states crucial to Biden's victory, also vouched for the integrity of the elections in their states. Nearly all the legal challenges from Trump and his allies have been dismissed by judges, including two tossed by the Supreme Court, which includes three Trump-nominated justices.

"Dominion brings this action to set the record straight, to vindicate the company's rights under civil law, to recover compensatory and punitive damages, and to stand up for itself, its employees, and the electoral process," the lawsuit read.

Giuliani did not respond to a reporter's message seeking comment.

During an episode of Giuliani's podcast, he charged that "Dominion had stolen the election 'technologically,'" the lawsuit alleges, and warned listeners that cybercriminals could steal the titles to their homes online. The lawsuit also details Giuliani pitching supplements to cure their achy joints and muscles, offering a special discount code as he held up the bottles.

The lawsuit also includes a photo of Giuliani holding a cigar, hocking cigars with a deal for $20 off orders over $100 after he pushed accusations about Dominion and falsely alleged that the election had been fixed by a Venezuelan company.

The lawsuit argues that Giuliani worked in concert with Trump supporters and lawyers Sidney Powell, L. Lin Wood and conservative media outlets "determined to promote a false preconceived narrative about the 2020 election."

Dominion has also sued Powell, who claimed that the company was created in Venezuela to rig elections for the late leader Hugo Chavez and that it has the ability to switch votes.

The lawsuit also alleges Giuliani's false statements about Dominion and the election being "stolen" helped to perpetuate the violent mob that stormed the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6 as Congress was meeting to vote to certify Biden as the winner of the election.

"Having been deceived by Giuliani and his allies into thinking that they were not criminals — but patriots 'Defend(ing) the Republic' from Dominion and its co-conspirators — they then bragged about their involvement in the crime on social media," the lawsuit states.

Associated Press Writer Michael Balsamo contributed to this report.

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WINNER

Your column here

By Dr. Karen Gunn and Tara Barauskas

Send comments to editor@smdp.com

Hate Has No Place in Santa Monica, or Anywhere

These times are challenging beyond anything we ever imagined. People are frustrated, fatigued, anxious, and stretched thin. We've seen many people step up to do amazing things during these last ten months, going above and beyond to help others in our community. We've seen community members raising their hands right away to help fellow residents with food and hygiene needs, helping seniors, and offering peer support for neighbors to talk to each other and offer and seek assistance. Their acts have inspired and uplifted our community; but a slew of recent incidents has cast a dark shadow on these points of light.

The first incident involved an African American community member who was the target of a hate letter. The letter called this person the "N" word and went on to state that "N's" don't belong here (in Santa Monica). The letter caused so much fear, anxiety, sadness and distress that this person moved– he no longer felt safe in his own home. He is now happy living elsewhere in Santa Monica, amongst people who are welcoming and supportive.

A similar incident occurred recently when another person was sent a hateful letter using the same language. The author of the letter is clearly targeting his or her African-American neighbors. A few weeks later, an African-American staff person at Community Corporation of Santa Monica, a nonprofit operator of affordable housing, received a vitriolic, threatening voice message with the same hateful language, the "n" word used again along with vulgarities no one should ever have to hear. Let's be clear: these incidents are race-based expressions of hate.

In addition to race-related hate incidents, there have also been a number of equally alarming disability-related incidents. Recently, we learned of a child with autism being harassed and taunted by other kids. We would guess this happens with some regularity but often goes unreported. To address this issue, Community Corp. held an autism awareness seminar in partnership with The Autism Society, but much more needs to be done.

Santa Monica is a microcosm of what's happening in the state and in the country. Similar incidents are being shared on numerous social media platforms – people being harassed or threatened in very public ways. And that's only what is shared; no doubt, experts would suggest, much more is probably happening but goes unreported or unaddressed. One must have faith in our system to muster the courage to report. Community members must work to address this.

These incidents should ring alarm bells for our community. Hurling the "N-word" at a person who is Black or taunting a child living with a disability are unfortunate symbols of our long, unresolved history of racism and ableism. Let's be clear-eyed about this, they flow from and reflect underlying prejudices or implicit biases of the perpetrator. When someone goes from holding prejudiced attitudes in their private thoughts to expressing and acting upon them through words or actions explicitly directed at someone, a hate crime or incident has taken place.

The definition of a hate crime or incident includes threats, harassment, or physical harm motivated by bias based on someone's race, religion, mental or physical ability, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, national origin. Bullying, shaming and offensive labeling can fit within this framework.

To truly stamp out hate and bigotry in our community, we must acknowledge the long, tortuous, often deadly history of these acts. Oftentimes, these acts have been directed at Black folks and those living with physical or developmental disabilities.

We believe it's important to bring your attention to these incidents, first and foremost, to tap that empathy button. We do want to generate outrage, spark community investment in thwarting bigotry, and even develop allies (that is, Upstanders, not Bystanders) for the cause of justice and acceptance. The impact on the people who are targets is profound – trauma, fear and anxiety, sense of vulnerability, alienation, anger, and resentment. The effect on the community is equally weighty in its implications - disengagement, polarization, divisiveness, ignorance and pain perpetuated. We can do better. We must do better by addressing the roots and manifestations of these antipathies. Silence and inattentiveness are not passive acts; they are permission.

It is up to each of us to break that silence, to choose to treat people with compassion and understanding, rather than prejudice and hate. The challenges of this moment are not an excuse to discriminate or belittle people to make yourself feel better. When you see an act of hate in our community– name it - do something about it –Stand Up for Justice!

What can you do about it? Don't just gripe about it on social media, please. Call it out in real time if it's safe to do so. Organize a community conversation about race or intolerance. Attend education sessions or read a book about it. Participate in the Committee for Racial Justice, which hosts many workshops on this topic. Embrace, connect with and get to know to your neighbors.

If you are the victim of a hate crime or incident, you can report it to the LA County Human Relations Commission and find resources at https://hrc.lacounty.gov/. You can also report the incident at www.lavshate.org. The Santa Monica Police Department is our local agency to make a report.

Dr. Karen Gunn is the principal of Gunn Consulting Group and co-founder of the Santa Monica Black Agenda. Tara Barauskas is the Executive Director of Community Corporation of Santa Monica. Both are Board members of the Santa Monica Bay Area Human Relations Council.

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.



What's the Point?

David Pisarra

Send comments to editor@smdp.com

The Return of Outdoor Dining is Upon Us

I'm a foodie. I love good food, high cuisine, or a greasy cheeseburger with a chocolate shake. I can be comfortable dining in any white linen restaurant in the world, and just as comfortable grabbing some street food from a vendor in Beijing. I was blessed with an iron gut and to have a family that taught me manners and etiquette which enable me to not make a total fool of myself at a table with 4 forks for an 8 course dinner.

While attending law school I supported myself by working for a business consultancy that primarily had me going into restaurants and performing a top to bottom shake down. I was in heaven. I could walk into a restaurant, march my way into the kitchen and start nosing around. I'd chat up the chefs, most of whom were wonderful, a few of whom were less than open to my insights shall we say, and I was taught many great lessons about the food world in those days.

The food industry is an interesting mix of hard scrabble businesspeople, dreamers and hard-working line cooks. They come from all over, and immigrants find their way to the food industry often as their first jobs because if they don't know English well enough it's a great place to practice, and in a city like Los Angeles where we have so many diverse cuisines there's always an opening for a newcomer who speaks a first language as they learn English.

But COVID and lockdowns are decimating the wealth of flavors that we have here. That's a big word, decimate, it originally meant to take a tenth and kill them, the Roman used it to keep order in their armies. Today it is generally used to mean a large percentage.

It's not actually big enough at 10% to describe the carnage that is happening in the restaurant industry. In an industry that regularly has 50% failure rate, the denial of indoor dining is speeding the deaths of many restaurants. The loss of any one business is bad for a community, because the money that is generated keeps circulating to pay rent, repair cars, pay for laundry services and a myriad other things to keep a society moving.

The Restaurant Association of America

SEE **WHAT'S THE POINT?** PAGE 11

In ambulances, an unseen, unwelcome passenger: COVID-19

STEFANIE DAZIO
Associated Press

It's crowded in the back of the ambulance.

Two emergency medical technicians, the patient, the gurney — and an unseen and unwelcome passenger lurking in the air.

For EMTs Thomas Hoang and Joshua Hammond, the coronavirus is constantly close. COVID-19 has become their biggest fear during 24-hour shifts in California's Orange County, riding with them from 911 call to 911 call, from patient to patient.

They and other EMTs, paramedics and 911 dispatchers in Southern California have been thrust into the front lines of the national epicenter of the pandemic. They are scrambling to help those in need as hospitals burst with a surge of patients after the holidays, ambulances are stuck waiting outside hospitals for hours until beds become available, oxygen tanks are in alarmingly short supply and the vaccine rollout has been slow.

EMTs and paramedics have always dealt with life and death — they make split-second decisions about patient care, which hospital to race to, the best and fastest way to save someone — and now they're just a breath away from becoming the patient themselves.

They gown up, mask up and glove up, "but you can only be so safe," Hammond said. "We don't have the luxury of being 6 feet apart from the patient."

Statistics on COVID-19 cases and deaths among EMTs and paramedics — especially ones employed by private companies — are hard to find. They are considered essential health care workers but rarely receive the pay and protections given to doctors and nurses.

Hammond and Hoang work for Emergency Ambulance Service Inc., a private ambulance company in Southern California. They, like so many others, have long fostered goals of becoming first responders to serve their communities.

Hoang is attending nursing school. Hammond is one test away from becoming a paramedic. Both were called to a life in the medical field after traumatic experiences: Hammond had to call 911 after his mother had an allergic reaction, and Hoang witnessed a young bicyclist get hit by a car.

Yet as COVID-19 infections surge and the risks increase, they wonder: Is it worth risking your life — and the lives of your loved ones at home — for a small paycheck and a dream?

"It's really hard to justify it beyond 'I really want to help people,'" said Hammond, 25. "Is that worth the risk?"

For now, yes.

"I do want to do my part in helping people get better, in a sense," said Hoang, 29.

And so their day starts at 7 a.m.

Wearing masks, Hoang and Hammond clean their ambulance and equipment, wiping down every surface even if the previous crew

SEE **AMBULANCES** PAGE 11

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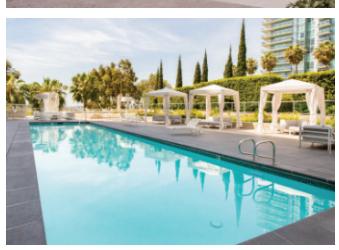
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This week, your donation will go twice as far! MSD Partners, L.P. and the Fairmont Miramar Hotel & Bungalows will match all donations through January 31, up to $15,000.

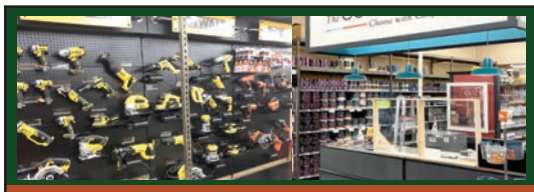
Your donation of ANY amount will directly help students. Please help by giving at **smedfoundation.org/donate**.

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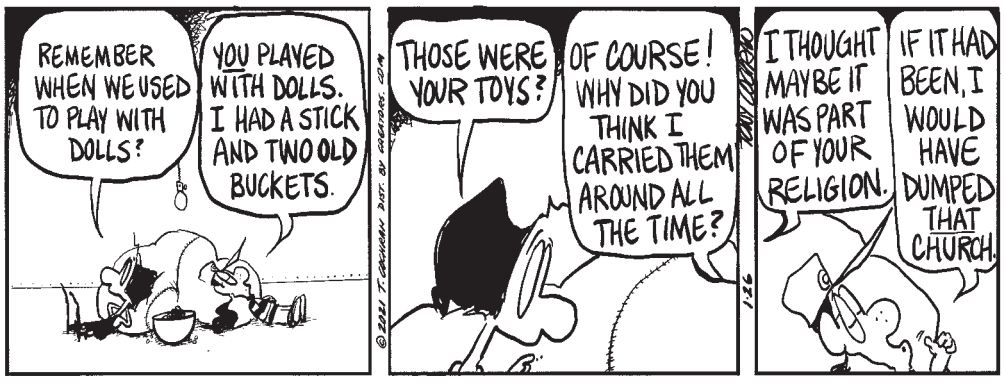
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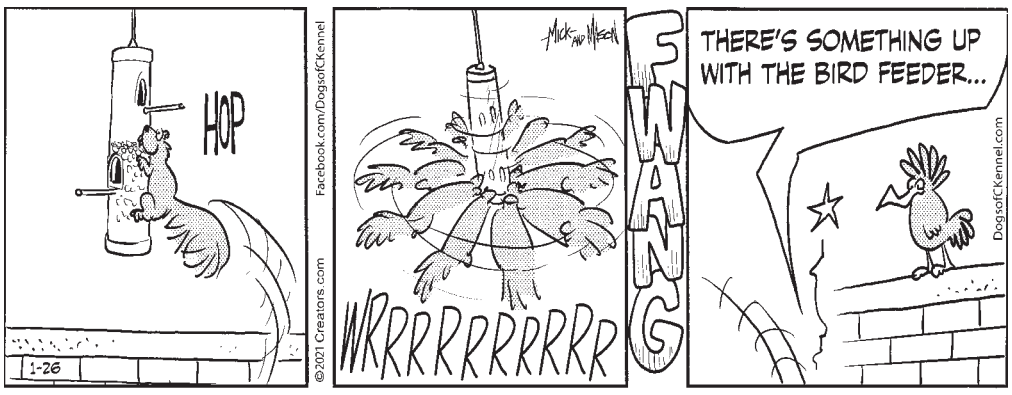
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SURF FORECASTS

WATER TEMP: 58.1°

TUESDAY - **POOR** - SURF: 3-4ft+ Waist to chest high occ. 5 ft
Long-period WNW swell tops out with less shorter-period energy in the mix.

WEDNESDAY - **POOR** - SURF: 2-3ft+ Waist to stomach high occ. 4 ft
Long-period WNW swell due to ease but shorter-period NW may bump back up to keep some decent size in the water.

WEATHER

Tuesday: Sunny, with a high near 57.
Tuesday Night: Increasing clouds, with a low around 47.
Wednesday: A 40 percent chance of rain. Cloudy, with a high near 56.

Date	Day	Time (LST/LDT)	Predicted (ft)	High/Low
2021/01/26	Tue	12:57 AM	2.33	L
2021/01/26	Tue	07:14 AM	5.85	H
2021/01/26	Tue	2:36 PM	-0.87	L
2021/01/26	Tue	9:08 PM	3.59	H
2021/01/27	Wed	01:35 AM	2.16	L
2021/01/27	Wed	07:50 AM	6.12	H
2021/01/27	Wed	3:07 PM	-1.09	L
2021/01/27	Wed	9:36 PM	3.71	H
2021/01/28	Thu	02:13 AM	1.98	L
2021/01/28	Thu	08:25 AM	6.28	H
2021/01/28	Thu	3:40 PM	-1.20	L
2021/01/28	Thu	10:06 PM	3.83	H
2021/01/29	Fri	02:51 AM	1.83	L
2021/01/29	Fri	09:02 AM	6.29	H
2021/01/29	Fri	4:12 PM	-1.17	L
2021/01/29	Fri	10:38 PM	3.97	H
2021/01/30	Sat	03:34 AM	1.71	L
2021/01/30	Sat	09:41 AM	6.09	H
2021/01/30	Sat	4:46 PM	-0.99	L
2021/01/30	Sat	11:13 PM	4.12	H
2021/01/31	Sun	04:21 AM	1.63	L

DAILY LOTTERY

POWERBALL
Draw Date: 1/23
5 8 17 27 28
Power#: 14
Jackpot: 20 M

MEGA MILLIONS
Draw Date: 1/22
4 26 42 50 60
Mega#: 24
Jackpot: 20 M

SuperLotto Plus
Draw Date: 1/23
15 25 37 43 45
Mega#: 12
Jackpot: 15 M

Fantasy 5
Draw Date: 1/24
17 21 30 32 33

Daily 3
Draw Date: 1/24
EVENING: 3 7 7
Draw Date: 1/24
MIDDAY: 0 8 1

Daily Derby
Draw Date: 1/24
1st: 07 - Eureka
2nd: 12 - Lucky Charms
3rd: 01 - Gold Rush
Race Time: 1:44.72

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 26)

What you do for family will reward you all year long. A special relationship takes focus. This one radiates from the realm in which it started and favorably affects other parts of your life with its luminous influence. Spring brings a financial lift. Your professional life will take off in an interesting new direction. Gemini and Taurus adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 20, 1, 13, 17 and 5.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Inside every single relationship, there's a dullness that will, sooner or later, emerge. When it does, don't take it as a bad sign but as an invitation to meet the tedium with equal forces of creativity, love and expression.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). One idea leads to the next, and before you know it, you've about 25 of solid merit. So, which is worth pursuing? The brightest ones, of course — the ideas that illuminate what's around them.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Multitasking is a good way to make sure that nothing is done quite right. That said, almost any work can be enhanced by upbeat music that doesn't tax the brain.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). Now is the only inhabitable moment. Keep track of what happens. You'll retell the story later, and it will be good to have your fresh impressions about how it felt from the inside.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). You are not the only voice in your own head. There is no shortage of noise sources: culture, echoes of parental voices, peers and more. Separating out the signal of truth will be the hard part.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Feelings elongate, stretching from moments into hours, becoming moods. Moods are powerful, as they set the tone for the scenes of your life. So it's important to pick good ones, such as being cheerful or amused.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Charming and open, cheerful and agreeable: As far as desirable company goes, you hit all the notes. It's easy around certain people. Together you're creating this supportive environment.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). The confidential information lands with you because people trust you to hear them without judgment, problem-solve without drama and keep it all under wraps, too. Discretion is one of your super talents.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Make a deliberately vague request to a number of people and observe how it's resolved differently by each individual. Such exercises are fascinating to you, a student of human behavior, empowered with each lesson.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). You've a delightful sense of spontaneity about you. You keep people wondering, and because of this, they check in to see what you're up to and how they can be a part of it.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). There is a certain amount of effort involved in relationships — more with some people than others. You like to make yourself easy to be around, but the fact is, people will value the relationship more when it requires work.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). Maybe you haven't been called "poetry in motion" out loud, but someone is thinking it as they watch you handle the day. You see and respond to life's beauty in a way all your own.

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

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

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

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

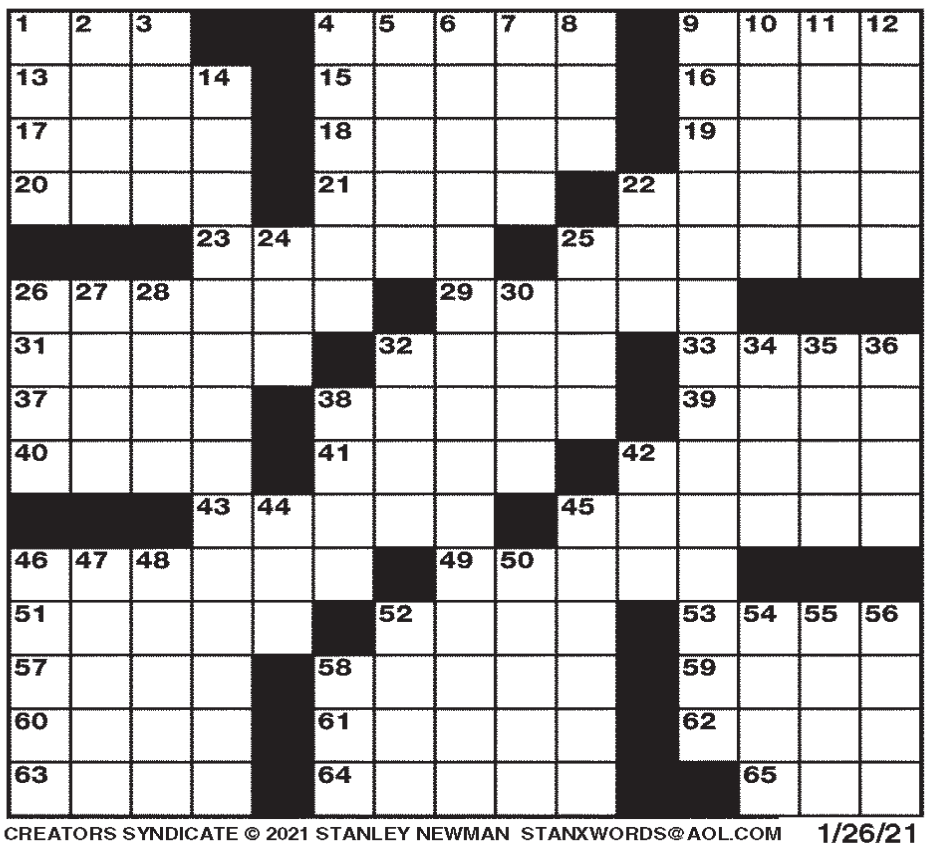
					7	2	9	
	2			6				7
7		3	9				6	5
	9	8			4			
1				2				8
	4		8			5	3	
4					6	3		9
9				7			5	
	7	2	5					

Newsday Crossword

KEEP IT UP by Sally R. Stein
Edited by Stanley Newman
www.stanxwords.com

ACROSS
1 Explosive initials
4 Prayers' last words
9 Affectionate embraces
13 Fabric from sheep
15 Salk vaccine target
16 "A likely story!"
17 Take __ account (consider)
18 Prevailing tendency
19 Here today, __ tomorrow
20 Minor error
21 Roof overhang
22 Divide up with others
23 Electric car company
25 Person batting in baseball
26 Patronize, as a hotel
29 The ones over there
31 Garments for Julius Caesar
32 Brunch or dinner
33 Holder for eyeglasses
37 College students' housing
38 In an unsatisfactory manner
39 Luau dance
40 Thick slice
41 Money in Spain
42 Walk inside
43 New Delhi's country
45 Groups of hatchlings
46 Attaches, as to a scrapbook page
49 As perfect as possible
51 Be patient for
52 Natural skin soother
53 "Clumsy me!"
57 Western Hemisphere alliance: Abbr.
58 Assure, as a victory
59 Grasp tightly
60 Ireland nickname
61 Clean off a blackboard
62 Connecticut university
63 See-through part of eyeglasses
64 Trifled (with)
65 Was winning

DOWN
1 Tiny tree branch
2 Prohibited thing
3 *Wizard of Oz* dog
4 Most appropriate
5 Lesson at the end of a fable
6 Train line overhead
7 Highest digit in phone numbers
8 Grass rolled out on a lawn
9 The latest in gadgets
10 World War II sub
11 Any literary category
12 Guide a car
14 Noble goals
22 Bro's sibling
24 __ in "eagle"
25 Sacred
26 Norms: Abbr.
27 Hammer or drill
28 Taj Mahal city
30 Angelic ring
32 Island near Oahu
34 Sedan or convertible
35 Kid's snow vehicle
36 Portions of corn
38 Cribs and cots
42 Historical period
44 After-tax
45 Sounded a car horn
46 Small group of experts
47 In the know
48 Glossy gown fabric
50 Extinguish, as a fire
52 Aviation prefix for dynamic
54 Talked-out, as an exam
55 Stack of stuff
56 Moved quickly
58 Make ready, as a dinner table



CREATORS SYNDICATE © 2021 STANLEY NEWMAN STANXWORDS@AOL.COM 1/26/21

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

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

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



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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 20 letters left over. They spell out the alternative theme of the puzzle. © australianwordgames.com.au 5005

Dressmaking

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

Argentella lace
Back
Belt
Bias
Cloque
Crepe
Cuts
Denim
Duck
Edges
Fabric
Fold
Hemming
Iron
Jute
Lampas
Lanon
Lawn
Leno
Lizard
Mesh
Mohair
Moire
Moleskin
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SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S WORDS PUZZLE.
What a great start to the morning

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Santa Monica Daily Press office (310) 458-7737

AMBULANCES

FROM PAGE 5

scrubbed it already. They take no chances during their daylong shift covering the Orange County city of Placentia.

The 911 calls come in with limited information: a broken bone, chest pain, difficulty breathing, stomachache, fever. Every patient is a potential carrier of the coronavirus, whether they know it or not.

Sometimes, people know they're infected and tell 911 dispatchers before the EMTs arrive. Other times, the symptoms themselves — fever, shortness of breath — signal a possible case. But Hammond remembers one woman, suffering from hip pain, who didn't tell him or his partner about her coronavirus diagnosis.

He only found out afterward, saying it reinforced the importance of treating every patient as if they have tested positive.

"That was definitely a call where we learned a lot," Hammond said.

Unlike doctors and nurses, first responders must go inside homes. They walk into hot zones where everyone in a household is sick, where the virus is in the air. They lift immobile patients onto gurneys, their masked faces just inches apart.

They race to hospitals already overwhelmed with sick people, sometimes only to wait hours outside before their patient can be admitted. And then they do it all again when the next 911 call comes in.

"We don't know the end result," Hoang said. "We only know the beginning to the hospital."

Then there are those who direct the EMTs where to go. In Los Angeles County, 20 miles (32 kilometers) northwest from Hoang and Hammond, three young women stood before six screens apiece recently, talking into headsets with clear, clipped voices, marshaling other ambulance crews around a territory stretching from the mountains to the sea.

Ashley Cortez, Adreanna Moreno and Jaime Hopper work 12-hour shifts as dispatchers for Care Ambulance Service Inc. If the EMTs are the front lines, these women are the scouts.

They play chess with ambulances all day. When one gets stuck at a hospital for eight, 10 or 12 hours, the dispatchers must reposition the others to cover its area. When an EMT reports a positive COVID-19 test, the dispatchers must find a way to cover the ambulance's calls if the whole crew must quarantine. When one household has multiple coronavirus patients requiring two ambulances, the dispatchers have to plug the hole.

Their greatest fear is what's called a "level zero" — when there are no ambulances left to send to an emergency. In Los Angeles County, one of the nation's hardest-hit counties during the pandemic, the fear becomes a regular reality.

For Moreno, 28, the anxiety begins the night before her shift.

"I lay there and know I'm going to come in, and I know I'm going to have no units to run these calls," she said.

On Christmas weekend, Cortez watched as call after call piled up on her screen — with no ambulances available. Typically, it takes 30 seconds to send one out. That weekend, it took up to 15 minutes. And this was even before ambulances started languishing outside hospitals for hours.

"I was just in disbelief," said Cortez, 26.

There's not much more the dispatchers can do. They watch those screens. They listen to radio chatter. They rearrange the crews to cover the most territory possible. And they wonder what fresh horror awaits in a virus-ravaged world where the dangers are too many and the ambulances are too few.

"What if something happens to my daughter," Cortez said, "and there was nobody to send for her?"

WHAT'S THE POINT?

FROM PAGE 5

estimated that as many as 100,000 restaurants closed in 2020 and sales were off by 34% and the increased costs of handling the COVID precautions have sliced razor thin margins to vapor.

Help is on the way though. Yesterday California relaxed the heavy restrictions statewide of the Stay At Home order, and in Los Angeles County outdoor dining can resume again. This is welcome news to many of our local restaurants who desperately need us to support them.

While outdoor dining is not always the warmest of experiences, many of our local eateries invested heavily in redoing their outdoor dining options to accommodate the demands of the Department of Public Health and their customers. For example, Lunetta All Day built two cement block guarded dining areas in their parking lot to allow us to enjoy dining al fresco.

Z Garden on Pico and 26th redid their outdoor dining patio, and expanded their front area to allow for more diners to enjoy their healthy Mediterranean. While they've been busy with the delivery side of the business, having the capacity for outdoor dining, but not being allowed to use it, is frustrating to both guests and owner.

The good news is that this relaxing of the SAH order by Governor Newsom is an indicator that the infection rate, and the hospitalization rates are headed in the right direction. That does not mean however that we are now free to "move about the cabin" – we need to still be aware of the need for social distancing, mask wearing, and avoiding crowds.

As we have learned over the past year, things change. Today's improvement in the overall conditions can easily turn bad again. We have new variants of the COVID19 that are popping up globally. A virus has the ability to become more infectious, more deadly, less deadly, less infectious and a combination of those.

We've lost hundreds of thousands of our fellow Americans so far, we've lost tens of thousands of restaurants which translates into millions of jobs that have been negatively impacted. The immediate future is brighter, if we stay vigilant, continue doing that which works and remember to support our fellow business owners.

I encourage you to head out to dinner at one of our local landmark restaurants, but do so intelligently and use the precautions that will allow us to fully recover, so one day we can even eat inside again.

David Pisarra is a Los Angeles Divorce and Child Custody Lawyer specializing in Father's and Men's Rights with the Santa Monica firm of Pisarra & Grist. He welcomes your questions and comments. He can be reached at dpisarra@pisarra.com or 310/664-9969. You can follow him on Twitter @davidpisarra

MAIN STREET

FROM PAGE 1

diverse business district.

Hall, who has extensive disaster management experience, said that in the long-term there will be benefits that come from the extreme economic challenges of the pandemic.

"The businesses that do survive will emerge better poised, stronger, with a way better handle on how to deal with financial adversity," said Hall. "For all the businesses that have closed, there's probably a greater number of businesses looking to get a foothold. There's been more lease activity in the past nine months than I've seen on Main Street in the past nine years."

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BLACK HISTORY MONTH

FROM PAGE 1

Monica's Black community, event organizer Delana Gbenekama said as she detailed the many upcoming opportunities to learn about Black history as well as the Black community's contributions to Santa Monica.

"Last year was the first opening ceremony and that will be held on Rosa Parks Day again this year. We also had the Black Excellence Awards last year for the first time to honor the people who have made an impact in the community so this year we'll of course return with the second annual opening ceremony and Celebrating Black Excellence Awards, but we've also added a lot of other events and unique programming for this year as well," Gbenekama said, "including Zumba and the Afro-Joy Dance Party with Tatiana Zamir; which I'm really excited for because it's something that's fun, but there's also going to be a healing component."

And those are only some of next month's events, Gbenekama added. "We have a book reading and conversation with Catherine Adel West on her book, "Saving Ruby King," and we have a talk about Historic Belmont Park because everybody should know the significance of that project."

A full list detailing the City's Black History Month celebrations is available on the website santamonica.gov/blog/blackhistorymonth2021, but Gbenekama said the fun will kick off at 10:30 a.m. Thursday, Feb. 4, during The Black Family: Representation, Identity and Diversity Opening Ceremony, which will feature special dance performances, segments highlighting the cooking traditions of Black families, and much, much more.

"I truly think the opening ceremony will be an opportunity for people to learn firsthand about the Black family experience because they will hear directly from community members and some families during the opening ceremony," Gbenekama said. "And I'm really excited about this event because the black community is not a monolith. We're a diverse community, so we really wanted to display that during the Opening Ceremony and throughout the different events this year. And given we're in a pandemic, I think these virtual events will be a nice reprieve for community members, which is something that I've always thought was important — but it is even more so now."

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REOPEN

FROM PAGE 1

than double the average case count reached at the height of the summer surge. While the County isn't out of the woods yet, all key health metrics are trending in the right direction.

On Jan. 20 the average daily positivity rate was 12.9 percent, down from 20 percent at the beginning of the month. Average daily deaths, which peaked at above 200, have now dropped to below 160.

"Hope is on the horizon, but please continue to do your part to limit the spread of COVID-19," said Director of Health Services Christina Ghaly. "Numbers in the hospitals are declining and we take that as a very positive finding, but remember they can easily and quickly go back up again if we let our guard down."

County officials reported that 853,650 vaccine doses had been received as of Monday and 525,747 doses had been administered as of Jan. 21.

The County's vaccine appointment system is currently booked through the end of the week, but more weekend slots will be added in the coming days, according to L.A. County Department of Public Health Director Barbara Ferrer.

"Our weekly shipments are significantly lower than what we need," said Ferrer. "Our ability to vaccinate people in L.A. County remains very constrained by supplies."

Appointment availability to receive a first dose will be limited for the next few weeks as the majority of slots will be reserved for people in need of a second dose.

"I'm advocating directly to the new president of the United States Joe Biden to send more vaccine doses to Los Angeles County as we are one of the hardest hit counties in the country," said Solis. "Furthermore, I'm asking the president to prioritize Los Angeles County in rolling out the community vaccination centers, which will be supported by FEMA."

Vaccines are currently being distributed to over 200 sites in L.A. County. Ferrer recommended residents visit vaccinatelacounty.com for the most up to date information on vaccine availability.

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