2 **Santa Monica Chamber**
Hosts business summit.

3 **Sunset Park murder**
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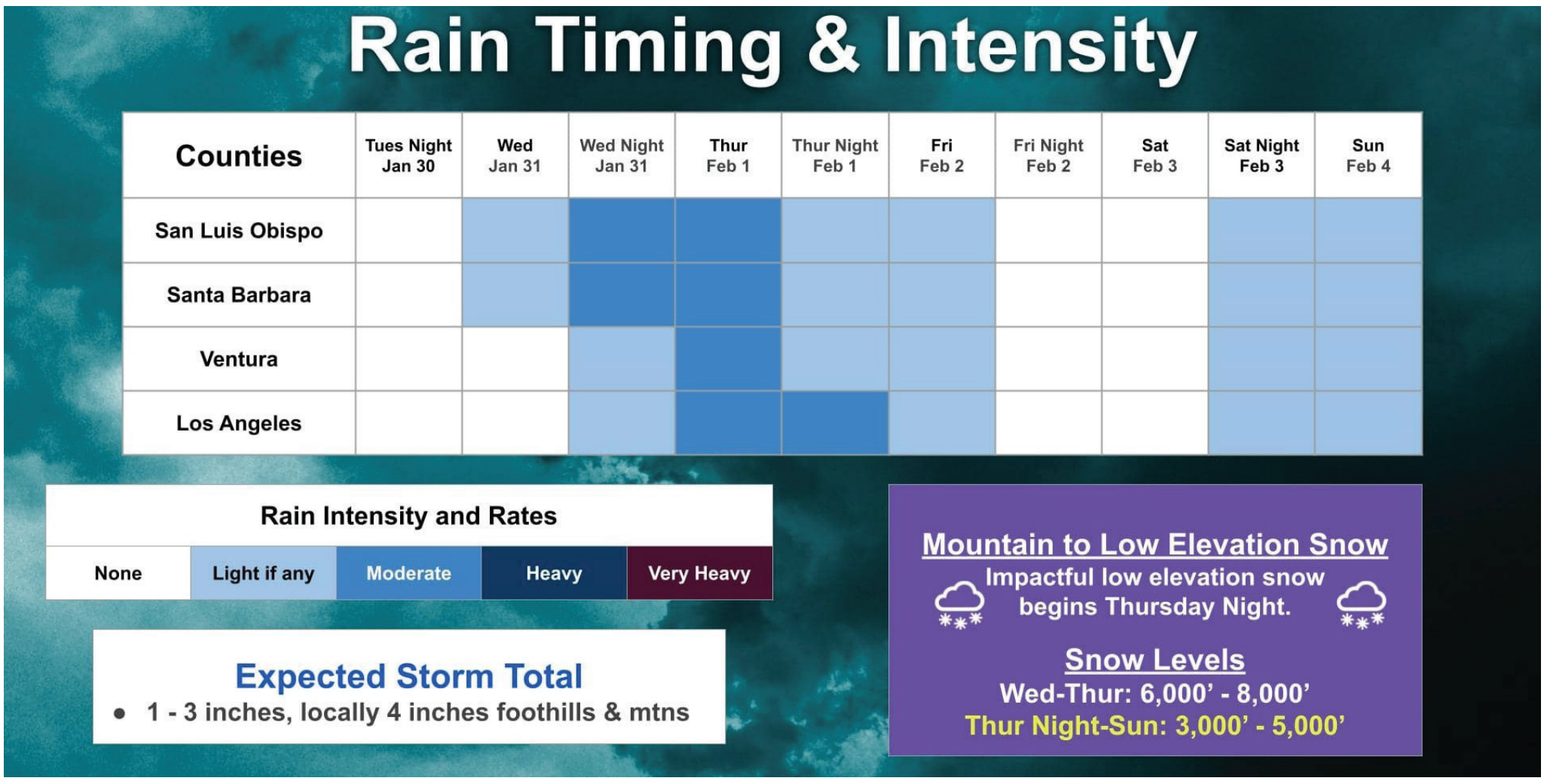
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Santa Monica Daily Press

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Wet weather worms its way into the city for February



Graphic Courtesy of National Weather Service

WET WEATHER: The start of February is set to bring rain throughout Los Angeles County, including Santa Monica.

THOMAS LEFFLER
SMDP Staff Writer

Typically the term "dry January" is reserved for discussions relating to alcohol use, but the saying can also be literal as it applies to Santa Monica weather. The city received 0.3 measurable inches of rain during the month, all concentrated within two days, Jan. 21-22, with the remainder of 2024's first weeks parched.

As the calendar flips to February, however, a new storm in the Los Angeles area looks to drench Santa Monica with five times as much precipitation as January's total. According to a National Weather Service forecast discussion, a low pressure system that was centered about 1,500 miles west of Seattle Monday will slide down the coast this week, bringing rain throughout California on Wednesday and Thursday. The storm will bring a 4-8 hour period of "steady moderate to occasionally heavy rain" to areas throughout Los Angeles County, with precipitation set to peak between 4 a.m. and 10 a.m. Thursday morning.

The NWS report states that peak rain rates will be between 0.33 and 0.66 inches per hour, meaning one hour of the storm will bring more rain to Santa Monica than all of January. Rainfall totals will generally end between 1.5 and 3 inches, with showers expected to dissipate by Friday.

Impacts from the rainfall include moderate flooding to roads and small creeks, however, the NWS states that "risk for significant damage is low." A report on the upcoming storm by AccuWeather Senior Meteorologist Alex Sosnowski noted that storm runoff may be "substantial and quick" with potential area-wide incidents of debris flows, rockslides and washouts.

Outside of precipitation, the truncated warm spell that ended the month will subside due to the conditions. According to a Weather Underground report using data from the Santa Monica Municipal Airport weather station, the high temperature climbed from 61 degrees Fahrenheit on Jan. 25 to 75 on Jan. 27, followed by a high of 78 on Jan. 28. After Monday and Tuesday also reached the 70s, the storm will plunge temperatures by double-digit degrees, with Thursday's high set to be 60 degrees.

This week's storm is classified by AccuWeather as an atmospheric river, a plume of tropical moisture in the atmosphere that can result in heavy rainfall in a narrow patch of land. A series of atmospheric rivers was the source of life-altering storms for many throughout California during the 2022-23 winter season, and the event will once again trigger precipitation in Santa Monica.

SEE **RAIN** PAGE 3



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Chamber summit brings new trends to local businesses



Photo by Thomas Leffler

SUMMIT: Regent Santa Monica Beach hotel General Manager Younes Atallah, Outstanding Business Leader Award recipient Providence St. John's CEO Michael Ricks, and Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce CEO Judy Kruger celebrate Ricks' award at the second annual Chamber Business Summit.

THOMAS LEFFLER
SMDP Staff Writer

The constantly-changing world of business requires a keen mind embracing new ideas to succeed, with a host of new trends entering the local conversation this past week.

On Jan. 25, the Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce held its second annual Business Summit at Santa Monica Brew Works, featuring several panels on hot industry topics as well as the awarding of the Outstanding Business Leader Award to Providence St. John's CEO Michael Ricks. A gathering of business and other local stakeholders listened in as experts relayed information relating to workforce development, business procurement and marketing using artificial intelligence (AI).

The workforce panel, moderated by Regent Santa Monica Beach hotel General Manager Younes Atallah, brought together higher-ups in local industry and education to highlight trends in both hiring and retaining employees. Atallah noted that when he thinks of the workforce, he thinks of "dealing with people," and questioned the three panelists on how to keep employee engagement alive locally despite challenges like commuting to and from Santa Monica.

Both UNITE-LA Director of Policy Amber Chapman and Lionsgate Head of Talent Acquisition Tami Quintero spoke of equity in employment opportunities, with Quintero adding that a workforce trend she's seen is in inclusive hiring practices, including at the Santa Monica-based Lionsgate.

"We are making sure that we are having ongoing education for our employees on the principles and making sure that we have processes, hiring processes, recruitment processes, that are equitable and transparent and present an equal playing field across the board for candidates," Quintero said. She also noted that another trend which is "long overdue" is focusing on "skills-based hiring," with employers looking for "demonstrated capacity for growth" instead of focusing on more strict educational requirements which "created barriers for entry."

Chapman expanded on how employers can keep talent once acquired, stating that employees want to see advancement opportunities and that businesses should create a culture where "upscaling and advancement is visible." On the day-to-day, Chapman added that new employees strive to find roles that are "connected to meaningful impact," which can spark joy even during mundane tasks.

The policy director also touched on how caring employers who offer living wages are also seen more fondly in a world recently impacted by the economic anxiety of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"If COVID showed us anything, it was the balance in the wellness that was prioritized with organizations that were able to keep (a lot of) their employees ... to the extent that we are prioritizing, ensuring that the whole person is taken care of both in terms of leadership (and) people management, (where) the development of a person is being kind of woven into the fabric of the culture and the organization," Chapman said.

Having strong educational roots locally

SEE **SUMMIT** PAGE 11

Roofing Supply

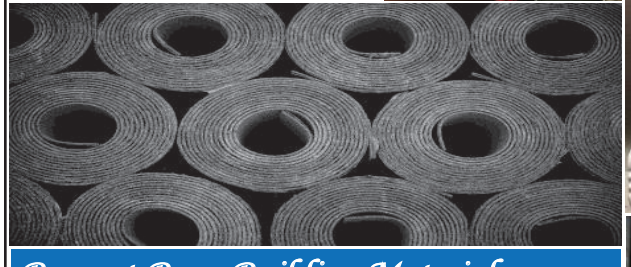


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Sunset Park murder suspect enters a plea of 'not guilty'

SCOTT SNOWDEN
SMDP Staff Writer

On Tuesday afternoon at about 2:15 p.m. Kayla Delise Mackie (27), the suspect in the Sunset Park murder last Thursday morning, January 25, had her arraignment at the Los Angeles County Court. The District Attorney's Office filed a murder charge (187(a) PC) for the Santa Monica homicide along with additional charges related to other Los Angeles incidents.

After prior consultation between Public Defender E. John Myers and Deputy District Attorney Lucrecia Boado, Myers entered into the record a plea of not guilty with bail set at two million and fifty thousand dollars and a date was set of March 21, 2024, in department 31 in the Airport Courthouse. Judge Keith L. Schwartz was presiding.

Mackie looked on through the reinforced glass of the separate, soundproofed holding dock in the department 30 courtroom and only muttered "yes" to confirm her name and that she understood the procedure.

On January 25 at approximately 10:25 a.m., Santa Monica Police Department (SMPD) officers responded to a call of "shots fired" in the 2600 block of 29th Street, close to the intersection with Ocean Park Blvd. Officers located the victim of the shooting sitting inside of his parked vehicle.

The victim, identified as William James Edwards III, a 46-year-old Venice resident, was transported to a local hospital in grave condition and died at the hospital. The motive for the crime remains unclear and is still being investigated.

SMPD located Mackie the following morning in West Los Angeles where she was taken into custody. Further investigation revealed she was responsible for additional crimes in Los Angeles, including an armed robbery and an attempted homicide.

In a statement put out by the SMPD, Police Chief Ramon Batista said, "With unwavering dedication, the SMPD team applied tireless effort and professionalism to every aspect of the criminal investigation. Their relentless pursuit of the facts, coupled with meticulous hard work, reflects a commitment to justice. Our officers take pride in knowing their diligence contributes to upholding the principles of law and order. In Santa Monica, public safety is foremost, and crime will not be tolerated in our community."

In response to this tragic incident, the local community has rallied to raise over $20,000 through a GoFundMe campaign. Edwards was an industry-respected music producer by profession and a popular member of the local community. He is survived by two young sons, Levi and G. Williams IV.

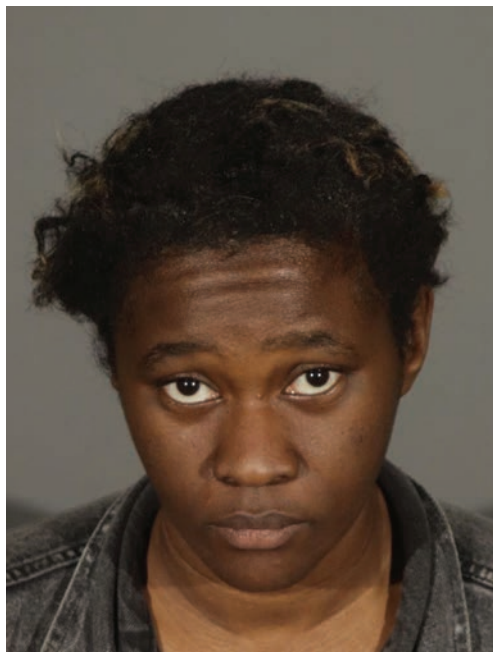


Photo by SMPD
KAYLA DELISE MACKIE

Mayor Phil Brock also issued the following statement to the community, "Last week's senseless killing on 29th Street has left all of us shocked. My heart goes out to William's family and friends, and my thoughts are with all who were affected by this tragic event."

"While nothing can take away the pain this incident has brought to our community, I am proud of the outstanding police work our officers showed to quickly apprehend the suspect and ensure she is brought to justice. I stand behind the strong message from Santa Monica Police, there is no place for any type of violence, particularly gun violence, in our city."

Anyone with information related to this individual or incident can contact Detective Tavera, Detective Sergeant Gradle, or the Watch Commander on 310-458-8427, which is a 24-hour number. The case number is 24ARCF00147 and the booking reference is 6739643.

scott.snowden@smdp.com

RAIN

FROM PAGE 1

After the series of atmospheric rivers delivered 15.45 inches of measurable rainfall to the city from January-March, 2023 was relatively dry, save for an intense downpour in August from Tropical Storm Hilary. In total, the city received 21.44 inches of rain in 2023, severely outpacing a parched 2022 with just 5.22 measurable inches. March of 2023, which brought the city 7.85 inches of rainfall, outpaced the entire 2022 total.

The dried out conditions of 2022 left not only Santa Monica, but all of California, in significant drought. According to the United States Drought Monitor, in January 2023 over half of California was locked into at least moderate drought conditions, but the early 2023 storms have changed that tune. As of Jan. 23, the drought monitor shows that just under 29% of the state is in at least moderate drought, with this week's rain aiming to further lower that number.

Snowpack throughout the state will also be impacted by the storm, with Southern California mountains like the Tejon and Cajon passes set to gain a "small, slushy accumulation" according to the AccuWeather report. Accumulations are also in store for the Sierra Nevada snowpack along the state's eastern border, which is currently running below historical averages for late January.

thomas@smdp.com



Surf report

WATER TEMP: **59.4**

WEDNESDAY
POOR TO FAIR
SURF: 1-2ft
Knee to thigh

Fresh pulse of favorably-angled WNW swell. Wind currently looks ok for the morning but it is likely southerly flow will develop in the afternoon as a storm pushes towards the California Coast. The low is expected to push in overnight.

THURSDAY
POOR
SURF: 1-2ft
Knee to thigh

New, stronger WNW swell expected to fill in but models in agreement a coastal storm will be moving into the region with E/SE wind in the AM trending WNW in the PM. Worth keeping an eye on the AM window at spots west of Dume.

Weather

Wednesday: Patchy fog before 10am. Otherwise, cloudy, then gradually becoming mostly sunny, with a high near 64.
Wednesday Night: Rain after 10pm. The rain could be heavy at times. Low around 51. Southeast wind 5 to 15 mph.
Thursday: Rain. The rain could be heavy at times. High near 61. Breezy, with an east wind around 20 mph.
Thursday Night: A 30 percent chance of showers, mainly before 10pm. Partly cloudy, with a low around 49.

Date	Day	Time (LST/LDT)	Predicted	(ft)High/Low
2024/01/31	Wed	12:30 AM	4.10	H
2024/01/31	Wed	06:26 AM	1.95	L
2024/01/31	Wed	11:53 AM	3.46	H
2024/01/31	Wed	6:05 PM	1.19	L
2024/02/01	Thu	01:04 AM	4.19	H
2024/02/01	Thu	07:45 AM	1.91	L
2024/02/01	Thu	12:52 PM	2.78	H
2024/02/01	Thu	6:19 PM	1.67	L
2024/02/02	Fri	01:47 AM	4.29	H
2024/02/02	Fri	09:46 AM	1.60	L
2024/02/02	Fri	3:15 PM	2.28	H
2024/02/02	Fri	6:25 PM	2.11	L
2024/02/03	Sat	02:47 AM	4.46	H
2024/02/03	Sat	11:17 AM	0.99	L
2024/02/04	Sun	03:56 AM	4.74	H
2024/02/04	Sun	12:13 PM	0.30	L
2024/02/04	Sun	7:48 PM	2.86	H
2024/02/04	Sun	9:53 PM	2.78	L

Daily Lottery

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POWERBALL
Draw Date: 1/29
39 41 43 49 64
Power#: 4
Jackpot: 188 M

MEGA MILLIONS
Draw Date: 1/26
14 31 34 50 61
Mega#: 13
Jackpot: 311 M

SuperLotto Plus
Draw Date: 1/27
1 6 36 39 47
Mega#: 24
Jackpot: 19 M

Fantasy 5
Draw Date: 1/29
9 10 17 28 29

Daily 3
Draw Date: 1/29
EVENING: 0 9 8
Draw Date: 1/29
MIDDAY: 7 3 2

Daily Derby
Draw Date: 1/29
1st: 04 - Big Ben
2nd: 08 - Gorgeous George
3rd: 10 - Solid Gold
Race Time: 1:49.51

PUBLISHER
Ross Furukawa
ross@smdp.com

PARTNER
Todd James
todd@smdp.com

EDITOR IN CHIEF
Matthew Hall
matt@smdp.com

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
Charles Andrews,
Jack Neworth,
David Pisarra.

CIRCULATION
Guadalupe Navarro
ross@smdp.com

Keith Wyatt
ross@smdp.com

STAFF WRITERS
Scott Snowden
scott.snowden@smdp.com

Thomas Leffler
thomas@smdp.com

DIRECTOR OF ADVERTISING
Cindy Moreno
cindy@smdp.com

MARKETING MANAGER
Dina Araniva
dina@smdp.com

PRODUCTION
Esteban Inchaustegui
production@smdp.com

Julio Davalos
julio@smdp.com

1640 5th Street, Suite 218
Santa Monica, CA 90401
OFFICE (310) 458-PRESS (7737)
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Petition to Admin Estate

NOTICE OF PETITION TO ADMINISTER ESTATE OF: Inigo Renas Saiz CASE NUMBER: 24STPB13392 To all heirs, beneficiaries, creditors, contingent creditors, and persons who may otherwise be interested in the will or estate, or both of Inigo Renas Saiz . A Petition for Probate has been filed by Valeria Carriles Martinez in the Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles-Stanley Mosk Courthouse. The Petition for Probate requests Valeria Carriles Martinez be appointed as personal representative to administer the estate of the decedent. The Petition requests the decedent's will and codicils, if any, be admitted to probate.The will and any codicils are available for examination in the file kept by the court. The petition requests authority to administer the estate under the Independent Administration of Estates Act. (This authority will allow the personal representative to take many actions without obtaining court approval. Before taking certain very important actions, however, the personal representative will be required to give notice to interested persons unless they have waived notice or consented to the proposed action.) The independent administration authority will be granted unless an interested person files an objection to the petition and shows good cause why the court should not grant the authority. A hearing on the petition will be held in this court as follows: Date: Apr 5 2024 Time: 8:30 a.m Dept. 79 Room - Address of Court: l Stanley Mosk Courthouse 111 N. Hill St Los Angeles, CA 90012 If you object to the granting of the petition, you should appear at the hearing and state your objections or file written objections with the court before the hearing. Your appearance may be in person or by your attorney. If you are a creditor or a contingent creditor of the decedent, you must file your claim with the court and mail a copy to the personal representative appointed by the court within the later of either (1) four months from the date of first issuance of letters to a general personal representative, as defined in section 58(b) of the California Probate Code, or (2) 60 days from the date of mailing or personal delivery to you of a notice under section 9052 of the California Probate Code. Other California statutes and legal authority may affect your rights as a creditor. You may want to consult with an attorney knowledgeable in California law. You may examine the file kept by the court. If you are a person interested in the estate, you may file with the court a Request for Special Notice (form DE-154) of the filing of an inventory and appraisal of estate assets or of any petition or account as provided in Probate Code section 1250. A Request for Special Notice form is available from the court clerk. Attorney or Party without Attorney: Gustavo A. Madero Esq. SBN 2773390 Madero Legal Group, PC 65) Grand Ave, Suite 900 Los Angeles, CA 90017 Tel No. 323-685-2150 Fax No. 323-685-2168. Email Gustavo@maderolegal.com 01/17/24, 01/24/24, 01/31/24

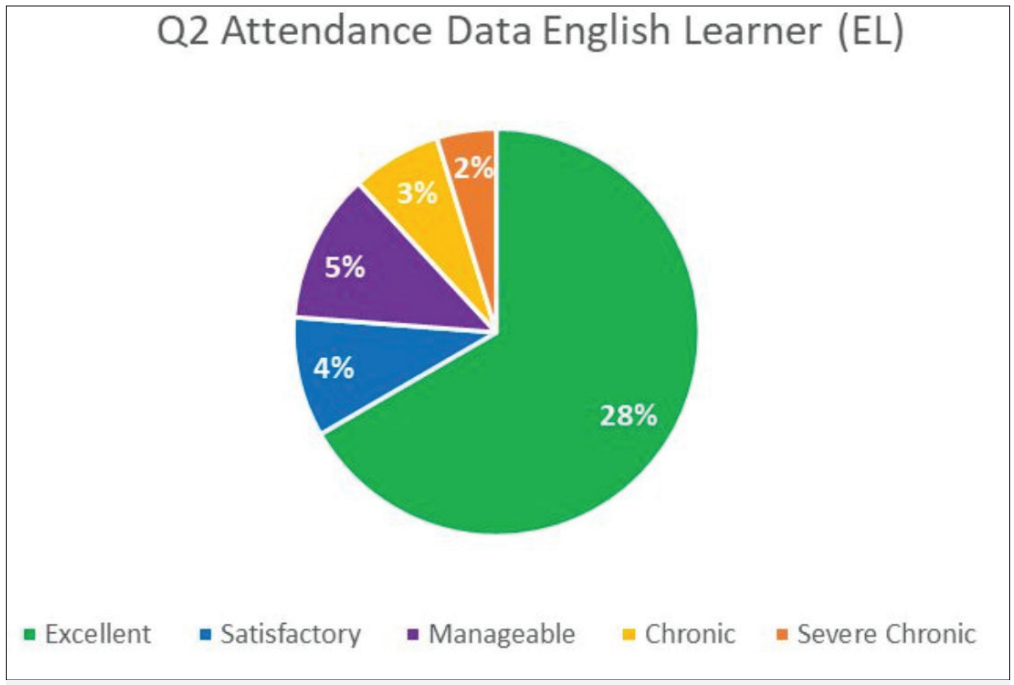
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Disproportionality discussions back on for school board



File Photo

SMMUSD: The first SMMUSD Board of Education meeting of February will include updates on several topics including student attendance rates for subgroups like English Learners

THOMAS LEFFLER
SMDP Staff Writer

A host of Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District Board of Education policies and administrative regulations may soon reflect the board's plan to address disproportionality in district Special Education programs.

According to the Department of Education, local educational agencies are required to collect and examine data to determine if "significant disproportionality based on race and ethnicity" is occurring with respect to identification for special education (called "eligibility"), educational placement (once identified as eligible for special education) and discipline. Disproportionality is defined as "the overrepresentation of a specific race of ethnicity," and the California Department of Education found that the district was "significantly disproportionate" in this category from the 2019-20 school year through the 2021-22 school year, particularly with identification of Latinx and Hispanic students for special education based on learning disability.

In a November 16, 2023 meeting, the board unanimously approved a plan to address this, with the district's "Dispro Core Team" identifying three root causes of disproportionality. The team said the root causes were a "lack of clarity, communication and understanding" of the districtwide support system framework, the "inconsistent implementation" of the district's English Language Arts program, and a "lack of cultural awareness and cultural competency" with inclusion and relationship-building with students and parents.

During Thursday's meeting, the board will discuss proposed updates to board policies to address the problem including clarification of who should be eligible for special education programs.

The board will also hear an update on student achievement data, focusing on data collected since the beginning of the 2023-24 school year in areas of student academic achievement. This includes the district's universal literacy and math assessments for all students, and the rates of non-passing grades (Ds and Fs) among students in secondary courses. Thursday's presentation centers on the district's Local Control and Accountability (LCAP) goals, which hone in on the themes of college and career readiness, English Learners proficiency and "culturally response and conducive" learning in safe schools.

One of the discussed metrics will be student attendance, broken down into the categories of "excellent" (zero absences), "satisfactory" (2-4 days absent), "manageable" (5-8 days absent), "chronic" (9-16 days absent) and "severe chronic" (17 days or more absent). Attendance statistics were given for grades K-8, grades 9-12, special education students, socio-economically disadvantaged students and English Learners. In the English Learners subgroup, 152 students (28% of the group) were in the "excellent" category, while 28 students were noted as chronically or severely chronically absent.

Other highlights include the potential approval of a Memorandum of Understanding between the district and the City of Santa Monica regarding allocations distributed to the district via Measure GS, which was approved by Santa Monica voters in November 2022. Effective in March of 2023, the measure provides an estimated $50 million annually for homelessness prevention, affordable housing and schools in the City, and the first $10 million of allocated funds is set to be distributed to SMMUSD on or before May 15.

The board also plans to recognize the importance of the district's career technical education program, likely adopting a resolution in honor of Career Technical Education (CTE) Month, wherein the board "recognize(s) the importance of career and technical education in preparing a well-educated and skilled workforce." Representatives from Webster Elementary School will be commended for their CTE work at the meeting.

thomas@smdp.com

GUEST COMMENTARY

Send comments to editor@smdp.com

California foster youth and COVID orphans gaining a sense of hope from trust fund program



Photo by Larry Valenzuela, CalMatters/CatchLight Local

YOUTH: MacLemore poses with a framed portrait of her father for a photo in her backyard in Bakersfield on June 22, 2022.

CELESTINA RAMIREZ

Before I went into foster care, I always looked up to my biological mother.

She was a woman of God, fierce and taught me a key lesson: There is always hope. It's a lesson that sustained me and still does as I now prepare to enter college – something I would have never imagined just four years ago.

When I was 6 years old, my dad was deported to Mexico. My mother had to care for me and my three siblings – all of us were younger than 8. We lived paycheck-to-paycheck while she worked jobs as a crossing guard before and after school and nine hours per day at a fast food restaurant.

Things took a turn for the worse when my mother got a new boyfriend and they began using drugs. She stopped caring for us properly. We didn't have much food or clothes, and there was only a single bed with plastic sheets. We had to fend for ourselves in the house while they spent most of their time in the garage out back.

It was difficult to function at school while worrying about what clothes we could wear or what we'd eat when we got home.

On Sept. 11, 2019, when I was 13, my mother and her boyfriend had an argument that escalated into pushing, hitting and physical harm to my 15-year-old sister. She ran away to get help.

When the police arrived at 5 a.m. and saw the state of things, they arrested my mother, her boyfriend, and told us to grab whatever we could because we were going somewhere else.

We spent two days at Children and Family Services before we were separated into two foster homes. My younger sister and I were placed with the foster family that I am still with today. Later, my younger brother joined us.

It was hard at first, particularly because I had many biological family members but none could take me in. That hurt. And I had to adjust to new rules and chores, a whole new family. But then I began to see that our old way of living was not a right way of living. Here there was stability and safety, and the opportunity to recover from trauma.

Eventually I began to call my foster mother "mom" because she now had that role in my life, helping me move forward.

This spring I will graduate early from high school. I have a full scholarship to Cal State San Bernardino where I plan to study business and also English since I love writing and the freedom of imagining stories. I am also benefitting from a new program California offers, the HOPE Program for foster youth and children who lost a parent to COVID, which is more commonly known as "baby bonds."

HOPE accounts were signed into law

SEE **GUEST COMMENTARY** PAGE 11

GAS PRICES IN SANTA MONICA

76	1776 Cloverfield Blvd	$4.93
SHELL	1802 Cloverfield Blvd	$5.10
CHEVRON	1819 Cloverfield Blvd	$4.98
MOBIL	731 Santa Monica Blvd	$5.30
LINCOLN BLVD CAR WASH	1624 Lincoln Blvd	$4.99
WORLD	1801 Lincoln Blvd	$4.29
SHELL	1866 Lincoln Blvd	$4.89
SPEEDWAY EXPRESS	2555 Lincoln Blvd	$4.39
CHEVRON	1732 Lincoln Blvd	$4.99
ARCO	332 Pico Blvd	$4.59
SINCLAIR	1944 Pico Blvd	$4.89
76	2601 Wilshire Blvd	N/A

*Prices paying in card

SMDP and GasBuddy

Average gasoline prices in Los Angeles have risen 5.3 cents per gallon in the last week, averaging $4.52/g today, according to GasBuddy's survey of 2,135 stations in Los Angeles. Prices in Los Angeles are 22.3 cents per gallon lower than a month ago and stand 0.8 cents per gallon higher than a year ago. The national average price of diesel has fallen 0.5 cents in the last week and stands at $3.87 per gallon.

According to GasBuddy price reports, the cheapest station in Los Angeles was priced at $3.78/g yesterday while the most expensive was $5.89/g, a difference of $2.11/g. The lowest price in the state yesterday was $3.49/g while the highest was $6.79/g, a difference of $3.30/g.

The national average price of gasoline has risen 4.5 cents per gallon in the last week, averaging $3.07/g today. The national average is down 4.1 cents per gallon from a month ago and stands 41.2 cents per gallon lower than a year ago, according to GasBuddy data compiled from more than 11 million weekly price reports covering over 150,000 gas stations across the country..

Santa Monica Daily Press

They're getting $1,000 a month for 3 years. How guaranteed income is changing lives in L.A. County

ALEJANDRA REYES-VELARDE
Special to the Daily Press

For years, Kipp Kahlia felt stuck. The Long Beach guitarist used to tour the country with reggae artists. But 20 years ago, after contracting intestinal parasites on a trip abroad, Kahlia had to take a step back from gigging.

Her health deteriorated and visits to doctors drained her savings. Recently she decided to start a business performing social justice songs at events. But with no extra funds or time, she had to pause the venture.

"With all the struggling I was doing, my attitude took a hit," Kahlia said. "The more you witness yourself being down and out, the more you feel down and out, and the more stuck you feel."

Now Kahlia is getting a chance to get unstuck. Kahlia was selected as one of 1,000 participants in L.A. County's guaranteed income program, called Breathe.

It's one of the largest guaranteed income programs in the nation, giving participants $1,000 a month over three years, more money over a longer period of time than other similar income programs. Last year, the program added an additional 200 participants who are former foster youth.

The pilot program will allow researchers to track its impact in a large, diverse region, said Sean Kline, director of the Stanford Basic Income Lab, which studies guaranteed income programs across the country.

"Whenever L.A. city or county or Chicago or New York do something bold like this, it's a really important signal that this big policy idea found its footing during COVID and represents a possible way forward in terms of supporting low income people across America," Kline said.

GUARANTEED INCOME'S IMPACT

One question the Breathe program raises, Kline said, is what does it mean to have extra money for months versus several years? "If you knew the money was coming for three years, it's a much longer runway. Can you go back to school? Can you quit your job now and look for a new one? Can you care for your aging parents?"

Researchers at the University of Pennsylvania are surveying the 1,000 Breathe participants, along with a control group of people not receiving funds. Every six months, program participants and members in the control group receive the same survey questions about their wellbeing, financially and mentally, said Amy Castro, director of Penn's Center for Guaranteed Income Research.

Program participants are assigned a personal coach to guide them through any needs, financial or otherwise, that arise during the duration of the program.

Guaranteed income pilot programs first garnered mainstream attention in 2019, when



Photo by Julie A. Hotz for CalMatters
INCOME: Kipp Khalia, who is part of Los Angeles County's guaranteed income program, Breathe, practices guitar at her home in Long Beach. November 15, 2023.

Stockton launched a pilot program in his city, giving families $500 monthly for two years. The idea was to see how people use financial aid when it doesn't have restrictions.

That pilot is one of the only experiments with published study results. While there were positive impacts on mental health and wellbeing the first year, when the pandemic broke out, the benefits were less pronounced, according to Penn's research.

Interest nevertheless grew in the last few years as COVID-19 exacerbated income inequality throughout California, researchers said.

Advocates point to the expansion of the federal child tax credit as proof that direct cash payments to families reduce poverty. In 2021 child poverty decreased to 9% from 17.6% in 2019.

Since then, guaranteed income programs' popularity remains strong at the local and state level. In the last two years, there have been 150 to 200 guaranteed income pilot programs launched in the U.S. In California, more than 12,000 people received money through several dozen similar pilots.

Still some opponents said these types of programs discourage participation in the labor market, are too costly and fail to sufficiently reform the welfare system to bring working people out of poverty.

Most of these programs don't yet have published results, and it's unclear how they'll contribute to federal policy, but California is taking the lead.

In November 2023, California launched its first state-funded guaranteed income pilot programs focused on former foster youth. The pilots will give 150 Ventura County

SEE **INCOME** PAGE 8

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California gave fast food workers a seat at the table. What comes next?

JEANNE KUANG
Special to the Daily Press

Before California's fast food workers get a minimum wage hike to $20 an hour in April, the state will grant them another historic avenue to advance their interests.

A first-in-the-nation fast food council will offer workers and labor advocates a way to set industry working conditions, hammering out rules directly across the table from franchise owners and representatives of restaurant chains such as McDonald's and Burger King.

The council is supposed to start meeting by March 15, and its decisions will be sent to state labor agencies to decide if they'll become real regulations. Gov. Gavin Newsom will have a hand in how the discussion plays out: He's responsible for appointing seven of the council's nine members; legislative leaders will appoint the other two. The positions are unpaid, except for $100 per day for council business.

The council will be split, 4-4, between business and labor. Newsom will pick the chairperson, who is "unaffiliated" with fast food businesses or workers — and could end up regularly being a tie-breaking vote. The governor's office is interviewing applicants now, a spokesperson said.

Labor advocates see the council as a way to decide workplace standards in an industry with scant union representation and multiple kinds of companies involved — including the franchise owners who employ the workers, and the large chains that dictate various aspects of production.

In recent years, the labor movement has also sought industry-wide councils for nursing home workers in Minnesota and nail salon workers in New York, borrowing from a European method of bargaining with employers that is uncommon in the U.S.

California is the first to convene a council for fast food, a sprawling industry employing mostly workers of color and women, who earn on average less than those in other service sectors. More than 500,000 people are employed in more than 30,000 limited-service restaurants in California, according to federal data; the council will govern those that belong to chains with 60 or more locations nationally.

The council, said SEIU California president David Huerta last year when Newsom signed the law creating it, puts "power in the hands of workers to improve conditions across their entire industry."

It's also a five-year experiment in how to regulate businesses in general across California — by returning to a model from the past.

For most of the 20th century, the state's now-dormant Industrial Welfare Commission — a similar, but more powerful council with labor and business representatives — convened wage boards specific to certain industries. The boards took testimony from workers and employers and wrote work standards in those industries.

Lawmakers did away with the commission two decades ago, after unions complained it had been seized by business interests to pass regulations that were less protective of workers' rights. Now, labor laws are almost all passed by the Legislature, which former commissioners from both business and labor say is less responsive to an industry's specific needs.

Though business groups have pushed back on the idea of industry-specific labor boards, lawmakers have signaled they're interested. Last year, during negotiations between the fast food industry and labor groups, the Legislature briefly resurrected the old commission, with a focus on industries with high levels of worker poverty.

"It is likely we'll see a continued push for both more sectoral labor standards" such as minimum wages specific to the fast food or health care industries, said UC Berkeley Labor Center co-chairperson Ken Jacobs, "as well as the use of labor standards boards in certain industries, where the structure of the industry makes traditional collective bargaining more difficult."

Former industrial welfare commissioner Barry Broad, a former lobbyist for unions who now sits on the state's Agricultural Labor Relations Board, recalls convening wage boards that would discuss specifics such as tipping practices in hospitality jobs, the length of shifts in nursing and how cement mixers almost universally took lunch breaks in the cabs of their trucks. He sees promise in creating such a forum that gets deep into details, for fast food work or other sectors.



Photo by Rahul Lal, CalMatters

STRIKE: Fast-food workers strike against efforts to repeal AB 257, a law creating a council to track workplace conditions in fast-food establishments, in Sacramento on Nov. 15, 2022.

"When you have something which is industry-specific like this … you'd get a consensus about how the work was organized and what the customs were" across that industry, Broad said in an interview. "There was a common understanding, and it led to compromise."

MORE FIGHTS AHEAD?

But after more than two years of a dizzying political fight between business and labor over whether to even consider specific regulations for fast food, will the new council result in more of the same battles?

Broad said it's possible to reach consensus, depending on who gets on the council.

But his former colleague, Bill Dombrowski, a representative of employers on the industrial commission, remembered its meetings as being just as contentious as the business-labor fights of today.

"We jokingly referred to it as the Industrial Warfare Commission," Dombrowski said, though he agreed that the process was preferable to business and labor going through the Legislature.

Appointed by then-Democratic Gov. Gray Davis, Dombrowski said he understood the commission would push through labor-friendly policies Davis had backed, such as returning to a rule of paying workers overtime for time beyond eight hours a day. But his role was to "try to make it as business-friendly as you can."

In the fast food industry, however, business groups aren't happy to be coming to the table, and they're likely to cite costs to push back on any new proposed regulations.

Restaurant owners are already wary of the upcoming wage hike.

In December two Pizza Hut franchise operators notified the state they are eliminating delivery services and in February will lay off more than 1,100 drivers, mostly in southern California. The cuts will take place two months before the $20 minimum fast food wage goes into effect. (The statewide minimum wage ticked up to $16 on Jan. 1.)

The layoff notices did not mention the new law, but Jeff Hanscom of the International Franchise Association, which backed the deal leading to the fast food council and the wage hike, said restaurant owners across the state are considering whether it'll prompt them to do the same.

"We have said all along, that you can't have a double-digit percentage increase in wages overnight, and not expect there to be repercussions," he said.

The law creating the council has also drawn the ire of many other restaurant owners, who are just now learning they'll be included under any new rules — including the wage hike, said Matt Sutton, senior vice president of government affairs and public policy for the California Restaurant Association.

When business and labor agreed on the scope of the council last year, they included restaurants belonging to a chain of 60 or more locations nationally; a prior version of the law covered those in chains with 100 or more locations.

"There's a lot of people that are caught off guard," Sutton said, predicting restaurants not covered by the law and other businesses will also be pressured to raise wages. "That is going to have a tremendous shock."

HOW WILL THE COUNCIL WORK?

The fast food council, having undergone significant changes since SEIU first proposed it in 2021, won't be as sweeping or as powerful as the old industrial commission, which created new regulations directly.

After pushing the proposal through the Legislature in 2022 and then being subject to a multimillion-dollar industry campaign to repeal it at the ballot box, labor groups ultimately ended up last fall with a wage hike for workers and a more limited council. The industry, in turn, agreed to withdraw the referendum from the November 2024 ballot.

There are some workplace issues the council can't touch, including creating any rules requiring employers to give workers more paid time off, or requiring businesses to adopt predictable scheduling policies.

And outside of minimum wages, most rules passed by the council would head to the state's labor agencies, which could still revise them through the regular rulemaking process before making them law. That was a win for the employers, said Hanscom of the franchise association, which represents both franchise owners and fast food brands.

"We want to ensure that the council is simply not a rubber stamp for" labor groups, Hanscom said. "We want to ensure that there's a counter-voice."

Meetings will be public, held at least once every six months. With the first meeting scheduled in less than two months, there are few other details public about who will be on the council and what it will discuss.

It will be part of the Department of Industrial Relations, a state labor agency. Newsom will appoint two fast food workers, two franchise owners, two fast food corporate representatives and the neutral member of the public. The two other spots, filled by legislative leaders, are reserved for workers' advocates.

Newsom's office did not respond to questions about what he's looking for in appointees.

A former "public member" of the old industrial commission, ex-U.S. Rep. Doug Bosco, said he wasn't the tie-breaking vote as often as he expected. "It was quite reasonable and quite centered and balanced, and not impervious to the political whims but not beholden to them either," he said.

Still, when asked how a neutral member should run the fast food council, he chuckled and said: "Don't take the job."

The council will also include non-voting representatives from the Department of Industrial Relations and the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development.

No appointees have been announced yet, and business groups have been mum on who they're pushing for the seats. On the labor side, Maria Maldonado, statewide leader of efforts to organize fast food workers through the Fight for 15 campaign, said she's interviewed with the Legislature for a workers' advocate seat.

"We're going to have a democratic process where (workers) can raise issues and talk about solutions," she said. "I hope that we can really convince (businesses) that we need to work together."

Whether on the council or as a future advocate at its meetings, Maldonado said her first goal will be to "protect the workers' hours" from getting cut in response to the wage hikes.

This article was originally published by CalMatters.

INCOME

FROM PAGE 6

residents $1,000 and 150 San Francisco residents $1,200 monthly.

"There is so much we don't know yet," Castro said. "We don't know how long people need to receive cash to create what level of change."

A WORK IN PROGRESS

More than halfway through the Breathe program, Kahlia said she and her business remain a work in progress, but the funds have given her an ability to move forward in a way she hadn't before.

"It's taking me from always putting out fires to being able to actually make some moves to advance, not just being stuck," Kahlia said.

The money came at the perfect time. Because of the pandemic, Kahlia had stopped teaching guitar lessons in person at parks and recreation centers and transitioned to virtual teaching. But one by one, her clients dropped off.

"I didn't expect to be accepted," to the Breathe program, Kahlia said. "When I was, I was really, really pleasantly surprised. It definitely took the edge off."

She figured $1,000 a month for three years would be enough to start investing in her business. She performed in a few experimental shows in 2017 when she sang about social justice issues and got positive responses from audiences.

Singing about social justice allows Kahlia to be a performer again and return to her roots as a reggae artist. She promised herself she would make this business work and focus on her health.

As the world recovered post-pandemic, Kahlia resumed giving virtual guitar lessons from her living room. During the lessons, she sits on a narrow carpet with a binder filled with sheet music propped in front of her. She places lamps near her laptop so students can see her well.

Kahlia said she doesn't keep track of how she spends the Breathe money. A lot of it has gone to health expenses, and some has gone to her business. But she also spends it on day-to-day things like groceries, or a taco night out with friends, she said.

Her biggest expense has been a new car she leased after her 28-year-old Toyota Corolla started breaking down.

Kahlia thought if she was going to meet clients for her business, showing up in an old, dinged up car wouldn't do a lot for her image.

Other smaller expenses include spending money on a website for her business and hiring a freelance IT worker.

Under other circumstances, Kahlia would have thought twice before spending that money.

"I'm probably getting more comfortable with spending money," she said. "Just learning to say yes to stuff. There's some stuff that, at the beginning of the program I felt was, you know, almost extravagant. And now I'm like 'Oh my god, I really needed that for my business to move forward.'"

WHAT RESEARCH SHOWS ABOUT GUARANTEED INCOME

Though data from the L.A. County guaranteed income program is limited, the Stanford Guaranteed Income Lab tracks 31 pilot programs throughout the country, including the Breathe pilot.

The lab found, in general, that food and groceries are the top way participants are spending money, making up 35% of the funds spent. Retail sales and services are a close second at 31%.

Participants also spent the money on transportation (10%) and housing and utilities (8%). They spend a smaller percentage on educational expenses, miscellaneous expenses and health care or medical expenses.

There's also anecdotal evidence that participants are spending some on things that may help them build wealth, like starting a business or saving for a down payment on a home, said Brian Arredondo, a coach for program participants.

The program's coaches, provided through Wilmington-based Strength Based Community Change, personally support participants as their lives change.

Arredondo regularly checks in with about 300 participants. He said participants come to him with a huge variety of needs, from questions about investing and money management to how to find a good mechanic.

He assists them in applying for state programs, such as CalFresh, and helps some enroll in schools or colleges. He even has helped families sign their kids up on sports teams with the extra funds.

Strength Based Community Change also offers workshops on financial literacy, investing and credit repair.

'IT CAN'T JUST BE THE MONEY.'

When Kahlia wanted to lease a new car, she went to Arredondo, who helped her research the used car market. He has helped other participants look for new cars and accompanied them to dealerships.

"People need help with normal, everyday interactions that may be easy for some individuals," he said. "But for others, they don't have any prior experience with them."

Researchers and advocates stress how no-strings-attached cash not only improves peoples' financial situations, but gives them peace of mind and improves mental health.

Participants report feeling more free to spend money on self care, outings with family members or sharing their wealth with community members. It's those hard-to-measure impacts that are key, said Ely Fournier, who oversees the program coaches at Strength Based Community Change.

"It can't just be the money," Fournier said. "It's the opportunity and the access to experiences sometimes that really make a big difference when there is even a little bit more resources folks can have. "

A year and a half into the program, Kahlia's business isn't off the ground yet. But she's made some progress. The program funds have given her time, she said. Normally she'd be stuck in a cycle of teaching guitar lessons to make money, but wouldn't have time for her business.

Now Kahlia is taking a step back from teaching and spending time writing new arrangements of music to perform for clients. She's working on updating her website and making calls to potential clients.

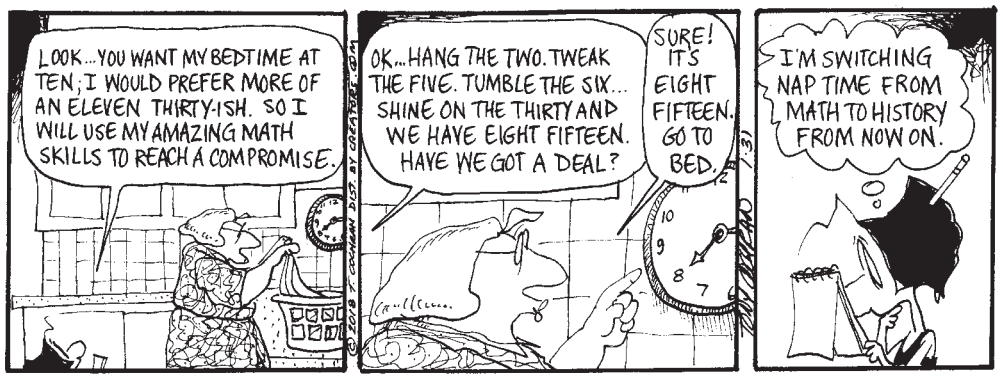
"I haven't gotten to the sexy part yet," Kahlia said. "I had to get stronger and healthier, clear space, and lay a foundation first. Pulling yourself out of a hole often doesn't look dramatic. For me it's been the ability to do some fairly tedious stuff over an extended period of time, over and over again."

This article was originally published by CalMatters.



Agnes

By TONY COCHRAN



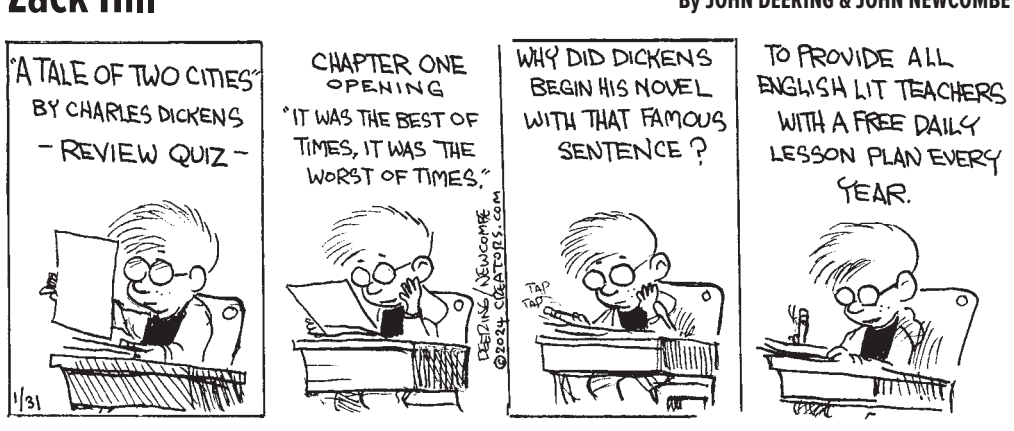
Dogs of C-Kennel

By MICK & MASON MASTROIANNI & JOHNNY HART



Zack Hill

By JOHN DEERING & JOHN NEWCOMBE



Heathcliff

By PETER GALLAGHER



"I PREFERRED THE LIONS."

Strange Brew

By JOHN DEERING



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

© australianwordgames.com.au 6106

Dollars and sense

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

Account	Duty	Mint	Staff
Advice	Economy	Money	Stock
Annuity	Euro	Number	exchange
ASIC	Gain	Pay	Terms
Buck	Growth	Queue	Trade
Card	Home	Real	Users
Cash	Invest	Regulation	Usurer
Cent	Kits	Risks	Value
Coin	Loan	Safe	Winner
Competitive	Loss	Sale	
Credit	Meet	Seller	
Debt	Merge	Shares	

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S WORDS PUZZLE.
Watch out for the snakes!

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TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (Jan. 31)

Your drive to achieve is motivated by a need in the world you know you can fill. That you are astute enough to recognize it is the brilliance that ripples out and out, connecting you to ideal partners, plentiful resources, and goodwill so sincere and abundant it cannot fail. More highlights: an upgrade in style, and keys to the room where magic happens. Taurus and Virgo adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 4, 42, 3, 20 and 18.

HOROSCOPES

ARIES (March 21-April 19). You wanted a thing. You're now realizing the cost, financial and otherwise, is far steeper than you thought. So, do you want it bad enough to do what it takes to get it? You'll now decide, realistically, if this is the case.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). Though you strive for an ideal, you don't expect yourself to perfectly achieve it. The little ways you veer off make the journey personal and exciting. Whatever you don't get right gives you a point of connection with your fellow flawed humans.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). As all the magicians know, magic isn't something to wait for; it's something to create. You'll be stuck by an idea worth putting effort into. You're up for learning, practicing and ultimately mastering the skill that will bring on the magic.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). Sure, stress affects you. But you've learned that nothing good comes from reacting too strongly to the signal. Instead, you'll turn that signal down by burning off some energy or by taking a break in a serene environment.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). Ambition alone can't get you to the goal. Many other qualities will kick in, like tenacity, intelligence and diplomacy, which is crucial. A successful strategy depends on figuring out what others want.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). You are a generally trusting person, and yet you have a feeling that it would be unwise to give up too much power, information or money. You'll be wary of anyone trying to persuade you. Go with your gut instinct — it's spot-on.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). You're still getting to know someone, and the relationship is somehow at once familiar and strange. It will groove much better once you work a few things out — not through conversation, though. Feel your way through.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). There are times in life when conflict is necessary, invigorating, and just the thing to sharpen and motivate you. This is not one of them. The prize in question is simply not worth fighting for. Avoid conflict. Embrace compromise and negotiation.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). The last word goes to the one who is the most obstinate, not the most correct. Either way, it is a childish thing to fight for, and you'll avoid the situations that seem to challenge people's maturity level.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Success doesn't hinge on one interaction going right. You'll continue to build a body of work and hone your stellar attitude, knowing you'll ultimately have many chances to get what you need.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). You'll keep company with talented people, and that makes you want to practice and improve your own bag of tricks. The command you have over your gifts is more important than which gifts you have.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). Science will impact the day. What can be proven via systematic observation, measurement and experiment has the potential to change your scene, improve your work or light up a relationship. Make your hypothesis and test it.

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD



Sudoku

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

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S SUDOKU

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

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

Newsday Crossword

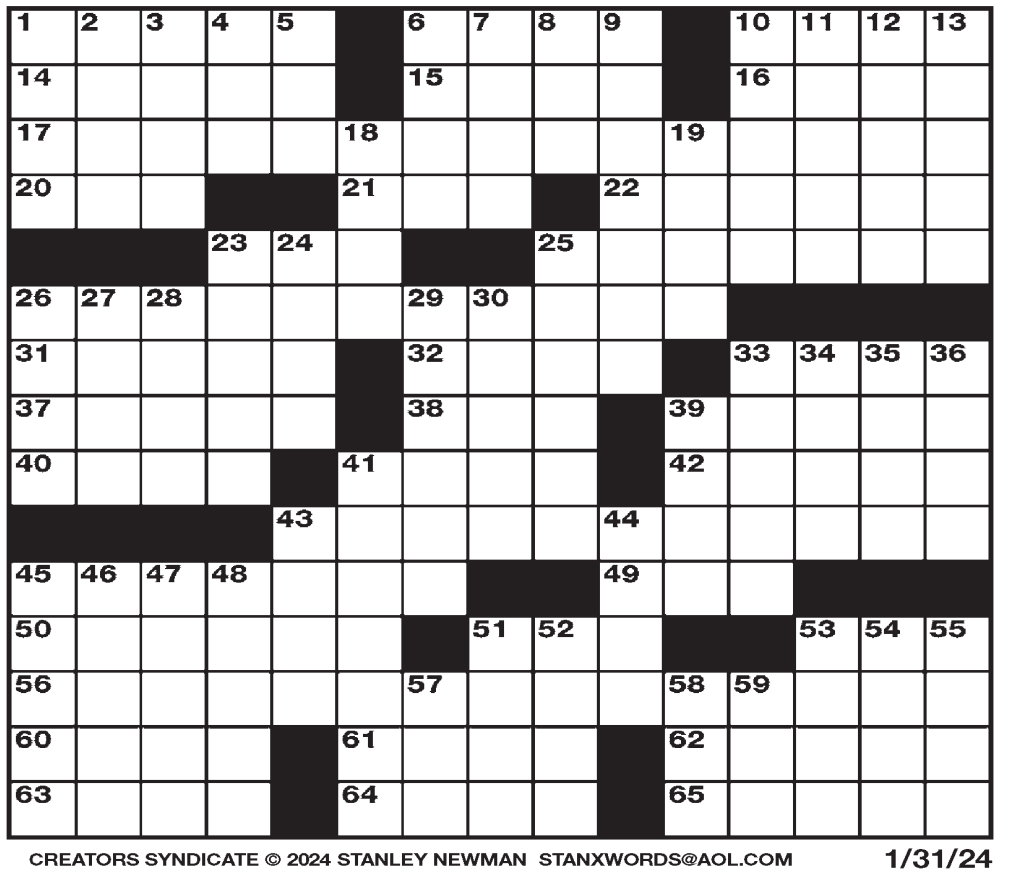
SENSE OF DIRECTION by Steve Faiella
Edited by Stanley Newman
www.stanxwords.com

ACROSS

1 Ship's load
6 Recedes, as the tide
10 Rolled-up sandwich
14 Uninterested
15 Big family
16 Mysterious glow
17 Early-day Irish greeting
20 Take notice of
21 "In what way?"
22 Frankfurter
23 Small battery
25 Accumulates
26 Player stationed behind third base
31 Dole out
32 TV host Seacrest
33 Ladder rung
37 Makes preparations
38 Tear apart
39 Formally greet at a sumo match
40 Wise person
41 Is unable to
42 Wonderland girl
43 Turns an auto, informally
45 Spotted wild feline
49 Stop-sign color
50 Antelope or Chevy model
51 Former nuclear agcy.
53 Possesses
56 Place of limited perspective
60 Suffix for kitchen
61 Italian money
62 Major blood vessel
63 Most August babies
64 Feline referred to at 63 Across
65 Mechanical worker

DOWN

1 Purring pets
2 Sunblock ingredient
3 Lasso
4 Sticky substance
5 Taking a vacation day
6 Sound rebound
7 Played a trumpet
8 Explosion sound
9 Winter sculptures
10 Subsides
11 Totally wrecks
12 Golf great Palmer's nickname
13 Sheets of a book
18 Bangkok native
19 __-view mirror
23 Make amends
24 PM periods
25 Changes with the times
26 Racetrack circuits
27 Jazz great Fitzgerald
28 Stars and Stripes
29 Quick trip to the store
30 Being deceitful
33 Not hollow
34 Tiny tree branch
35 Engrave with acid
36 Verse writer
39 Undecorated
41 Chewy candy
43 Angelic light
44 Curved entryway
45 Malign in print
46 Overact on stage
47 Decide you will
48 Party spreads
51 Frizzy hairdo
52 British prep school
53 Basil or oregano
54 Female voice range
55 Park bench plank
57 Parisian assent
58 Corn serving
59 Wine and dine



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MORE OF STAN'S CROSSWORDS! Play FREE from Stan's archives of Easy, Hard and Sunday puzzles at: tinyurl.com/stan-newman-crosswords

SUMMIT

FROM PAGE 2

also cultivates a strong workforce, with Santa Monica College Vice-President of Academic Affairs Jason Beardsley commenting how SMC is an "anchor" of the community with resources that can help businesses connect with students. Beardsley noted that the strength of SMC is in its flexibility to develop new programs or pathways in "emerging areas," such as cloud computing and aquaculture. The Chamber and SMC recently began the Chamber Talent Connect program based on these growing industries.

Other panels at the summit included discussion on AI marketing, with comments from Botcopy CEO Dustin Dye, Snap, Inc. Business Partner Solutions' Rick Lucas and Chamber Marketing and Events Manager LeAnn Oliver. Both Dye and Lucas explained how their services can be used within businesses, such as Botcopy's expertise in AI-centered contact and customer relations live chat interfaces. Oliver added that online services like the Chamber's directory of local businesses are crucial for getting businesses seen on Google searches and other social media platforms.

"You have no idea how quick it'll get picked up … you just don't know how amazing it is (how) the simplest things can really make a big difference," Oliver said.

The final panel, hosted by Chamber CEO Judy Kruger, was a discussion on business growth and procurement with representatives of the local, regional and state levels. The panelists were City of Santa Monica Economic Development Manager Jennifer Taylor, El Camino College Small Business Development Center Director Starleen Van Buren and California Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-BIZ) Director of Innovation Christopher Earl. During the panel, Taylor promoted several City initiatives like the Buy Local campaign and the Most Loved contest as ways to get a local business noticed.

Presenting the Outstanding Business Leader Award was Atallah, who noted he "couldn't be prouder" to give the honor to "dear friend" Ricks, who has served as CEO of Providence St. John's for the past four years.

"Michael's exceptional leadership not only with his team, but successfully navigating … one of the largest healthcare organizations (locally) during the pandemic, has been absolutely incredible," Atallah said. "His distinct blend of humor, intellect and compassion has really left a lasting mark on Santa Monica as a community."

Ricks jokingly stated that he wasn't going to make a formal acceptance since the crowd has heard "dozens" of acceptance speeches at recent shows like the Golden Globes and the Emmys. He did, however, recognize everyone from the Chamber, his team at Providence St. John's, his family for "tolerating" the time he spends away at work, and his colleagues in healthcare.

"(This isn't) just a job, (it's) a vocation, and how you actually answer the call," Ricks said of being in the healthcare industry. "Many of us in our own ways … we all answered the call in the things that we do for our respective organizations in our community. I was grateful for the opportunity I had to answer the call to work at St. Johns … taking care of anyone, but especially with a focus on the poor and vulnerable in our community. It's an honor to see our mission in action all day, every single day."

He added that he was "proud" to live in Santa Monica, and that his colleagues that reside in the area should feel the same way, calling for them to "spread the word" about the city's positives.

"I think we can all continue to help shape the culture of our city, a city that's business friendly, a city that's travel and tourism friendly, and we need to do that from within," Ricks said.

thomas@smdp.com

GUEST COMMENTARY

FROM PAGE 5

in 2022. They are seeded by the state and invested on behalf of the recipients. Under this program, approximately 58,500 children will receive access to $4,500 at age 18, and the money will remain available until age 26.

For me, the funds will help with transportation for college. Others might use it towards tuition or an entrepreneurial idea, or some other wealth-building activity. The state is also engaging a "youth panel of experts," myself included, to help with program implementation, utilizing our expertise on issues like how to best reach young people. What kind of language do we connect with, or not connect with?

We also have the opportunity to share our stories so that the public can better understand the HOPE Program and why they matter.

For me, there is an additional benefit in that the young people who are part of this group also form a kind of community. I know that I am not alone – that there are people I can trust and talk to, and they will understand my story. That's something I really need.

My hope, for a lack of a better word, is that this program will be successful and get expanded so that all young people experiencing this kind of hardship will have the resources to pursue their dreams, just like everyone else.

The place where I have lived the past four years is so beautiful. I love taking walks to be alone and to relax. The clouds are often low, but I can see the silhouettes of the mountains. As my mind clears, I remember it is hope that brought me here, but the next steps will be all mine.

Celestina Ramirez is a senior at Options for Youth Public Charter School in Victorville. She is a member of the HOPE Program's Youth Panel of Experts. This article was originally published by CalMatters.

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WEDNESDAY | JANUARY 31

LA STARTUP AND TECH MIXER
LA Tech is the fastest growing networking group in Los Angeles focusing on tech, startups and entrepreneurship. Professional Networking Events, Panel Discussions. The pandemic was tough on us all but now IRL events are back. Los Angeles represents Southern California startup elite, aspiring entrepreneurs, successful startup founders and venture capital in the LA area. The Santa Monica Whaler, 101 Broadway Santa Monica, 6 - 9 p.m. $12 - $83
https://www.eventbrite.com/e/la-startup-and-tech-mixer-2024-tickets-775797821167

THURSDAY | FEBRUARY 1

LOVE LETTERS TO SANTA MONICA
10 a.m. - 8 p.m. Through the month of February and across all branches, teen volunteers ask patrons to write a love letter to their favorite SMPL branch in honor of Library Lover's Month.

COLLABORATIVE ART CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY MONTH
10 a.m. - 8 p.m. Main Library, 601 Santa Monica Blvd. Kids and teens are invited to help complete portions of artwork celebrating Black History Month on our Main Library Youth area display wall. For youth through 17.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH READING CHALLENGE
10 - 8 p.m. smpl.beanstack.org Learn more about Black history and celebrate Black authors and illustrators through reading. Visit smpl.beanstack.org to register. Log your reading and activities to earn badges and entry into a book-pack drawing. For youth through 17.

TECH & TASKS
2 - 4 p.m. Main Library, 601 Santa Monica Blvd. Volunteer tutors provide help with reading documents or written tasks, using mobile devices, navigating government websites, filling out forms, using email, writing resumes, and more.

HOUSING COMMISSION
6 p.m. The Santa Monica Housing Commission is a city advisory body whose mission is to protect and improve the quality of life of all Santa Monicans by listening to input from city residents and staff, publicly deliberating, and providing recommendations to both the Santa Monica City Council and Santa Monica Housing Authority Board on issues related to housing in Santa Monica. https://www.smgov.net/departments/clerk/boards.aspx?id=53687092551

FRIDAY | FEBRUARY 2

WINTER BIRDS OF LEGACY PARK
SMC Malibu presents San Fernando Valley Audubon Society for another great lecture: Winter Birds of Legacy Park. The presentation will highlight identifying some of these likely species, where and when to look for them, and how to use eBird and other online resources for research and documentation. If weather permits, we will take a brief walk to the park to illustrate various habitats and their likely denizens. The intent is not to be an exhaustive examination of the Legacy Park bird life, but rather an overview of birding in relation to the location. Note: Please bring binoculars if you have them. SMC Malibu Campus, 23555 Civic Center Way, Malibu, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. https://www.smc.edu/calendar/index.php#event-details/fe1b2202-7cd7-45e9-bf39-4d4d4817d976

HIGH VOLTAGE
$10, The Electric Lodge, 1416 Electric Avenue Los Angeles, 8 - 10 p.m. Featuring Samba Royale is a Samba collective dedicated to honoring the roots of samba while bridging the gap of Afro-Diasporic movements. In this showing of High-Voltage we will take the audience on a tour of Rio de Janeiro through our show entitled "Welcome to Rio".
https://www.eventbrite.com/e/high-voltage-tickets-793676817727

SOLAR SYSTEM EXPLORATION SURVEY: PART 8: URANUS
Organizers move into the Outer Solar System with Senior Lecturer Jim Mahon's review of his studies of mysterious Uranus — the first major planet discovered via use of the telescope. Uranus is a world visited via space probe only once, but a prime candidate for an orbiter mission in the near future. 8 - 9 p.m.
Free on Zoom
https://www.smc.edu/calendar/index.php#event-details/98474db2-feac-43f4-8436-2f8a0229f1f1

SATURDAY | FEBRUARY 3

RECYCLING EVENT
The City is hosting a FREE recycling event Saturday, February 3rd, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. for Santa Monica residents only. Bring your used mattresses, box springs, electronic waste, and up to five boxes of paper for shredding! Shredding will happen on-site and the paper will be recycled. City Yards, 2500 Michigan Ave Questions? Call (866) 311-7266, https://www.santamonica.gov/events.

SANTA MONICA FILM FESTIVAL
The Santa Monica Film Festival is an annual film festival focused on emerging artists. The annual festival takes place in Santa Monica, CA, in February. The Santa Monica Film Festival showcases award winning independent films from local, national and international filmmakers. $10 - $50. AMC Broadway 4 1441 3rd Street Promenade, 11 a.m. - 7 p.m. https://www.santamonicafilmfestival.com.

Evening of Dance
Join organizers on February 3rd at 7 p.m. at the JAMS Performing Arts Center for a fabulous Evening of Dance! JAMS Performing Arts Center, 2425 16th St. $20, https://www.eventbrite.com/e/evening-of-dance-tickets-789376184417

Submit your events at smdp.com/events

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