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Santa Monica Daily Press
THURSDAY
07.12.18
Volume 17 Issue 202

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Noteworthy

By Charles Andrews

Don't Let It Be, Go Get That Good Music

SUMMERTIME AND THE MUSIC IS POPPIN'

Here are some suggestions.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED:

BLIND BOYS OF ALABAMA, Paul Thorn opening (how many groups, especially with a founding member still up there on stage, can say they will be celebrating their 80th anniversary, next year? yeah, that's right, eighty-th, been touring for seven decades but hear this, they're as good as they are old, they take you to church because they've spent their whole gospel-shoutin' lives there, but largely thanks to former McCabe's booker John Chelew, who went on to produce their albums, they won Grammys for three successive discs and the rest of the world finally took notice, and here's some advice for these great free concerts all summer long at MacArthur Park, based on the brilliant Fishbone concert I saw there recently: this show will probably be well-attended but there is lots of outdoor area for seeing and listening and there is a long lead-in with DJs and crowd-hype chatter, so bring a picnic dinner and blankets and relax because the Blind Boys, well worth the wait, won't be taking the stage till way past their bedtimes, but God willin' they will wear you out with a performance you won't forget), Sat 7 p.m., Levitt Pavilion, MacArthur Park, downtown LA, no cover.

RECOMMENDED:

TONIGHT! — Marina del Rey Symphony: OPERA BY THE SHORE (emerging opera stars

SEE MUSIC PAGE 5

Rent Control Board to discuss potential corporate housing ban

KATE CAGLE
Daily Press Staff Writer

The Rent Control Board will take up the issue of corporate tenants tonight, nearly a month after a newly remodeled rent control building on Tenth Street appeared on corporate housing websites. Chairperson Anastasia Foster and Commissioner Nicole Phillis placed the discussion item on tonight's agenda regarding a "prohibition of rental of controlled units as corporate housing."

At the moment, there is no regulation to prevent a company from becoming a tenant in a rent control building. Once a corporation is on

SEE RCB PAGE 4



FREE ICE CREAM

Courtesy photo

Starting this Friday, July 13th, SoCal Honda is rolling out their Helpful Honda Free Ice Cream truck filled with an assortment of free frozen sweets for everyone including bomb pops, big dippers, orange dreamsicles, fruit bars, ice cream sandwiches and more. The Free Ice Cream Truck will be stopping at various community activities, parks, sporting events, and concerts every week, from Friday, July 13 including stops in Santa Monica. Residents can request a stop by posting their location online at www.facebook.com/SoCalHondaDealers.

Police: DNA evidence connects inmate to 2016 unsolved shooting

KATE CAGLE
Daily Press Staff Writer

Police have charged a 32-year-old Las Vegas man in connection with a 2016 violent home invasion in Santa Monica where the homeowner was shot in the torso, according to Lt. Saul Rodriguez with the Santa Monica Police Department. Vacho Shahen was already in custody at a Federal

SEE DNA PAGE 8

Toastmasters builds confidence

LUCY FRIED
Daily Press Intern

Three years ago, Santa Monica resident Daniel Rangel was terrified of public speaking. Now, he gives

SEE TOASTMASTERS PAGE 6

Culture Watch

By Sarah A. Spitz

Tickle Your Inner Elmo

JIM HENSON'S LIFE WORK IS being celebrated at The Skirball Cultural Center through September 2, and what a life he led. I had no idea about the longevity and breadth of his career, not just as the guy who created the Muppets, but as an early TV pioneer, using techniques never before attempted.

"The Jim Henson Exhibition: Imagination Unlimited" will tickle your inner Elmo. See the Bert and Ernie, Count von Count puppets and Kermit the Frog in the "flesh." Watch wonderful clips from Sam and Friends, Henson's first TV venture.

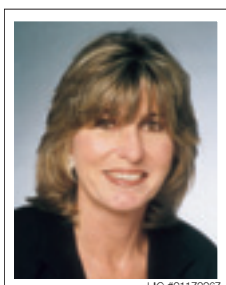
Did you know that Jim Henson worked with filmmaker George Lucas AND legendary rocker David Bowie (The Labyrinth)? I didn't! And there are related costumes, TV and film clips, handwritten scripts and more from the Muppet Show, movies and Fraggle Rock. Henson was even nominated for an Academy Award in 1965 for an experimental short he made, called Time Piece.

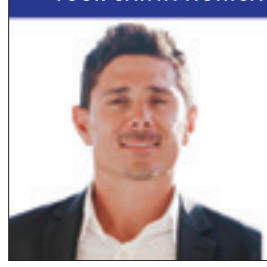
NOT JUST FOR KIDS

This is truly a comprehensive show. And trust me, it's not just for kids – in fact, most of those in attendance are so young, they would never have seen Sesame Street or The Muppet movies. Nevertheless, they were giddy with joy.

There are so many unique interactive exhibits. A friend and I used puppets to video-synch with a vintage clip (That Old Black Magic) from Sam and Friends, a five-minute twice-weekly puppet show that aired on the Washington, DC NBC affiliate from 1955 to 1961...where Kermit the Frog made his debut! Very few of the original tapings have survived so

SEE CULTURE PAGE 7


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What's Up Westside

OUT AND ABOUT IN SANTA MONICA

Thursday, July 12

Thursday Beach Eats

Beach Eats is a weekly food truck gathering at Marina "Mother's" Beach on summer Thursdays through September 27, 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. New this year, enjoy live music from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. while you picnic by the sea. Bring your own beach chair and enjoy the free show. Visitmarinadelrey.com/beacheats; 424-526-7900.

Santa Monica Rent Control Regular Board Meeting

The Rent Control Board meets to conduct business associated with the Rent Control Charter Amendment and Regulations. City Hall, 1685 Main St, 7 p.m.

Teen Creative Writing Workshops

Attention, aspiring teen writers. Be inspired by and learn writing techniques from published authors of books for youth. No registration required; come to any session you like. Notebooks and pens provided, or bring your own. Snacks included. Grades 6-12. Thursday, JULY 12: Planaria Price, author of Claiming My Place: Coming of Age in the Shadow of the Holocaust 3 – 5 p.m. Main Library, 601 Santa Monica Blvd.

Mad Science/ Fire and Ice

A fantastic hands on show with chemical reactions and bubbling potions for science lovers of all ages. Tickets are free and available the day of the program. Ocean Park Branch Library, 2601 Main St. 2:30 – 3:15 p.m.

Friday, July 13

Free screening of "Modern Times"

This week, Mind Over Movies screens the comedic classic "Modern Times," Charlie Chaplin's silent take on the conflict between one individual and an increasingly mechanized society. Film followed by roundtable discussion and audience Q&A. The Christian Institute, 1308 Second Street. 6:30 p.m. For more information, visit facebook.com/MindOverMoviesLA.

Hooping Workshop with Hoopfit: Summer Activity Program

Channel your child's energy. A wide variety of movement patterns will be introduced with the hoop. Space is limited. Free tickets available 30 minutes before event. Ages 4 - 11. Fairview Branch Library, 2101 Ocean Park Blvd. 2:30 – 3:15 p.m.

Kids Craft: Space Rocket

"Reading Takes You Everywhere" Craft - Learn how you can put together a space rocket you can launch! Ages 4-10. Montana Avenue Branch Library, 1704 Montana Ave. 2 – 2:30 p.m.

Craft Supply Swap

Do you have leftover yarn, extra buttons, or scraps of ribbon you haven't used in months? Join organizers at the library each Friday to share your crafting supplies or find new crafting treasures. Pico Branch Library, 2201 Pico Blvd, 12:30 – 4:30 p.m.

Out of the Blue: Diorama Building with Molly Allis

Join artist Molly Allis in a free diorama-making workshop, open to kids 5+. Allis is creating a sculpture that utilizes the diorama format to tell an episodic story. Bring a take out container, shoe or cake box; scissors, glue, pencils and crayons provided. 11 a.m. Annenberg Community Beach House, 415 PCH, free. Register online at http://annenbergbeachhouse.com/beachculture

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

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

SMO

Challenge to Santa Monica Airport Consent Decree Dismissed

The United States District Court, Central District of California has dismissed in its entirety a case challenging the Consent Decree and Settlement Agreement between the City of Santa Monica and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). The lawsuit sought an order from the Court declaring that the City cannot close the Santa Monica Airport after 2028 and requiring that the City must immediately "reverse all construction" performed to the airport's shortened runway.

On October 23, 2017, Plaintiff Barry Rosen filed an action with the District Court seeking to invalidate the Consent Decree and to obtain a temporary restraining order to stop the City from shortening the airport runway. Three days later, the Court denied Mr. Rosen's injunction request on multiple grounds. The City proceeded to shorten the runway from 5,000 feet to 3,500 feet and completed the project on December 23, 2017. Mr. Rosen continued his challenge by filing three amended versions of his lawsuit between November 2017 and March 2018. On April 23, 2018, the City filed a motion to dismiss Mr. Rosen's third amended complaint.

On July 5, 2018, Judge Philip S. Gutierrez dismissed Mr. Rosen's challenge to the Consent Decree and denied further opportunity to amend the complaint. The Court ruled on procedural grounds and determined that Mr. Rosen does not have the necessary standing to assert his claims. Judge Gutierrez's ruling further confirms the validity of the Consent Decree, as have prior rulings from federal appellate and district courts.

"This ruling, as with several similar rulings from other courts in the past eight months, the U.S. District Court reaffirms the validity of the historic agreement between the City of Santa Monica and the FAA as a Consent Decree," said Mayor Pro Tem Gleam Davis. "Despite frivolous legal challenges over the past year, the City kept on course to improve the lives of residents by shortening the runway and reducing large jets flying over our neighborhoods by over 80%."

The historic agreement with the FAA follows decades of work by the Santa Monica community to mitigate impacts of airport operations on local communities. The City's runway shortening project brought immediate relief to residents registering over 80% reduction in jet traffic.

SUBMITTED BY CONSTANCE FARRELL, SANTA MONICA PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER

SAN FRANCISCO

UC schools admit record number of transfer students

University of California say they have admitted a record number of transfer students for the upcoming school year, as part of UC's plan to widen access to the university system for California community college students.

The UC said Wednesday that it has offered nearly 137,000 students admission at its nine undergraduate campuses as overall enrollment continues to increase annually.

The UC has said it already surpassed a goal of adding 10,000 Californians by the 2018-19 academic year.

Among those admitted were more than 28,000 transfer students, mostly from California community colleges. That represents an 8 percent increase over the number of in-state community college students from the previous year.

The figures released Wednesday were preliminary.

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MOUNTAIN VIEW

Loon and Wing graduate from Alphabet's 'moonshot factory'

Two of Alphabet's high-flying startups are leaving the nest.

Loon and Wing are graduating from X, Alphabet's secretive incubator known as the "moonshot factory." Loon aims to deliver internet signals via hot air balloons, while Wing builds airborne delivery drones.

By graduating, they are considered full-fledged businesses and will be part of Alphabet's "other bets," aside from the company's main cash cow, Google. They join companies like smart-thermostat maker Nest, health-data firm Verily and self-driving car company Waymo.

Astro Teller, X's captain of moonshots, says on a blog that the two companies now "seem a long way from crazy" after having started as X projects several years ago.

Loon, for instance, provided internet service from the stratosphere to Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria devastated the island last year.

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LOS ANGELES

Child services employee pleads not guilty in child porn case

An employee of the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services has pleaded not guilty to charges of possessing and distributing child pornography online.

County prosecutors charged 54-year-old Carlos Enrique Castillo with five counts of sending or receiving obscene matter for sale and a felony count of possessing more than 600 images of child or youth pornography.

Castillo entered his plea Tuesday and was ordered by a judge not to have any unsupervised contact with minors and to not access the internet.

Children and Family Services director Bobby Cagle says in a statement that the alleged behavior goes against its mission to keep kids safe and violates the public trust.

If convicted on all charges, Castillo faces up to eight years and four months in prison.

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Proposals must include forms furnished by the City of Santa Monica. Request for Proposals may be obtained on the **CITY'S ONLINE VENDOR PORTAL**. The website for this Request for Proposals and related documents is: Planet Bids or http://vendors.planetbids.com/SantaMonica/bid-search4.cfm. There is no charge for the RFP package.

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COMMUNITY BRIEFS

LOS ANGELES

Wildfire temporarily shuts LA's 'La La Land' observatory

The landmark Griffith Observatory overlooking Los Angeles is temporarily closed in the aftermath of a nearby brush fire that forced the evacuation of more than 2,000 tourists.

The observatory's website says its grounds as well as roads, parking lots and trails in adjacent areas of sprawling Griffith Park will remain closed Wednesday.

The observatory and urban wilderness park, attractions in their own right, are destinations for movie fans after being prominently featured in decades of films ranging from "Rebel Without a Cause" to "La La Land."

The fire erupted Tuesday afternoon about a quarter-mile northwest of the observatory, burning about 25 acres of brush and several parked cars before water-dropping helicopters and firefighters stopped its spread.

The Los Angeles Fire Department says the observatory itself was not directly threatened.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES

Woman arrested in Los Angeles-area beating of elderly man

A woman has been arrested in the investigation of the beating of a 92-year-old man in Southern California.

The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department says detectives took 30-year-old Laquisha Jones into custody late Tuesday in Los Angeles and booked her into jail for investigation of assault with a deadly weapon.

Rodolfo Rodriguez was beaten around 7:30 p.m. July 4 on a sidewalk in the unincorporated Willowbrook area.

A witness made a video of Rodriguez moments later as he sat on the ground dazed, his face bloodied. The witness said the assailant struck him several times on the head with a brick. Three or four men reportedly also joined the attack.

The Sheriff's Department says the motive remains unknown.

Jones remains jailed in lieu of $200,000 bail.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

RCB

FROM PAGE 1

the lease, they have the same protections as a person - including a cap on annual increases and protections from eviction. It is up to the landlord whether to allow subleases in the units, but otherwise corporations are free to offer the space to traveling employees.

"Commissioner Phillis and I want to see if a majority of the Board has any interest in taking up a regulation to prevent corporate rentals in rent controlled units," Foster said in an email to the Daily Press. "It has come to our attention that some units are being used in this way. This would seem to be at odds with the intention that rent level protections are for people who want to make Santa Monica their home, not for temporarily housing transient corporate travelers."

In June, code enforcement opened an investigation into a rent control property owned by Neil Shekhter, Santa Monica's most prolific developer and property manager. The complex at 1238 and 1242 Tenth Street has undergone drastic remodeling and city officials are investigating whether the existing apartments were carved into smaller units. The building's website, www.swellapartments.com, still advertises "junior suite" apartments that do not include kitchens for rent between $2,795 and $3,995 a month.

A spokesman for Shekhter and his affiliated companies said each building has ten units that are under rent control. A rental agreement for the complex obtained by the Daily Press includes a corporate application. The Tenth Street property is run by My Suite, LLC, which is managed by Shekhter's son, Adam. My Suite also offers furnished rentals at a second rent control building in Santa Monica: "Pacifico" at 1445 9th Street.

"Discover a rare opportunity to live in a furnished apartment located in a community that is intimate and yet sophisticated, with controlled access entry and apartments that showcase thoughtful design, fine finishes and spacious layouts," reads an online advertisement for Pacifico.

Spokesperson Eric Rose did not respond to recent questions from the Daily Press regarding corporate tenants.

"We look forward to reading your story," Rose said.

The Rent Control Board's top attorney said courts have upheld regulations that seek to preserve rent control's intended purpose: allowing residents to stay in Santa Monica. For example, a property owner who believes a unit is not the tenant's primary residence may petition the Board for a rent increase.

Lewis said it is up to the Board to decide tonight whether they want to pursue the corporate tenant issue.

"What a regulation would look like, if any, is something they would need to give some thought to," J. Stephen Lewis said.

Commissioner Nicole Phillis said corporate tenants compete with residents looking for an affordable place to live in Santa Monica.

"It undermines what I see is the cornerstone of rent control. It turns housing that is intended to be long term and stable into something that is extremely transitory to the benefit of corporations," Phillis said.

The Board will meet tonight, Thursday, July 12 at 7 p.m. in Council Chambers, City Hall, 1685 Main Street.

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MUSIC

FROM PAGE 1

from a national vocal competition perform along the water, arias and ensembles from best-loved operas), 7 p.m., Burton Chace Park, no cover.

TONIGHT! — THE RECORD COMPANY (I love this LA bluesy rock trio, I love their funky slidey playing and spare arrangements, I like their songs, their vocals, their attitude — thank you, again, to 88.5 FM for yet another valued stuck-in-Santa Monica-traffic discovery — and apparently so do B.B. King, Grace Potter, Trombone Shorty, Buddy Guy and Robert Randolph who have toured with them, but if you want to see them at Amoeba's music heaven in Hollyweird you will have to get there way, way early but you will also have plenty to look at while you're waiting and while I've not yet seen them live they have a reputation for killing it on stage, guitarist-harpist-lead singer Chris Vos declaring, "nobody can say how many shows you get to play in your life so we try to play our guts out, leave it all on the table"), 6 p.m., Amoeba Music, Hollywood, no cover.

BOB NEUWIRTH with Tony Gilkyson, David Mansfield, J. Steven Soles, Bob Thiele Jr. plus DON HEFFINGTON opening (the new booking team at McCabe's have done it again with two promising shows this weekend and continuing their string of folk-rock legends you gotta see — Kinky Friedman with Jack Elliott ramblin' around, Tom Paxton, Jim Kweskin, does Henry Rollins count? great performance! who am I forgetting? — even if the ar may not be a household name, like Neuwirth, he of Dylan's renowned Rolling Thunder tour in '75, Dylan's Don't Look Back film, the Cambridge folk scene, co-wrote "Mercedes Benz," and he's got a great band, the elusive legendary Alpha Band minus T Bone Burnett, plus the superlative local sometimes-X guitar slinger-singer Tony Gilkyson and the son of the legendary jazz producer Bob Thiele, I can't wait, plus drummer Heffington should be fascinating, he of recordings with Bob Dylan, Lowell George, Big Joe Turner, Rickie Lee Jones, Percy Sledge, Big Mama Thornton, Lucinda Williams and Dwight Yoakam), Sat 8 p.m., McCabe's, Santa Monica, $25.

THE BANGLES, Best Coast (not a huge fan of either band but hey, Bangles, El Lay, you should know about this free show, entertaining even for non-devotees I imagine, and once again you should get there early if you expect to see anything), Sat 7 p.m., Pershing Square, downtown LA, no cover.

ORCHESTRA SANTA MONICA (and now for something completely different, but music and movies do go together, don't they, chamber music from the OSM's clarinet quintet playing Krein and Brahms), Sun 11 a.m., Laemmle Monica Theater, Santa Monica, no cover.

JAMES "SLIM" HAND (I got sucked into this one, glad I did, I usually don't have the time to research people I'm not already familiar with but the McCabe's bookers, especially Koko, broke into such grins when mentioning him and how he's all they've been listening to lately and with the way they described his music and singing it sounded right up my alley and by golly he is, the absolute real deal in '50s-style country, he could've walked right up on stage with Hank or any of the legends and held his own), Sun 8 p.m., McCabe's, $20.

BAND NAMES OF THE WEEK: Yawning Man, We Are Scientists, Potty Mouth, Albatross Overdrive, Body/Head, Nostradumbass, Bitsy la Bourboun, Freekey Zekey, H.P. Loveshaft, the San Andreas Sisters.

LYRIC OF THE WEEK:

"When I find myself in times of trouble, Mother Mary comes to me, speaking words of wisdom, let it be, and in my hour of darkness she is standing right in front of me, speaking words of wisdom, let it be. Let it be, let it be, let it be, let it be, whisper words of wisdom, let it be. And when the broken hearted people living in the world agree, there will be an answer, let it be, for though they may be parted, there is still a chance that they will see, there will be an answer, let it be. Let it be, let it be, let it be, let it be, there will be an answer, let it be. Let it be, let it be, let it be, let it be, whisper words of wisdom, let it be. And when the night is cloudy there is still a light that shines on me, shine until tomorrow, let it be. I wake up to the sound of music, Mother Mary comes to me, speaking words of wisdom, let it be. Let it be, let it be, let it be, yeah, let it be, there will be an answer, let it be, whisper words of wisdom, let it be." — Paul McCartney, John Lennon (released 1970, recorded 1969, written 1968).

Sometimes I post lyrics of obscure songs I feel deserve some props, sometimes, like today, a very well-known song that maybe, with all the singing along to it for half a century, we may no longer really be listening to the words. I slightly rearrange the punctuation to make it seem more like prose and a little less like the song you think you know. And I try to add some context, which I think is always helpful.

Paul says he wrote this classic during the recording of the landmark, brilliant White Album, as he could see the writing on the wall for the demise of the Beatles. He says his long-dead mother Mary McCarney (he was 14) appeared to him — "I felt very blessed to have that dream" — and that "let it be" may or may not have been her exact words, but that was the message. It will all be okay, Pauly, just let it be. It seems to have found resonance for many, for many times of man and many personal or global circumstances, for 50 years now.

The single was scheduled for release, and McCartney announced his official departure from the band the day before. It did not find universal critical favor, being chided as a simple tune with too much repetition (Hey Jude much?). But that usually indicates a stream of consciousness writing, such as that which might come from a dream visit with your beloved mother.

Have you seen the Carpool Karaoke he did with late night host James Corden recently? It is just too marvelous, too marvelous for words. Special for me because I took the Beatles tour in Liddypool and visited all those places.

CHARLES ANDREWS has listened to a lot of music of all kinds, including more than 2,000 live shows. He has lived in Santa Monica for 32 years and wouldn't live anywhere else in the world. Really. Send love and/or rebuke to him at therealmrmusic@gmail.com

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Santa Monica Malibu Unified School District of Los Angeles County (SMMUSD) Inviting Bids

Santa Monica Malibu Unified School District of Los Angeles County (SMMUSD) will receive sealed bids from contractors holding a type **"B"** license, on the following: **Bid #19.04.ES - DSA#03-118985 Santa Monica High School – Utility Building Alterations Project at Santa Monica High School**. This scope of work is estimated to be between **$140,000 - $175,000** and includes the internal demolition of two bathrooms in the Utility building, closing up the external doors and roller door on the one side of the building, with reinforced concrete and creating new openings in the existing reinforced concrete wall, to the same space on the opposite side of the building. Also included is all mechanical, electrical, fire alarm, plumbing and other associated improvements per bidding documents. All bids must be filed in the Districts Purchasing Office located at 1651 16th Street, Santa Monica, CA 90404 on or before 8/15/18 no later than 2:00 PM at which time and place the bids will be publicly opened. Each bid must be sealed and marked with the bid name and number. Bidders must attend a Mandatory Job Walk to be held at the site, on 7/25/18 at 11:00 AM. All General Contractors and Mechanical, Electrical and Plumbing (M/E/P) Subcontractors must be pre-qualified for this project per bidding documents. To view the projects bidding documents, please visit ARC Southern California public plan room www.crplanwell.com and reference the project Bid #.

Prequalification Due Date & Instructions for Application Submission:
All applications are due no later than 8/1/18 - Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District has contracted with Colbi Technologies, Inc. to provide a web-based process for prequalification called QualityBidders. To submit an application at no cost please visit www.qualitybidders.com. Once you have been approved, you will receive an email indicating your approval expiration date and approval limit. The Districts approved contractors listing can be obtained via the FIP website at http://fipcontractors.smmusd.org/fip-office-website.aspx..

Mandatory Job Walk:
Wednesday, 7/25/18 at 11:00 AM

Job Walk location:
Santa Monica High School located in Santa Monica, CA – **All Attending Contractors MUST meet the District representatives at the 4th Street pedestrian gate, adjacent to the Double Tree Hotel, opposite the Civic Center parking structure. Bidders will be escorted onto the campus from that location**.

Bid Opening:
Wednesday, 8/15/18 at 2:00PM

Any further questions or clarifications to this bidding opportunity, please contact Sheere Bishop at smbishop@smmusd.org directly. In addition, any pre-qualification support issues relative to Colbi Technologies, Inc., website or for technical support please contact support@qualityBidders.com directly.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Send comments to editor@smdp.com

Wrong choice

Editor:

Brett Kavanaugh is the wrong choice to replace Justice Anthony Kennedy on the Supreme Court. If he is confirmed to the Supreme Court, everything that we hold dear as a nation will be at stake.

From a protecting a woman's right to choose to dismantling the Affordable Care Act, Kavanaugh could be the swing vote that takes away our rights. His lifetime appointment also means he could also cement the Citizens United decision in for decades, giving corporate special interests and mega-donors with extreme agendas even more influence in our democracy.

It's time to take the "For Sale" sign off of our Democracy. The Senate should NOT vote to confirm Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court.

David Searfoss
Santa Monica

TOASTMASTERS

FROM PAGE 1

frequent speeches as a real estate agent and has performed two TedX talks. The transformation, he said, can be attributed to Santa Monica's Sand and Sea Toastmasters club.

The international Toastmasters organization was founded in 1905 and has over 352,000 memberships across 16,400 clubs. The clubs, each meeting once a week for about an hour, seek to improve participant's leadership abilities, and help people overcome their fears of public speaking. The Santa Monica Sand and Sea club meets on Mondays at 7 p.m.

"Starting off was extremely scary for me," Rangel, who is now one of eight officers of the club, said. "But it gave me the gave me the opportunity to speak on a larger level, and I was eventually invited to speak at a TedX in Mexico and another one in Texas. Without a doubt I don't think I would have been able to do it if it wasn't for Toastmasters."

Rangel began attending the Sand and Sea club for its structure and its values.

"We have an agenda that's broken down to the minute, which really makes it easy for anyone who comes in to not be lost and to be in tune with what's going on," Rangel said. "What that structure instills is to take public speaking very seriously, because we want to improve. It creates that culture where we respect the space and the environment."

As an officer of the Sand and Sea club, Rangel's responsibilities include mentoring new members, taking photographs of club events, running the social media and recruiting people to join.

Rangel said that members have various opportunities to develop their public speaking skills during meetings, which are attended by 30 people per week. Meetings begin with 20 minutes of 'Table Topics,' in which a selected 'Table Topics master' will pose a question to the audience, and one person will be called on to speak on the question for two minutes.

Rangel said, "It's a great skill that you can transfer to sales, or just work in general, being able to speak off the cuff."

In addition to practicing unprepared speaking, every practice also includes prepared speeches presented by three different members, all of whom are focusing on different skills, such as vocal variety or speaking to the point.

Meetings end with evaluations, during which members assess the prepared speeches and give feedback.

The Sand and Sea club has a fee of $45 every six months, in addition to a new members' fee. Rangel said that the cost goes toward occasional food that is offered at practices, renting the Santa Monica First Presbyterian Church for meetings, and ribbons awarded to the best speaker of each practice.

Toastmasters also offers opportunities for international competition, and Rangel said that Sand and Sea provides financial aid for their qualifying participants to travel to the competitions.

"I think one of them was in India, they have them in so many places," Rangel said. "We want to help people out to get them to wherever that country is so that they can compete and represent our club."

Rangel said that he appreciates the values that Toastmasters Santa Monica upholds.

"It's difficult to pick up public speaking, especially when you're starting off, so I guess one of the requirements would be to come in with a supportive and optimistic attitude."

Rangel said that Toastmasters was successful for him because of the audience that it provided him.

"If you want to practice basketball, you can show up at the court and shoot some free-throws, and if you want to practice swimming you can do that by yourself," Rangel said. "But to build the skill of public speaking, you need people, and it's not always easy to get an audience of find an opportunity to speak."

"That's one of the huge values of Toastmasters is that it always creates that environment for you to practice over and over once a week."

Despite its nerve-wracking nature, Rangel said that public speaking and leadership are crucial skills to have, and that their relevance go beyond just speaking.

"It's important for knowing how to get your message across, for a business perspective to sell more of your product, but many times it's just to communicating ideas, perspective, ideologies." he said. "If you want to change the world, you have to be able to tell the world what it is that you're trying to do, and public speaking is one of those great mediums by which you can do that."

In an era of social media and the internet, Rangel said that public speaking's importance will only increase.

"You can transfer what you learn from public speaking to writing content for social media, or maybe you want to be a 'Vlogger,'" he said. "I think it's a great complement to the technology that's evolving as far as communication is concerned."

For more information about Toastmasters, visit www.toastmasters.org. For more information about the Sand and Sea club, visit www.sandandseaspeakers.com.

editor@smdp.com

SEE NEWS HAPPENING OR HAVE SOMETHING TO REPORT?
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Courtesy The Jim Henson Company / MoMI

HENSON: Jim Henson with puppets from Fraggle Rock. © The Jim Henson Company

CULTURE

FROM PAGE 1

enjoy them here.

Henson died too young (53) but he began working at the age of 18 so the body of his work is extensive. The Museum of the Moving Image created this traveling show and the Skirball offers a fitting setting for it.

Why the Skirball? Because their values and Henson's are aligned. Putting emphasis on the social impact of Henson's work, signs around the gallery read: "The Skirball highlights how his characters and stories represent individuals and communities of diverse backgrounds and abilities, inspiring the public to look beyond differences and cultivate a more compassionate, inclusive world."

In one moving text that I resonate with, especially in these very dark, polarized times, the Skirball writes: "Henson's is a voice for all of us now, a model of compassion, empathy and understanding to help us with the never-finished work of social healing."

"The Jim Henson Exhibition: Imagination Unlimited" will be at the Skirball Cultural Center in Sepulveda Pass through September 2. www.skirball.org

NOAH'S ARK

If you're going to the Skirball anyway, make sure you make a reservation (believe me, they do sell out, especially in summer) for a timed visit to the ever-updated Noah's Ark.

Such a fun, amazingly creative space with animals made of recycled items, bird wings represented by whisks, turtles made of footballs, musical instruments repurposed as bodies, all dovetailing with the idea of sustainability, which is highlighted in the "Rainbow" gallery at the end of the Ark space. There are storm machines, a lightning generator, watch as you fill a tank with water to see the ark rise in the flood, giraffes whose necks bend toward you, a howling coyote, all made possible with the use of human intervention (pulleys, wheels and more).

If ever an exhibition can inspire children to continue going to museums as they grow up, this is the one.

BUT WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

As if that weren't enough, there are two other noteworthy exhibitions. Kehinde Wiley, the Los Angeles-born artist who painted the official portrait of President Barack Obama, is the first ever African American to paint a Presidential portrait. In a small gallery, there are two wall-sized paintings in his "The World Stage: Israel" series, in which he trains his eye on Ethiopian Jews who've settled in Israel.

These are starkly beautiful, at once representational in their depiction of the two young men, while highly symbolic, showcasing elements of their Israeli, Jewish and African heritage, all elevated with bright colors and patterns drawn from Jewish ritual art.

BERNSTEIN CENTENNIAL

And don't miss Leonard Bernstein at 100, organized by the GRAMMY Museum®, a centennial celebration that takes you into his home studio, displaying his first childhood piano (an upright!), as well as the grand piano he kept in his adult home; you'll see handwritten score sheets for songs from one of his best-known works, West Side Story, as well as the desk he wrote it on.

Two interactive exhibits give you a chance enter a small recording booth to sing along with "I Like to Be in America", or learn how to conduct with Lenny. Many personal items, awards, photographs – 150 objects are on view representing the life of this composer, conductor, TV celebrity…and so much more.

Dubbed the "Renaissance man of American Music," Leonard Bernstein was a towering 20th century figure who brought music to the masses, sharing his love and knowledge with adoring audiences.

The Skirball Center also presents free screenings of movies related to the shows, as well as a lively line-up of world music "Sunset Concerts" all summer long. www.skirball.org.

SARAH A. SPITZ is an award-winning public radio producer, now retired from KCRW, where she also produced arts stories for NPR. She writes features and reviews for various print and online publications.

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DNA

FROM PAGE 1

Detention Center in Philadelphia when he was charged with attempted murder, robbery and burglary for crimes allegedly committed in California.

The charges bring closure to a disturbing incident on Adelaide Drive in August of 2016, where the homeowner walked in on a burglar wearing a mask from the movie Scream. The burglar shot the homeowner and then ran away. The victim survived the shooting.

Santa Monica Police Department detectives collected DNA evidence after the break-in but didn't make any connections until Shahen was arrested in Philadelphia in 2017. An SMPD detective recently traveled to Pennsylvania to interview Shahen in Federal Prison before officially filing the charges related to the California crimes.

Shahen is currently in prison related to an alleged debit-card scam that used sophisticated skimmers to steal personal information.

Shahen could not be reached for comment.

kate@smdp.com





City of Santa Monica

CITY OF SANTA MONICA
REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the City of Santa Monica invites sealed proposals for:

SHARED MOBILITY SERVICES
Submission Deadline Is JULY 27, 2018 at 2:00 PM Pacific Time.

The Request for Applications can be downloaded at:
http://vendors.planetbids.com/SantaMonica/QuickSearch.cfm

Or, may be obtained by visiting:
https://www.smgov.net/SharedMobility

Proposals must include forms furnished by the City of Santa Monica.

Operators interested in doing business with the City of Santa Monica are encouraged to register online at http://www.smgov.net/finance/purchasing/

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SURF FORECASTS

WATER TEMP: **73.9°**

THURSDAY – **FAIR** – SURF: **1-2 ft** ankle to knee high occ. 3 ft
Old SSW swell trends down. Fresh SSW swell moves in through the day as SSE pulse mixes in.

FRIDAY – **FAIR** – SURF: **2-3 ft** waist to stomach high
New SSW/S swell builds further. Potential for more NW swell-mix.

CRIME WATCH

BY DAILY PRESS STAFF



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

ON JUNE 27, 2018 AT ABOUT 4:40 A.M.

While conducting routine checks for livability issues in Tongva Park, officers located a subject lying on a bench in violation of the park closure ordinance. The subject provided a variety of names and birthdates when asked. The subject was taken into custody and transported to SMPD Jail for booking. Jan Jennette, 65, homeless, was issued a citation for sleeping in the park and providing false information.

DAILY POLICE LOG

The Santa Monica Police Department Responded To 411 Calls For Service On July 10.

HERE IS A SAMPLING OF THOSE CALLS CHOSEN BY THE SANTA MONICA DAILY PRESS STAFF.

Person down 500 block Broadway 12:44 a.m.
Auto burglary 200 block Bay 5:31 a.m.
Threats 900 block 10th 7:06 a.m.
Burglary report 200 block Wilshire 7:15 a.m.
Auto burglary 1300 block Ocean 7:31 a.m.
Auto burglary 600 block Pier 7:35 a.m.
Battery 1600 block 7th 7:40 a.m.
Attempt burglary 2800 block 3rd 7:52 a.m.
Trespassing 600 block Wilshire 7:53 a.m.
Grand theft 900 block California 8:07 a.m.
Person down 15th/Wilshire 8:20 a.m.
Auto burglary 1700 block 16th 8:25 a.m.
Animal related incident 1500 block Palisades 8:34 a.m.
Auto burglary 600 block Hill 8:42 a.m.
Vandalism 1100 block 15th 9:01 a.m.
Elder abuse 2200 block Virginia 9:25 a.m.
Battery Lincoln/Santa Monica 9:38 a.m.
Battery 2000 block The Beach 9:41 a.m.
Auto burglary 2400 block 2nd 9:57 a.m.
Person down 2300 block Ocean Park 10:04 a.m.
Assault w/deadly weapon 1300 block Wilshire 10:07 a.m.
Battery report 1500 block 2nd 10:12 a.m.
Grand theft 1300 block Ocean 10:24 a.m.
Grand theft 1200 block Euclid 10:39 a.m.
Auto burglary 1000 block 18th 10:54 a.m.
Grand theft 1600 block The Beach 10:59 a.m.
Grand theft 1000 block Chelsea 11:25 a.m.
Child endangerment 1000 block Euclid 12:07 p.m.
Animal related incident 2200 block Oak 12:13 p.m.
Assault 1500 block 2nd 12:39 p.m.
Lewd activity 700 block 9th 12:45 p.m.
Critical missing person 1500 block 2nd 1:19 p.m.
Child abuse Ocean/Bay1:43 p.m.
Bike theft 1100 block Pacific Coast 2:12 p.m.
Animal related incident 2100 block Pier 2:46 p.m.
Elder abuse 1400 block Ocean 3:04 p.m.
Critical person missing 1100 block The Beach 3:34 p.m.
Vandalism 1400 block 2nd 3:38 p.m.
Battery 2100 block Lincoln 3:40 p.m.
Vandalism 1100 block 15th 3:47 p.m.
Rape 100 block Wilshire 3:49 p.m.
Indecent exposure 2600 block Ocean Park 4:02 p.m.
Trespassing 2200 block Colorado 4:32 p.m.
Battery 2400 block Santa Monica 5:42 p.m.
Civil dispute 800 block 4th 6:14 p.m.
Drinking in public 1600 block Ocean Front 6:18 p.m.
Auto burglary 1400 block Pacific Coast 6:23 p.m.
Injured person 1400 block 2nd 6:33 p.m.
Drunk driving 23rd/Ocean Park 7:01 p.m.
Battery 1300 block 18th 7:13 p.m.
Encampment 600 block Wilshire 7:46 p.m.
Person down 20th/Colorado 8:13 p.m.
Domestic violence 500 block Santa Monica 8:28 p.m.
Battery 700 block Broadway 9:35 p.m.
Fight 2500 block 5th 11:17 p.m.

DAILY FIRE LOG

The Santa Monica Fire Department Responded To 40 Calls For Service On July 10.

HERE IS A SAMPLING OF THOSE CALLS CHOSEN BY THE SANTA MONICA DAILY PRESS STAFF.

Emergency medical service 1700 block Ocean 12:15 a.m.
EMS 1400 block 21st 12:58 a.m.
EMS 1500 block 2nd 1:23 a.m.
EMS 300 block Colorado 1:25 a.m.
EMS 1700 block Ocean Front 4:51 a.m.
EMS 1300 block 12th 5:19 a.m.
EMS 1500 block 6th 7:24 a.m.
EMS 4th/Idaho 7:47 a.m.
EMS 1500 block 5th 8:47 a.m.
EMS 2500 block Kansas 9:02 a.m.
EMS 20th/Santa Monica 09:20 a.m.
EMS 2200 block 29th 10:04 a.m.
EMS 400 Ocean 10:39 a.m.
EMS 5th/Colorado 11:13 a.m.
EMS 800 block Ocean 11:23 a.m.
EMS 800 block 10th 12:10 p.m.
EMS 2900 block Delaware 12:57 p.m.
EMS 300 block Santa Monica 1:13 p.m.
EMS 6th/Santa Monica 1:39 p.m.
EMS 2700 block Ocean Front 2:21 p.m.
EMS 400 block Expo Line 5:32 p.m.
EMS 1600 block Ocean Front 5:33 p.m.
EMS 200 block Montana 5:53 p.m.
EMS 1200 block 2nd 6:26 p.m.
EMS 1900 block Ocean 6:33 p.m.
EMS 1700 block Cloverfield 6:41 p.m.
EMS 1000 block Wilshire 6:57 p.m.
EMS 1200 block 25th 7:12 p.m.
EMS 1900 block Ocean 7:13 p.m.
Traffic collision w/injury 18th/Ocean Park 7:16 p.m.
EMS 900 block Pacific Coast 7:36 p.m.
EMS 400 block Pacific Coast 7:52 p.m.
EMS 1900 block 20th 8:18 p.m.
EMS 1400 block 5th 8:44 a.m.
Trash/Dumpster 2600 block Ocean Park 9:18 p.m.
EMS 1500 block 5th 9:57 p.m.
EMS 4th/Colorado 10:42 p.m.
EMS 1100 block Princeton10:48 p.m.
Traffic collision w/injury 400 block Wilshire 10:48 p.m.

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DAILY LOTTERY

Powerball
Draw Date: 7/7
1 10 43 45 64
Power#: 22
Jackpot: 90M

Mega Millions
Draw Date: 7/10
1 17 28 56 70
Mega#: 14
Jackpot: 340M

Super Lotto
Draw Date: 7/7
1 10 34 36 39
Mega#: 25
Jackpot: 13M

Fantasy 5
Draw Date: 7/10
11 15 16 18 24

Daily 3
Draw Date: 7/10
MIDDAY: 4 0 1
Draw Date: 7/10
EVENING: 1 8 2

Daily Derby
Draw Date: 7/10
1st: 11 Money Bags
2nd: 04 Big Ben
3rd: 12 Lucky Charms
RACE TIME: 1:42.25

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**

WORD UP!

solecism
1. a nonstandard or ungrammatical usage, as unflammable and they was.
2. breach of good manners or etiquette.
3. any error, impropriety, or inconsistency.

WELL NEWS BY SCOTT LAFEE

Medical History

■ This week in 1903, Pepsi-Cola Co. registered the Pepsi-Cola trademark with the U.S. Patent Office. Pharmacies at the time were favorite gathering places. To increase business at his store's soda fountain, pharmacist Caleb D. Bradham created a soft drink. In the summer of 1898, he mixed carbonated water, sugar, vanilla, oils, pepsin and kola nut extract. Customers at in his pharmacy in North Carolina liked the beverage and called it Brad's Drink. As its popularity grew, Bradham changed the name to Pepsi-Cola. The name emphasized the pepsin and kola nut extract with their supposed health benefits. Pepsin, an enzyme, was thought to aid in digestion, and caffeine, an alkaloid found in kola nuts, was believed to bestow beneficial energy.

MYSTERY PHOTO

SPONSORED BY Chick-fil-A



The first person who can correctly identify where this image was captured wins a prize. Send answers to *editor@smdp.com*.

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

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

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

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

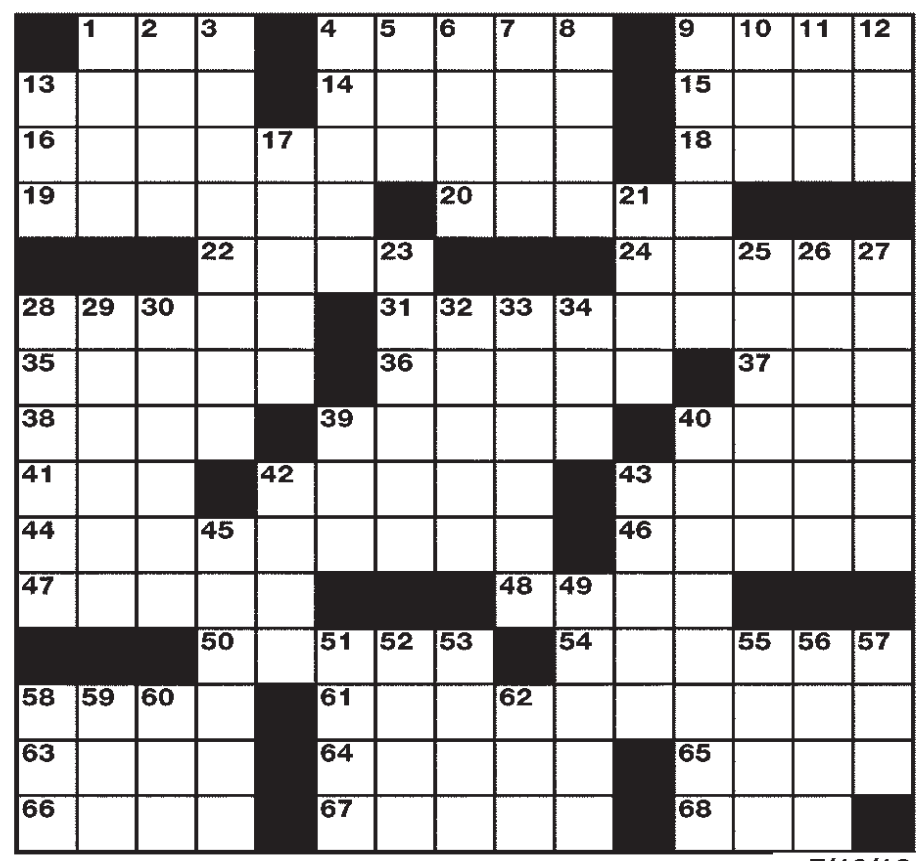
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	6		7			3		8
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Newsday Crossword

MUSIC OR MONEY by Mark McClain
Edited by Stanley Newman
www.stanxwords.com

ACROSS
1 __-ray
4 Ship's deck boss
9 Slightly cracked
13 Chestnut horse
14 Infra- opposite
15 Hay quantity
16 Tiny bits in space
18 Had a balance of
19 Begin vigorously
20 Material for models
22 Sniffer
24 Oceanic predators
28 Orbiter of 1962
31 Walk in the park and hot dogs, perhaps
35 Email ancestors
36 Expression of mirth
37 '80s First Son
38 Benediction opener
39 Chaplain
40 Egg quantities: Abbr.
41 Straight stick of a sort
42 Twill fabric
43 __-Roman wrestling
44 Throat soother
46 Straight stick of a sort
47 Be subsequent
48 Periods with names
50 Origami birds
54 Shiny paint
58 Mulberry source
61 Soldier's assignment
63 Sooner, affectionately
64 Got squared up
65 A, as in Austria
66 Turn of a river
67 Sources of wisdom
68 Mazatlán Mrs.

DOWN
1 Oust
2 Have staying power
3 Crewless
4 Objects strongly to
5 What King Cole is called
6 Ticket half
7 Celestial bear
8 Countrywide, briefly
9 On the train
10 Uppercut target
11 Brewer's product
12 Alert color
13 Color TV pioneer
17 Smartphone images
21 New frat member, often
23 Cream puff cousin
25 Syndicate
26 This minute
27 Electric eye, e.g.
28 Jet pilot's pressure
29 Water beside a sandbar
30 Mass departure
32 "I __ idea!"
33 Home to 700+ million
34 Develop over time
39 Academic bestowal
40 Ideological quests
42 Ponder, with "on"
43 Foundation bestowal
45 Flowed copiously
49 Relishes a mystery, say
51 Takes steps
52 Romance novelist Roberts
53 Self-important
55 Big name in conservation history
56 Sicilian landmark
57 Caustic cleaner
58 Short haircut
59 Four-string instrument
60 Do a bad thing
62 Pollen spreader



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TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (July 12)

The Chinese word "guanxi" describes a network of trusting relationships essential to conducting business. This year, such a network will bring happiness and prosperity to you. You'll develop a system of measuring goodwill. Those who learn your ways and earn your trust will get your business, your love or both. Sagittarius and Aquarius adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 8, 20, 4, 16 and 23.

ARIES (March 21-April 19)
Your love is a rare and beautiful gift best invested where it can be appreciated. If you're not getting feedback that you're appreciated, then you're probably not. You deserve better! Go find it.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
If you got into love a little deeper than was good for you, you have it in you to save your own heart like a hero. Of course, it's a lot easier just to choose the right people upfront — people who can love you back and just as hard.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21)
People on the offense will make moves to defend themselves, and this creates conflict. So if you want avoid conflict, refrain from threatening people's beliefs, possessions or position.

CANCER (June 22-July 22)
In order for something to make you happy, you must really feel as though you've earned it. When you're putting in the quality attention and work, even the tiniest things can bring you a great sense of accomplishment and elation.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
You love your friends and family, but the most satisfying relationships featured today will be with mere acquaintance. When people barely known to you do kind things, it restores your trust in the good of humanity.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
A deeper look into your possessions will reveal what you have, what you thought you'd lost and what you'd totally forgotten about. It will also help you avoid making unnecessary purchases in the future.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23)
"Taking stock" is a term used by merchants accounting for their wares to track what's available, what's been sold, ordered, broken or stolen. Take stock of current resources, material and immaterial; you'll soon reopen "shop."

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21)
For whatever reason, others seem fine with all that's going on. But everyone is different. Suddenly you'll feel creative. This is a response to discomfort — your way of trying to cope or adapt to conditions that don't naturally suit you.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
Do people really belong to each other? It depends on whom you ask. This will be the question at the heart of the action: To what extent do and/or should you allow yourself to be controlled by others?

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
You'll combat difficult people with tolerance, acceptance and love. You'll win with this approach, not a trophy or a monetary award but something more valuable: peace and self-respect.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
You like people, but you also thrive on solitude. Lately, you haven't had enough tranquility to do the deep thinking that connects you with the most intelligent and creative parts of yourself. Arrange for it!

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
Follow instructions and you'll be a hit with the boss. Whether the "boss" in this instance is a friend, a partner or your actual boss, deference to authority is a skill that will serve the whole team well today.

Solar Eclipse and New Moon Offerings

Most people can see what's wrong with another person, but it takes an emotionally mature person to see what's wrong with oneself. Perhaps "wrong" or "right" isn't the most helpful way to look at it. We're all doing our best to adapt in a complex world. The solar eclipse and new moon promise a fresh start for those willing to self-reflect.

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smdp.com Santa Monica Daily Press office **(310) 458-7737**

Heathcliff
By PETER GALLAGHER



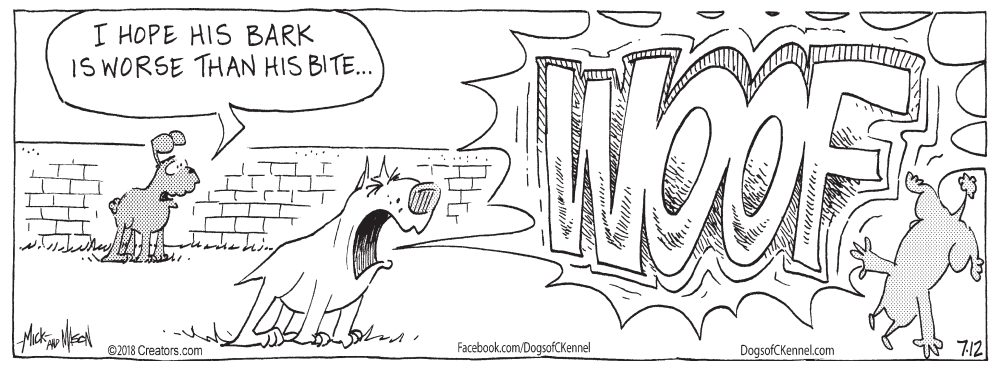
Strange Brew
By JOHN DEERING



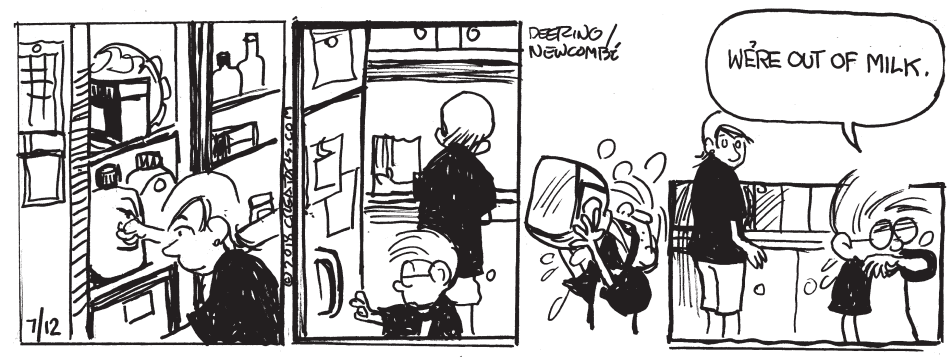
Agnes
By TONY COCHRAN



Dogs of C-Kennel
By MICK & MASON MASTROIANNI & JOHNNY HART



Zack Hill
By JOHN DEERING & JOHN NEWCOMBE



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Review: Click 'like' for Bo Burnham's 'Eighth Grade'

JAKE COYLE
AP Film Writer

Not even Joseph Conrad had the courage to venture into that darkest of hearts: middle school.

Bo Burnham's "Eighth Grade," however, plunges us into the day-to-day experience of a 13-year-old girl, Kayla Day (Elsie Fisher) with just as much intensity as a journey down the Congo. Every sling and arrow, in the mall food court or on Snapchat, is felt acutely. Whenever Kayla's crush, the (to her eyes) smoldering Aiden (Luke Prael), steps in the room, the world turns slow-motion and the music thunders. End-of-the-year superlatives? The horror.

Such harrowing moments have long been stretched for their comedy ("Middle School: The Worst Years of My Life") or their torture ("Welcome to the Dollhouse"), but rarely have they been rendered with such precision and empathy. Burnham's intimate, impressive directorial debut is armed not just with an understanding for the awkwardness of youth but with an anger at what social media and cell phones are doing to it.

The 27-year-old former YouTube sensation turned stand-up comedian turned feature filmmaker is an unlikely guide for such a crucible of adolescence. Burnham's comedy, while evolving, has typically been theatrically, even combatively brash. His rise was propelled by the technology he's now turning on.

Like Burnham did as a teenager, Kayla hosts a YouTube show, only nobody watches her earnest life advice. "The hard part about being yourself is that it's not easy," she says into her bedroom camera before reminding viewers to hit "like" and signing off with a forced trademark: "Gucci!" Sweet, shy and acne-covered, Kayla lacks both an audience and friends. Only one of those matters.

Kayla tries, unconvincingly, to project a confident version of herself online while struggling through lonely days at school. On YouTube, she insists that she just chooses not to talk a lot. At school, she's named "quietest." Her loving single dad (an adorable Josh Hamilton) is seemingly the only one in her corner, and she mostly just sighs at him or tunes him out his very dad-ish entreaties with earbuds.

From the start, we feel the unreasonable pressure put on Kayla by blissful Instagram accounts and savvier Twitter feeds. She spends much of her days and nights anxiously scrolling down screens, fueling her insecurity (certainly not an affliction reserved only for teens). In one scene, Kayla wakes up, does her makeup from a YouTube tutorial, and then crawls back into bed to take a Snapchat selfie. That the Internet is damaging Kayla isn't hard to get; when her iPhone screen cracks, she pricks her finger on it.

But she is gloriously plucky. The Post-its on her mirror read "Go get 'em!" and "Be sexy!" When an already cringe-inducing birthday party sets up karaoke, we start covering our eyes for the all certain embarrassment to come. But she goes for it. Burnham keeps the camera focused on Kayla and her personal triumph, not the reaction of the teen onlookers. Sorry, Rock. Kayla is the summer's most awe-inspiring hero.

Another movie might lead inevitably toward scenes of bullying. While there are dramatic confrontations, "Eighth Grade" is subtler and its focus more inward. There's the cool girl Kennedy (Catherine Oliviere) and an intimidating group of older kids, some nice, some not. But what Kayla most needs is to simply recognize, as her dad pleads, that she's "so cool."

We know that Kayla is going to be OK, but "Eighth Grade" hangs on whether she's going to realize it herself soon enough. Fisher, who voiced Agnes in the "Despicable Me" movies, is extraordinary. "Eighth Grade" is a revelation of both a remarkably natural young performer and a clever, sensitive young filmmaker. As if with battle scars from his youthful days consumed by social media, Burnham has returned from the Millennial trenches like a war reporter.

Largely on the outskirts throughout the film, adults are clueless to what's going on, making only comical gestures at bridging the generation gap. A sex-ed video host promises a lesson is "gonna be lit." The principal tries to dab. When Kennedy's mom tells Kayla that Kennedy will send her a birthday party invitation on Facebook, Kennedy seethes: "Mom, nobody uses Facebook anymore."

That parents should see "Eighth Grade" is a given, just as it that middle-school kids should, too. But would Kayla see "Eighth Grade"? She has her nose so firmly in her laptop and phone that I fear not. "Eighth Grade" is one more good reason to log off.

"Eighth Grade," an A24 release, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association of America for "language and some sexual material." Running time: 94 minutes. Three and a half stars out of four.

Review: In 'Skyscraper,' the Rock towers over action tropes

JAKE COYLE
AP Film Writer

I like to imagine what King Kong, as a popcorn-chomping moviegoer, might make of "Skyscraper," the latest summer actioner staring Dwayne Johnson. Would he, watching a goliath ascend the exterior of a high-rise with helicopters and klieg lights swirling, woundedly mumble, "Hey, that's my gig."

But in Rawson Marshall Thurber's thriller, there is Johnson steadily — and without too much trouble, really — swinging up a 100-story-high crane to then leap across a mammoth chasm and land in an open window on the burning 220-story tower where his wife and twin kids are trapped.

It goes without saying that if you're the sort to scoff at a tale's implausibility, "Skyscraper" may not be the movie you're looking for. Experts in fields including physics, thermodynamics and screenwriting should proceed cautiously. But then again, few go to a movie starring the Rock and a tall building (they do have great chemistry) for sensible and realistic rescue methods. They go for the dumb fun, the crazy stunts and, above all, the Kong-sized appeal of Johnson, the towering movie star whose on-screen powers easily exceed those of any other action star today, superhero or not.

The Hong Kong-set "Skyscraper" is a kind of West-meets-East "Die Hard," but without the gritty flair of John McTiernan's film, nor anything like the villainous heights of Alan Rickman's Hans Gruber. Johnson's protagonist, too, is a polished family man, the inverse of Bruce Willis' unshaven divorcee.

Johnson plays Will Sawyer, a former military man who, after a haunting hostage encounter, has become a security systems consultant. "I put my sword down," says Sawyer, who has a prosthetic leg from the incident — a welcome touch in a movie world where disabilities are seldom represented.

Along with his former combat surgeon wife (the nice-to-see-again Neve Campbell, whose part exceeds the stereotypical spouse role) and their two kids (McKenna Roberts, Noah Cottrell), Sawyer is in Hong Kong to ready the security for "The Pearl," a state-of-the-art skyscraper promoted as three times the size of the Empire State Building. With a swirling turbine midway up and a tennis ball-like sphere at the top, it looks a little like a giant World Cup trophy.

The building is the pride of billionaire developer Zhao Long Ji (Chin Han), who has filled it with extravagant attractions, like a kind of digital hall-of-mirrors that will inevitably serve as the setting for a "Lady From Shanghai"-like shootout. He presides over it from the penthouse, more than 100 floors above anyone else in the unfinished high rise.

The Singaporean star Han is one of the many Asian actors who populate the film, clearly fashioned to appeal as much to Chinese filmgoers as American ones, though their roles are largely peripheral.

Sawyer's family is installed on floor 96, a precarious spot when, just below them, a band of terrorists led by Kores Botha (a ho-hum Roland Moller) sets a floor on fire, blazing a crimson line across the night skyline. ("Skyscraper" is lensed by Robert Elswit and it regularly looks better than you'd expect it to.)

Their aim, like countless bandits before them, is to smoke out Zhao. It's an overly elaborate plan considering they mostly desire the flash drive Zhao carries with him. But what bloodthirsty international mercenary isn't a big fan of "The Towering Inferno"?

That the timing felt right to Thurber and Johnson (who previously teamed for "Central Intelligence") for a film about a skyscraper under terrorist assault is itself noteworthy. Such a movie would have been unthinkable in the years after Sept. 11, and for some, still is. But this year, for whatever reason, seems to close a chapter in the post-9/11 disaster movie. In April, "Rampage" (also with Johnson) didn't hesitate to topple urban towers in clouds of dust.

"Skyscraper" doesn't have any such thoughts — or, really, any thoughts, period — in mind. It's counting on your amnesia to the past, on screen and off, and it will readily supply you with two hours of mindless escape. It does the job better than most, thanks largely to its hulking hero. When Johnson makes his crane leap — the movie's much-promoted central set piece — throngs surrounding the building ooh and aah. It's a bird! It's a plane! It's the Rock.

"Skyscraper," a Universal Pictures release, is rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association of America for "sequences of gun violence and action, and for brief strong language." Running time: 102 minutes. Two and half stars out of four.







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