2 **Insurance crisis**
Will regulations work?

3 **Unmuted**
A farewell to Phil Brock.

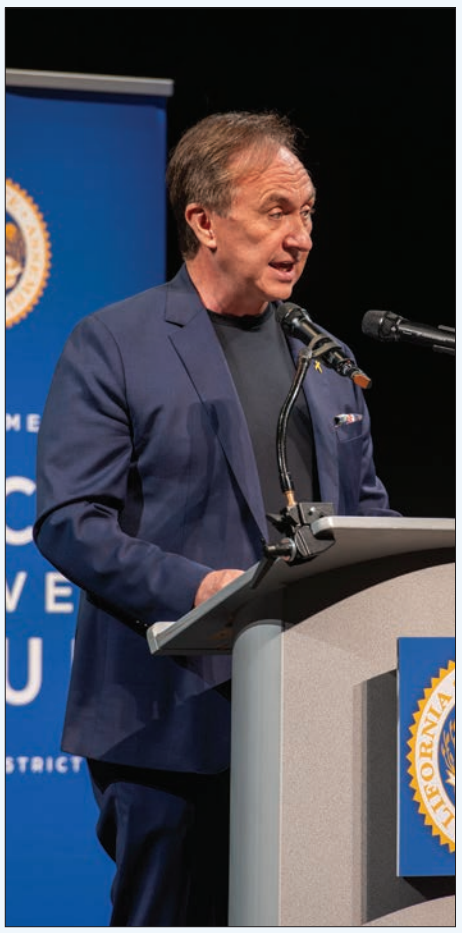
5 **SMC Board**
Seeks applicants for vacancy.

6 **Gas Buddy**
Where to fill up locally.

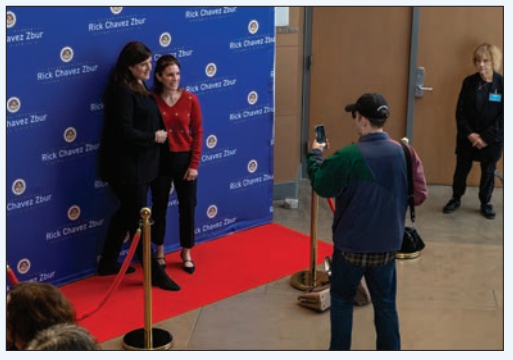
smdp
Santa Monica Daily Press

Volume 24 Issue 24 WEDNESDAY 12/18/24 smdp.com

Zbur celebrates the season with District awards











Courtesy photos

DISTRICT 51: Assemblymember Rick Zbur recognized a variety of district residents last week with an awards ceremony at The Broad Stage. Visit smdp.com for a list of award winners.

School Board approves Roosevelt campus plan that balances the past and future of learning

THOMAS LEFFLER
SMDP Staff Writer

Balancing the history of Santa Monica with the educational needs of the present was a needed compromise for one local elementary school.

At the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District Board of Education meeting on Dec. 12, Chief Operations Officer Carey Upton presented the board with the Roosevelt Elementary Campus Plan. The remaking of the campus includes the construction of a new auditorium, new Transitional Kindergarten/Kindergarten spaces, a new library and a new Maker Space & Teaming Area; among other additions.

The campus plan required the adoption of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and an adoption of mitigation monitoring and reporting and statement of overriding considerations; mainly due to "significant and unavoidable impacts" when it comes to cultural resources, also known as the campus' Historic District. The board approved of the campus plan during the meeting.

Analysis of the campus found that there was historic significance to Roosevelt, eligible for both listing in the California Register

SEE **CONSTRUCTION** PAGE 11

Samohi leads the way in annual NASA competition

THOMAS LEFFLER
SMDP Staff Writer

Samohi's push into Project Based Learning brought the school another accolade this month, courtesy of an innovation in the sweet science of Peanut Candy Tossing.

The Samohi Scallywags team representing Project Lead The Way took home the top prize in the 25th Invention Challenge at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, beating out 20 other teams. This was the seventh NASA/JPL competition for the school, and the first challenge championship.

The nature of the contest was to build an automated machine that would launch 50 Peanut M&Ms in 60 seconds, sending the candies over a barrier and into a triangular Plexiglas container. The scoring

SEE **ENGINEERING** PAGE 7



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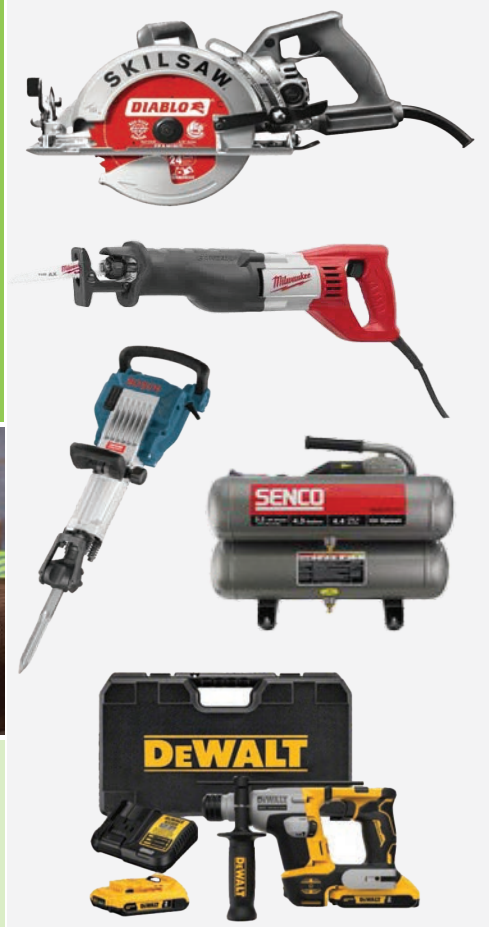
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GUEST COMMENTARY

Send comments to editor@smdp.com

Can new state regulations resolve California's existential insurance crisis?



Photo by Wally Skalij, Los Angeles Times via Getty Images
REGULATIONS: A man stands in the middle of the street at the Seminole Springs mobile home park in Malibu Lake in Los Angeles after the Woolsey Fire roared through the community on Nov. 10, 2018.

There's no law requiring California property owners to carry insurance, but the vast majority buy it to protect themselves from fire and other perils, or are required to do so by their mortgage lenders.

There's also no law requiring insurance companies to offer coverage in California, but most would prefer to do so in the nation's most immense concentration of property needing protection.

For decades, insuring California's homes, farms and commercial properties was a humdrum business of willing sellers and willing buyers. However, the former have become less willing as the state experiences an ever-increasing number of wildfires — even during winter months — that devastate homes and businesses in fire-prone areas.

Last Friday, as the latest of those fires was driving people from their homes in the quaint seaside village of Malibu, Ricardo Lara, the state's elected insurance commissioner, formally unveiled a large chunk of his plan to stem the exodus of insurers from California.

> "Giving people more choices to protect themselves is how we will solve California's insurance crisis"
> - Ricardo Lara

It would allow insurers to use computer modeling of future exposure to set premiums, while requiring them to offer coverage in risky communities roughly in line with their shares of the market. Until now, insurers set rates based on past losses.

"Giving people more choices to protect themselves is how we will solve California's insurance crisis," Lara said in a statement as he released details of the modeling plan. "For the first time in history we are requiring insurance companies to expand where people need help the most. With our changing climate we can no longer look to the past. We are being innovative and forward-looking to protect Californians' access to insurance."

He also noted that in setting rates, insurers will be required to consider hardening efforts by threatened communities and property owners to reduce potential losses.

Lara claims support from environmental groups, farmers and other stakeholders, in addition to insurers. But he's drawing

SEE **INSURANCE** PAGE 8



OPINION **UNMUTED**

Devan Sipher

Send comments to editor@smdp.com

Farewell to Brock

"Find ways to help people," Mayor Phil Brock implored the public at the December 10th Santa Monica City Council meeting, the last of his mayoralty. "Find ways to uplift others."

It was partly a request and partly a call to arms for compassion and kindness. In this Yuletide season of brotherhood and goodwill, it's important to be reminded that these virtues aren't just ideals for one brief holiday of one religion. They're a fundamental part of the social fabric that sustains our society, and Brock was trying to remind us of that.

All of the outgoing Councilmembers were praised at the meeting: Oscar de la Torre for his dedication to the Pico community, Christine Parra for her commitment to civic engagement, Gleam Davis for her leadership and political mentorship, and the Mayor's contribution was best described by Assembly Democratic Caucus Chair Rick Chavez Zbur.

"To many in this city, Mayor Brock has become synonymous with Santa Monica," Assemblymember Zbur said, singling out Brock's enthusiasm and devotion. "His love for Santa Monica is clear, and he's one of the key cheerleaders for the city."

If there were an election for Santa Monica mascot, Brock would likely win it in a landslide. Unfortunately, that wasn't the outcome of his reelection bid. "I mistakenly thought everyone in the city knew me and knew my heart," he said.

His heart is evident on his daily walks through the city, chatting up bus drivers, sewer maintenance workers and pothole patchers. "They aren't just nameless, faceless workers," he said. "Residents might not notice, but that's who keeps the city going."

Brock is a third-generation Santa Monican with similarly blue collar roots. His maternal grandmother cleaned motel rooms on Ocean Avenue, and his grandfather was a butcher at local grocery stores. Family lore has it that during the Depression, while working at a slaughterhouse, his grandfather cut off a finger for injury pay in order to feed his family.

Brock says his parents met on July 4th at the cannon in Palisades Park while his father, who was a Marine, was on shore leave from his aircraft carrier. It's an appropriately Rockwellesque origin story for an elected leader who cherishes belonging to the Elks, the Kiwanis, the Lions Club, and the Rotary Club.

However, Brock's family life was far from idyllic. His parents divorced while he was young, and at the age of 11, he sought refuge at the Boys Club of Santa Monica, where he started working at 16 and where he also learned the virtue of giving back.

"The expectations for me growing up were not very high," he said. "I think my mother at one point said I should be a mail carrier, because there's a pension."

Instead he became a high school teacher and athletic coach, the latter being a continuation of his role at the Boys Club and a precursor to his 18 years on the Recreation and Parks Commission. His career veered from his expected trajectory in the 1980s when he decided to pursue acting work, with stints on television shows from "M*A*S*H" to "Matlock," and for nearly 30 years he's been a talent manager.

"I tried to make sure actors got trained and had a friend in their corner," he said, describing his approach to managing, which isn't very different from his approach to coaching — or public office.

At Brock's best, he personifies civic virtue. He may not always be at his best, but none of us are. There were times that he was ill-prepared for Council meetings, and sometimes his actions fell short of his ideals, particularly his participation in fear mongering podcasts.

But civic virtue is something that's currently in short supply. I don't think it matters who you voted for in the national election to have qualms about some of the mean-spirited and self-centered rhetoric, and it's what concerns me the most about the incoming administration in Washington.

Policy differences can be debated, but there's something more fundamental at risk. I'm not one of the people who believes our country will cease to exist, but I do wonder if Little League can continue to exist. Because how can there be sports competitions if players won't admit when they've lost a game? What are we teaching our children when hard work, fair play and charity to those less fortunate are denigrated by people in leadership positions?

I'm grateful to Phil Brock for championing altruism. "My basketball hero, Coach John Wooden, once said you can't live a perfect day without doing something for someone who will never be able to repay you," is what he counseled from the dais. I know he's a politician and an actor, but I believe he's sincere.

"I pledged to help people in the city, and that's what I hope I've done," he told me privately. "It's not hokey for me."

Helping people is never hokey. We need to look out for one another. That's what we can teach our children — in this season and every other.

Devan Sipher can be reached at Unmuted.SMDP@gmail.com



Surf report

WATER TEMP: **56.8**

WEDNESDAY
POOR
SURF: Knee to thigh 1-2FT

Localized Santa Ana winds. Keep an eye on the early AM tide push. A deep high tide bogs down the later morning. Expecting there will be decent NW swell on tap through the day, and some S swell.

THURSDAY
POOR TO FAIR
SURF: Knee to thigh 1-2FT

Fun combo surf - not big but a few decent waves to track down. NW swell continues along with peaking small S swell. Morning winds looking favorable. Tide is elevated in the morning but early AM is OK.

Weather

Wednesday: Sunny, with a high near 77. Northwest wind around 10 mph, with gusts as high as 15 mph.
Wednesday Night: Mostly clear, with a low around 54. North northeast wind around 10 mph.
Thursday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 72. North northeast wind 5 to 10 mph becoming.
Thursday Night: Mostly clear, with a low around 53.

Date	Day	Time (LST/LDT)	Predicted (ft)	High/Low
2024/12/18	Wed	12:02 AM	3.69	H
2024/12/18	Wed	04:13 AM	2.59	L
2024/12/18	Wed	10:24 AM	5.91	H
2024/12/18	Wed	5:56 PM	-0.69	L
2024/12/19	Thu	12:55 AM	3.70	H
2024/12/19	Thu	05:08 AM	2.73	L
2024/12/19	Thu	11:09 AM	5.31	H
2024/12/19	Thu	6:40 PM	-0.20	L
2024/12/20	Fri	01:49 AM	3.77	H
2024/12/20	Fri	06:13 AM	2.85	L
2024/12/20	Fri	11:58 AM	4.64	H
2024/12/20	Fri	7:24 PM	0.30	L
2024/12/21	Sat	02:43 AM	3.91	H
2024/12/21	Sat	07:40 AM	2.85	L
2024/12/21	Sat	12:57 PM	3.96	H
2024/12/21	Sat	8:09 PM	0.80	L
2024/12/22	Sun	03:32 AM	4.12	H
2024/12/22	Sun	09:34 AM	2.57	L

Daily Lottery

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POWERBALL
Draw Date: 12/16
9 30 33 57 61
Power#: 17
Jackpot: 69 M

MEGA MILLIONS
Draw Date: 12/13
36 43 52 58 65
Mega#: 16
Jackpot: 760 M

SuperLotto Plus
Draw Date: 12/14
9 10 17 33 45
Mega#: 8
Jackpot: 8 M

Fantasy 5
Draw Date: 12/16
5 13 20 33 34

Daily 3
Draw Date: 12/16
EVENING: 3 3 0
Draw Date: 12/16
MIDDAY: 8 0 5

Daily Derby
Draw Date: 12/16
1st: 03 - Hot Shot
2nd: 12 - Lucky Charms
3rd: 04 - Big Ben
Race Time: 1:47.79

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Santa Monica Daily Press

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Furniture	Travel	Commercial Lease	Services	Health and Beauty	Obituaries
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Summons

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GET IT DAILY...

What does Big Tech hope to gain from warming up to Trump?

In a string of visits, dinners, calls, monetary pledges and social media overtures, big tech chiefs — including Apple's Tim Cook, OpenAI's Sam Altman, Meta's Mark Zuckerberg and Amazon's Jeff Bezos — have joined a parade of business and world leaders in trying to improve their standing with President-elect Donald Trump before he takes office in January.

> The first term, everybody was fighting me
> - Donald Trump

"The first term, everybody was fighting me," Trump said in remarks at Mar-a-Lago. "In this term, everybody wants to be my friend."

Tech companies and leaders have now poured millions into his inauguration fund, a sharp increase — in most cases — from past pledges to incoming presidents. But what does the tech industry expect to gain out of their renewed relationships with Trump?

CLEARING THE WAY FOR AI DEVELOPMENT

A clue to what the industry is looking for came just days before the election when Microsoft executives — who've largely tried to show a neutral or bipartisan stance — joined with a close Trump ally, venture capitalist Marc Andreessen, to publish a blog post outlining their approach to artificial intelligence policy.

"Regulation should be implemented only if its benefits outweigh its costs," said the document signed by Andreessen, his business partner Ben Horowitz, Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella and the company's president, Brad Smith.

They also urged the government to back off on any attempt to strengthen copyright laws that would make it harder for companies to use publicly available data to train their AI systems. And they said, "the government should examine its procurement practices to enable more startups to sell technology to the government."

Trump has pledged to rescind President Joe Biden's sweeping AI executive order, which sought to protect people's rights and safety without stifling innovation. He hasn't specified what he would do in its place, but his campaign said AI development should be "rooted in Free Speech and Human Flourishing."

EASIER ENERGY FOR DATA CENTERS

Trump's choice to head the Interior Department, North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum, has spoken openly about the need to boost electricity production to meet increased demand from data centers and artificial intelligence.

"The AI battle affects everything from defense to healthcare to education to productivity as a country," Burgum said on Nov. 15, referring to artificial intelligence. "And the AI that's coming in the next 18 months is going to be revolutionary. So there's just a sense of urgency and a sense of understanding in the Trump administration" to address it.

Demand for data centers ballooned in recent years due to the rapid growth of cloud computing and artificial intelligence, and local governments are competing for lucrative deals with big tech companies.

But as data centers begin to consume more resources, some residents are pushing back against the world's most powerful corporations over concerns about the economic, social and environmental health of their communities.

CHANGING THE ANTITRUST DISCUSSION

"Maybe Big Tech should buy a copy of 'The Art of The Deal' to figure out how to best negotiate with this administration," suggested Paul Swanson, an antitrust attorney for the law firm Holland & Hart. "I won't be surprised if they find ways to reach some accommodations and we end up seeing more negotiated resolutions and consent decrees."

Although federal regulators began cracking down on Google and Facebook during Trump's first term as president — and flourished under Biden — most experts expect his second administration to ease up on antitrust enforcement and be more receptive to business mergers.

Google may benefit from Trump's return after he made comments on the campaign trail suggesting a breakup of the company isn't in the U.S. national interest, after a judge declared its search engine an illegal monopoly. But recent nominations put forward by his transition team have favored those who have been critical of Big Tech companies, suggesting Google won't be entirely off the hook.

FENDING OFF THE EU

Cook's notoriously rocky relationship with the EU can be traced back to a 2016 ruling from Brussels in a tax case targeting Apple. Cook slammed the bloc's order for Apple to pay back up to 13 billion euros ($13.7 billion) in Irish back taxes as "total political crap."

Trump, then in his first term as president, piled on, referring to the European Commissioner Margrethe Vestager, who was spearheading a campaign on special tax deals and a crackdown on Big Tech companies, as the "tax lady" who "really hates the U.S."

Brussels was eventually vindicated after the bloc's top court rejected Apple's appeal this year, though it didn't stop Cook from calling Trump to complain, Trump recounted in a podcast in October.

Trump hosted Cook for a Friday evening dinner at the president-elect's Mar-a-Lago resort, according to a person familiar with the matter who was not authorized to comment publicly. Neither Apple nor the Trump transition team has commented on the nature of their discussions.

MAKING AMENDS?

Altman, Amazon and Meta all pledged to

SEE **BIG TECH** PAGE 8

COMMUNITY NEWS

Citywide

SMC Board of Trustees Seeks Applicants for Vacant Trustee Position

The Santa Monica College (SMC) Board of Trustees invites applications for a vacancy following the election of trustee Barry Snell to the Santa Monica City Council. The selected candidate will fill the vacant seat until the next regularly scheduled Board election in November 2026 when a new four-year term will be filled via the electoral process. Applications are available at smc.edu/BOTMeetings and are due January 10, 2025. The Board of Trustees will make the appointment at its regular meeting on February 4, 2025.

The seven-member Board of Trustees—elected by voters in the Santa Monica Community College District, comprising Santa Monica and Malibu—is the governing body for Santa Monica College, which serves more than 27,000 students and provides vital educational services to communities in the region. A student trustee who serves for a one-year term is elected by the students of the college. The current trustees include Dr. Nancy Greenstein (chair); Dr. Sion Roy (vice-chair); Anastasia Foster; Dr. Tom Peters; Dr. Margaret Quiñones-Perez; Rob Rader; and Daniel Martinez Garcia (student trustee).

To be eligible, an individual must be at least 18 years old, must be a resident of the Santa Monica Community College District; must be a registered voter, and must not be disqualified from holding civil office by the Constitution or any law of the state.

The Board is seeking candidates who have the ability and time to fulfill the responsibilities of being a trustee, which includes:

- Participating fully in the work of the Board, including attending all meetings and some college events, studying issues and agenda items, and participating in trustee education programs.
- Being knowledgeable about the communities served by the college and willing to act on behalf of and for the benefit of those communities.
- Being committed to community colleges and their missions, as well as understanding educational, social and economic policy issues.
- Engaging in balancing the needs of a variety of diverse groups and being able to build consensus.

Hiring the Superintendent/President.

Ensuring the fiscal health and sustainability of the college.

- Participating as one member of the Board and supporting the Board's authority as a whole.

For more information on the application process, please contact District/Board of Trustees Coordinator Lisa Rose at 310-434-4402 or Rose_Lisa@smc.edu. Santa Monica College is a California Community College accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC).

SUBMITTED BY GRACE SMITH

Citywide

Keep the Holidays Magical for Pets and People with Safety Tips from Best Friends Animal Society

'Tis the season for joyous celebrations and heartwarming moments with loved ones, but for dogs and cats at home, the holidays can present some unexpected hazards. Nothing puts a damper on the holiday spirit like a sick or injured pet, but there's no need to stress – with a few simple safety precautions, this special time of year can remain festive and fun for all.

To help pet owners keep things merry and bright, Best Friends Animal Society, a leading animal welfare organization working to end the killing of dogs and cats in America's shelters and take the country no-kill in 2025, recommends following the below steps:

Opting for a real Christmas tree? Try a tree skirt to keep dogs and cats away from water in the stand, which can carry pine sap – toxic to pets – and harmful bacteria.

Make sure to secure larger decor – like Christmas trees – to a wall or the ceiling to prevent pets from knocking them over and hurting themselves (or others!).

Done decorating? Carefully check the floor for any tinsel, ribbon, and ornament hooks. These glittery items can be attractive to pets, but ingesting them can cause major problems and can even require surgery.

Keep human food out of pets' reach. Human treats can be dangerous for dogs and cats – especially holiday staples like alcohol, chocolate and raisins.

As festive as they are, plants like poinsettias and mistletoe can be dangerous when ingested by pets. Keep holiday plants well out of pets' reach or consider buying artificial.

Candles are a common part of holiday decor, but they can be hazardous to dogs and cats and easily knocked over. Put any decorative candles or menorahs in places that are inaccessible to pets, and never let candles burn unattended.

Lots of new sounds and new faces can make pets nervous around the holidays. If a dog or cat seems agitated, consider placing them in a quiet, calm room with dim lighting. In addition, make sure identification and microchips are up to date in case of an escape.

For those looking to bring even more joy into their homes this holiday season, consider adopting a dog or cat from a local shelter or rescue instead of purchasing from a breeder or pet store. If adoption isn't an option right now, fostering a dog or cat is another way to play an important role in pet lifesaving.

To learn more about how to save a pet's life this holiday season, please visit bestfriends.org.

SUBMITTED BY ERINN O'CONNOR

To learn how to feature your upcoming event on the SMDP and various digital event calendars

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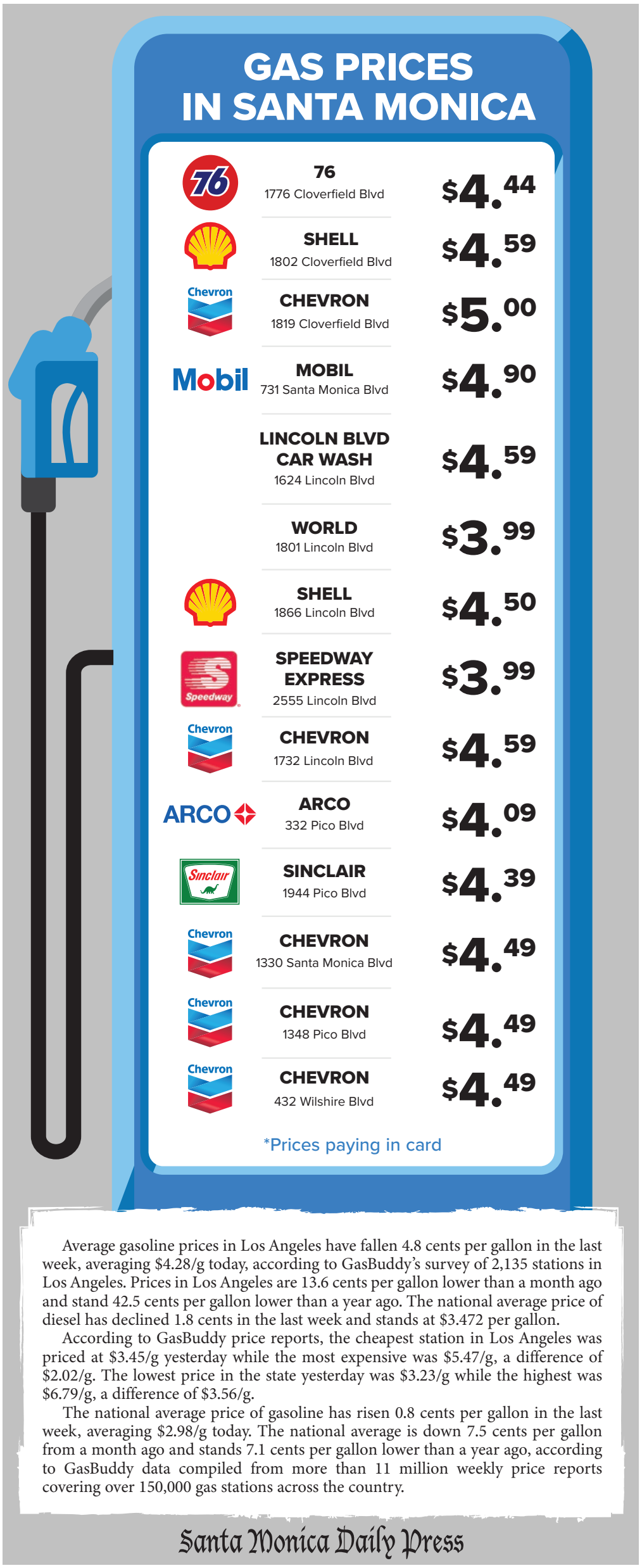
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This holiday season, please support affordable housing on the Westside! Your donations support community gardens, art classes, food distribution, and leadership programs for our residents. Together, we can improve lives and neighborhoods!

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Average gasoline prices in Los Angeles have fallen 4.8 cents per gallon in the last week, averaging $4.28/g today, according to GasBuddy's survey of 2,135 stations in Los Angeles. Prices in Los Angeles are 13.6 cents per gallon lower than a month ago and stand 42.5 cents per gallon lower than a year ago. The national average price of diesel has declined 1.8 cents in the last week and stands at $3.472 per gallon.

According to GasBuddy price reports, the cheapest station in Los Angeles was priced at $3.45/g yesterday while the most expensive was $5.47/g, a difference of $2.02/g. The lowest price in the state yesterday was $3.23/g while the highest was $6.79/g, a difference of $3.56/g.

The national average price of gasoline has risen 0.8 cents per gallon in the last week, averaging $2.98/g today. The national average is down 7.5 cents per gallon from a month ago and stands 7.1 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

COMMUNITY NEWS

Marina del Rey

Marina del Rey Tax Preparer Sentenced to 3 ½ Years in Prison for Tax Fraud Scheme That Caused More than $1.6 Million in Losses to IRS and Victims

A Marina del Rey woman has been sentenced to 41 months in federal prison for preparing and filing false tax returns for her clients and for not reporting her income generated from this complex, multi-year scheme, IRS Criminal Investigation announced today.

Lidiya Gessese was sentenced Wednesday by United States District Judge Percy Anderson, who also ordered her to pay $1,096,034.01 to the IRS and $53,526.95 to her other victims.

Gessese pleaded guilty on April 1 to one count of wire fraud.

Gessese owned and operated Tax We R / Tax R Us and Insurance Services from 2013 through 2019, and would charge clients between $300 and $800 to prepare tax returns. Gessese would then prepare tax returns that included claims to deductions and credits she knew her clients were not entitled to. These claims included falsely claiming dependents, earned income credits, American Opportunity Credit, child tax credits, business deductions, education expenses, and/or unreimbursed employee business expenses. The illegitimate claims led to approximately $1,135,554.64issued by the IRS for tax years 2010 through 2018.

> This is an example of a tax preparer using their position of trust to steal from clients. American taxpayers should have confidence and trust in their tax preparers when paying them to assist them in filing their federal tax returns with the Internal Revenue Service
> - Rod Ammari

To further defraud the IRS, Gessese failed to report, or underreported, her own income generated by Tax We R / Tax R Us and Insurance Services from 2010 through 2018, some of which included improperly diverted funds from her clients' inflated or fraudulent refunds, causing a tax loss of $488,276.00.

"People trust their tax preparers to file accurate and truthful tax returns on their behalf to help ensure they are meeting their tax obligations," said Special Agent in Charge Tyler Hatcher, IRS Criminal Investigation, Los Angeles Field Office. "Ms. Gessese knowingly claimed deductions and credits her clients did not qualify for which led to tax returns being false. IRS-CI's top priority is to root out these unscrupulous tax preparers and hold them accountable."

"This is an example of a tax preparer using their position of trust to steal from clients. American taxpayers should have confidence and trust in their tax preparers when paying them to assist them in filing their federal tax returns with the Internal Revenue Service," said Special Agent in Charge Rod Ammari, Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration, Western Field Division. "Today's sentencing is a reminder to other paid tax preparers that they will be held accountable if they use their position of trust to defraud the American taxpayer or the IRS."

Taxpayers seeking a return preparer should remain vigilant against unscrupulous tax preparers. The IRS has information on its website for choosing a tax return preparer and has launched a free directory of federal tax preparers. The IRS also offers tips to recognize tax scams and fraud.

IRS Criminal Investigation and Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration investigated this matter.

Assistant United States Attorneys Alexander Tran, General Crimes Section, Criminal Division; Cameron Vanderwall, General Crimes Section, Criminal Division; and Valerie Makarewicz, Major Frauds Section, Criminal Division of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Central District of California prosecuted this case.

IRS-CI is the criminal investigative arm of the IRS, responsible for conducting financial crime investigations, including tax fraud, narcotics trafficking, money laundering, public corruption, healthcare fraud, identity theft and more. IRS-CI special agents are the only federal law enforcement agents with investigative jurisdiction over violations of the Internal Revenue Code, obtaining a more than a 90% federal conviction rate. The agency has 20 field offices located across the U.S. and 12 attaché posts abroad.

SUBMITTED BY SCOTT VILLIARD

SEND YOUR NEWS TO THE EDITOR

Santa Monica Daily Press editor@smdp.com

ENGINEERING

FROM PAGE 1

was determined similar to Skeeball, with different scores corresponding to spots in the container.

To take the prize, the Scallywags went "tried and true" with a modified crossbow format to sling the candies. At the regional competition at Augustus Hawkins High School, trigger issues delayed the squad and only 35 of the 50 candies were launched. However, the score was still successful enough to qualify.

Project Lead The Way teacher Breanna Snyder said the team tinkered with the design for the finals, but had to improvise when temperatures began to rise in the Orange County locale. The day-of adjustments, as well as the pre-finals work, both paid off with the title.

"You don't want to make any last-minute changes, but they were able to, and they were able to do it successfully," Snyder said. "So I think just (with) the last-minute testing and last-minute adjustments, they were able to perform under pressure."

Former Santa Monica Mayor Ted Winterer was one of the proud parents watching on, cheering his son Steele as part of the Scallywags.

"(It's) good to see all these kids from different backgrounds ... taking these different approaches, learning how to build things through trial and error, (target) the different angles at which to launch," Winterer said.

Project Lead the Way is a four-year program part of the Samohi PBL push, something that Winterer approves of for physics and engineering because there is "nothing like that practical experience in the field." The engineering students are also unique due to taking on semester-long projects, like the NASA competition and next semester's Capstone projects.



Photo Courtesy NASA/JPL-Caltech

ENGINEERING: Samohi's Project Lead the Way took home first place at the NASA Invention Challenge.

Both of those projects are being worked on in the Samohi Exploration Building for the first time, with the new section of campus making a "huge difference" for Snyder and her class.

"When you have the right tools to do something, it's always beneficial (in) any subject, so we're just really thankful that we have not only the space that's appropriate, but all of the machinery and the equipment that (comes) along with it," Snyder added.

For more information on Project Lead The Way or to donate to the endeavor, visit pltw.org.

thomas@smdp.com

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Santa Monica Daily Press
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Name Change

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE FOR CHANGE OF NAMECase No. 24STCP03257 Superior Court of California, County of Los AngelesPetition of Armen Martirosvan and Manushak Titanyan for Change of Name. TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS: Petitioner or Attorney: Armen Martirosvan a petition with this court for a decree of changing names as follows: Artyom Khojayan to Artyom Martirosvan . The court orders that all persons interested in this matter shall appear before this court at the hearing indicated below to show cause, if any, why the petition for change of name should not be granted. Notice of Hearing: Date 01/31/2025 Time: 10:00 a.m, Dept: 86 Room: 836 The address of the court is SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA – COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES 1111 N Hill St Los Angeles, CA 90012 A copy of this Order to Show Cause shall be published at least once each week for four successive weeks prior to the date set for hearing on the petition in the following newspaper of general circulation, printed in this county: Santa Monica Daily Press

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INSURANCE

FROM PAGE 2

sharp criticism from Consumer Watchdog, an organization that has sponsored landmark changes in insurance regulation. The group has also received millions of dollars in fees from intervening in insurance rates cases, and has been a harsh critic of Lara throughout his time in office.

> Full transparency is what keeps insurance rates honest but Commissioner Lara's rule does away with that protection
>
> - Carmen Balber

"Full transparency is what keeps insurance rates honest but Commissioner Lara's rule does away with that protection," Consumer Watchdog executive director Carmen Balber said in a statement. "The rule will let insurance companies raise rates based on secret algorithms but not expand coverage as promised."

The new rules take effect in January. Farmers Insurance, California's second-largest property insurer, has already pledged to expand its coverage in response to Lara's actions. The American Property Casualty Association, a trade group, also reacted positively.

"California will continue to have a robust regulatory and rate approval process that guarantees that rates reflect the actual cost of covering claims," the association said.

While the rules unveiled last week are central to Lara's plans, there are other elements that remain: shoring up the FAIR Plan, California's last ditch insurer for property owners who cannot obtain coverage elsewhere, speeding up insurance rate case approvals, and allowing insurers to include costs of reinsurance — coverage of their potential losses — in setting rates.

Adoption of Lara's plans may result in premium increases, but maintaining a viable insurance market is a vital factor in the state's economy. The inability to buy insurance would devastate the residential and commercial real estate market and require property owners to pay for fire losses out of their own pockets.

Lara's plans may not be perfect, but nobody — including Consumer Watchdog — has offered a better alternative. He should be credited with at least attempting to deal with one of California's existential crises.

By Dan Walters. This article was originally published by CalMatters.

BIG TECH

FROM PAGE 4

donate $1 million each to Trump's inaugural fund.

During his first term, Trump criticized Amazon and railed against the political coverage at The Washington Post, which billionaire Bezos owns. Meanwhile, Bezos had criticized some of Trump's past rhetoric. In 2019, Amazon also argued in a court case that Trump's bias against the company harmed its chances of winning a $10 billion Pentagon contract.

More recently, Bezos has struck a more conciliatory tone. He recently said at The New York Times' DealBook Summit in New York that he was "optimistic" about Trump's second term, while also endorsing president-elect's plans to cut regulations.

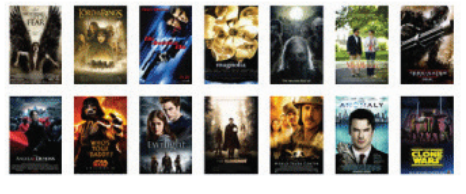
The donation from Meta came just weeks after Zuckerberg met with Trump privately at Mar-a-Lago.

During the 2024 campaign, Zuckerberg did not endorse a candidate for president, but voiced a more positive stance toward Trump. Earlier this year, he praised Trump's response to his first assassination attempt. Still, Trump in recent months had continued to attack Zuckerberg publicly.

And Altman, who is in a legal dispute with AI rival Elon Musk, has said he is "not that worried" about the Tesla CEO's influence in the incoming administration. Musk, an early OpenAI investor and board member, sued the artificial intelligence company earlier this year alleging that the maker of ChatGPT betrayed its founding aims of benefiting the public good rather than pursuing profits.

Written by the Associated Press

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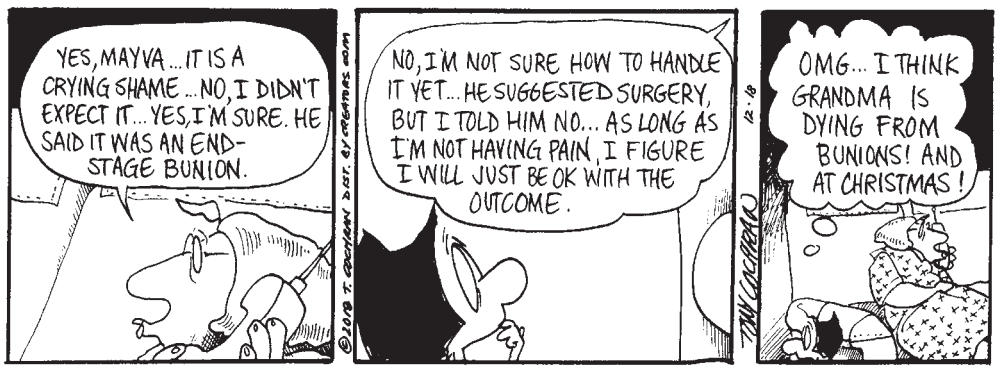


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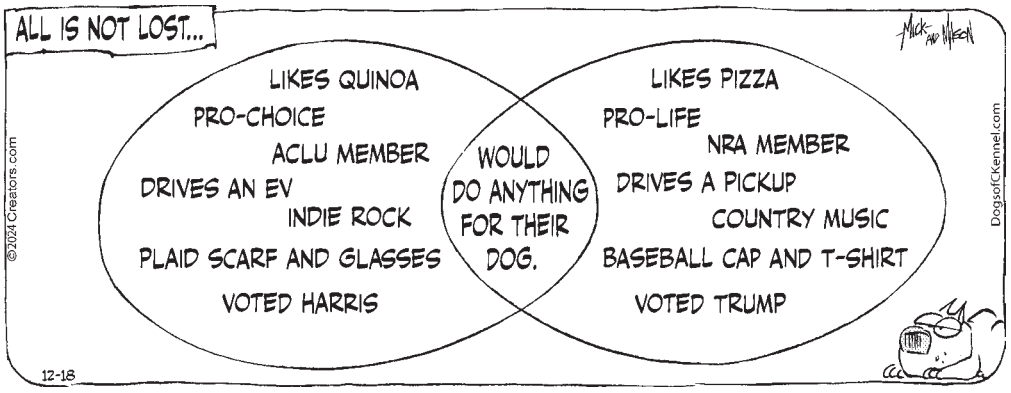
Agnes

By TONY COCHRAN



Dogs of C-Kennel

By MICK & MASON MASTROIANNI & JOHNNY HART



Zack Hill

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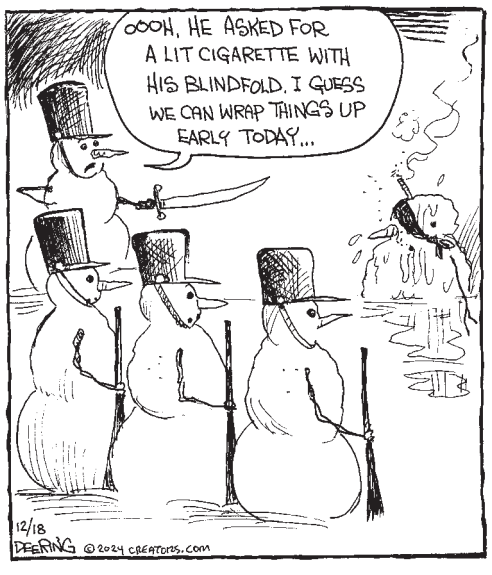
By PETER GALLAGHER



"THAT'S THE SELF-CHECKOUT."

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 6428

Making music

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

Alpenhorn
Aria
Bass
Baton
Boom
Bridge
Bugle
Cello
Cembalo
Cheng
Choir
Crwth
Deagan
Drums
Duet
Euphonium
Gong
Hands
Harp
Hear
Interval
Lute
Lyre
Melody
Method
Mistake
Neck
Oboe
Opera
Radio
Rock
Score
Sitar
Soprano
Spinet
Stop
Tenor
Time
Tremolo
Tuba
Tune
Ukulele
Viola
Wood
Zither

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TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (Dec. 18)

You'll evolve while staying authentic to your vision, ensuring you a place of remarkable and enduring influence. You'll share the story of your life and your many brave refusals to conform, and you will be admired for your honesty, resilience and the skills you've mastered. More highlights: new friends, hobbies and fun. An investment that quickly triples. Family pride. Aquarius and Cancer adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 3, 9, 19, 27 and 40.

HOROSCOPES

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Change is afoot. Everyone wants to control it and no one can. The best way is to sit back and be fine with surprise. A sudden twist could be just the spice that makes a relationship suddenly more interesting.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). You feel that you can have the thing you want. In some ways, you feel like you already have it, and that is drawing more of it to you. Powerful feelings create powerful outcomes.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). When you ask how someone is, you seek an answer that helps you connect. People feel your intention, and you will get open-hearted answers and opportunities to learn and grow from what's exchanged.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). It's as though a dark cloud has covered the sun, considerably dimming your view of the path. The inability to see the horizon ahead is an opportunity to see it with your mind's eye. Dream, fantasize, brainstorm - the future is wide open.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). You don't always need to be the winner. That is your advantage. You don't fear losing the game or even losing face. The only thing you fear is not living to the fullest. That's why even if you lose, you'll win.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). The bridge between great ideas and tangible results will be built out of communication. Be organized with your communication, prioritizing what matters and keeping the extra stuff out of the mix to reduce confusion.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Habits are made from decisions to act. The decision that was hard to make yesterday will be easy to make today and even easier to make tomorrow. Focus on the joy, possibility and hopefulness all around you.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Today's puzzle has already been solved by many before you, so ask for the answers and fill in the blanks. It would be silly not to build on the wisdom of those who came before you when life is full of questions that still need answers.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). The quest for less brings gorgeous, peaceful moments. As you sell, give or toss away what you no longer use, you have more appreciation for the efficient, compact and quiet things that make your life better.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Bonds are always built in the present moment. It's interesting to remember how things were, but it won't count nearly as much as being aware and responsive to what's happening with your people at the time it's happening.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Whether it's because you've grown and honed your tastes or because you simply crave wholesomeness, you'll find yourself willing to work hard to get something that's very good for you and enormously appealing.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). You'll navigate the push and pull of attraction. People can be good company and yet be, nonetheless, a bad match for you for a given time in your life. It's your prerogative to distance or make yourself available in keeping with your intuition.

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

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

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

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

Newsday Crossword

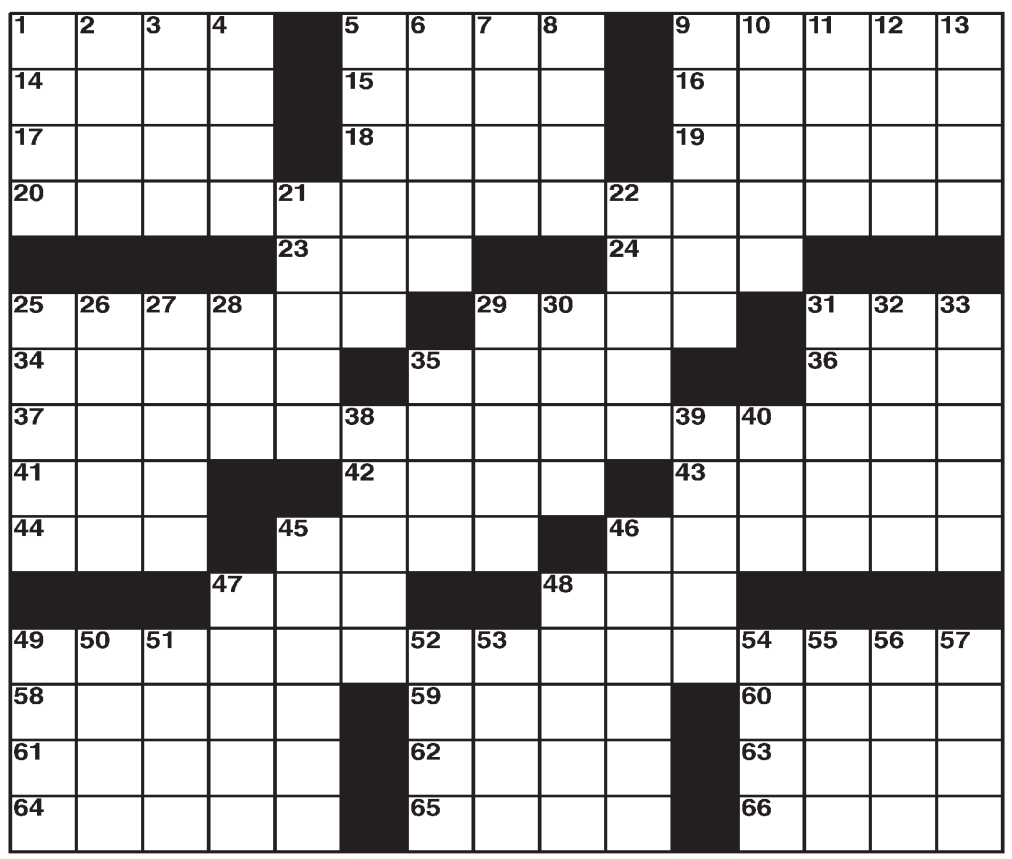
HIGH ADVENTURE by Lin Josephson
Edited by Stanley Newman
www.stanxwords.com

ACROSS

1 Study hard
5 "Ornery" guy
9 Adjust, as an alarm clock
14 Handed-down legends
15 Prefix for freeze
16 Banish
17 Heavy burden
18 Barrel of laughs
19 Oklahoma city
20 Circus performer up high
23 Got the top prize
24 Box office smash
25 Long-eared hopper
29 Twirl around
31 NNW's opposite
34 Bassoon relatives
35 Antlered animal
36 What fills a basketball
37 Person headed for a summit
41 Mo. before Labor Day
42 Takes a spouse
43 Extra __ eggs
44 Ultimate degree
45 Pied Piper's followers
46 Turned to mush, as baby food
47 Faux __ (minor mistake)
48 Restroom, for short
49 Person into skydiving
58 On your own
59 PBS science series
60 Tiny amount
61 Ne'er-do-well
62 Shopping list line
63 Custardy dessert
64 Lunch and dinner
65 "Trillion" prefix for byte
66 __ songs (traditional sing-along music)

DOWN

1 Form a clump
2 Rice-A-__
3 Snug...bug in __"
4 Netlike fabric
5 Orange veggie
6 Labor group
7 "Cut it out!"
8 Location
9 Don't give away
10 Rejoice
11 Fine shirt fabric
12 Otherwise
13 Pull apart
21 Story line surprise
22 Gyrate
25 Native of Italy's capital
26 Approximately
27 Big tree branch
28 Actor Stiller or Kingsley
29 Transmits
30 Muscles above abs
31 British cavalry sword
32 Prolonged battle
33 Made a mistake
35 Personal food plan
38 Overflowing (with)
39 Message on a candy heart
40 Scratch up
45 Indy 500 entrants
46 __ party (teen sleepover)
47 Group of experts
48 Prying tool
49 Coconut tree
50 Natural balm
51 Civil rights icon Parks
52 Part of BTU
53 Carryall bag
54 Offend a little
55 Horseback sport
56 And others: Abbr.
57 Relative standing



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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

CONSTRUCTION

FROM PAGE 1

of Historic Resources and as a local Santa Monica landmark. The significance comes from the innovative "Santa Monica Plan," which rebuilt the campus after the 1933 Long Beach Earthquake and set national precedent on functional teaching spaces, child-centered buildings and plentiful outdoor spaces.

"Moving from this sort of interior-focused, multi-story, monolithic kind of schools which were very prevalent prior, to this much more open, single-story, using the outdoors (and) utilizing lots of natural light (at Roosevelt), which became the Santa Monica Plan, was extremely influential nationally," Historic Resources Group Managing Principal Paul Travis said.

The Roosevelt plan would take down some contributors to the campus' local district, prompting the EIR with an alternative that preserves the majority of the district. Travis added that what's going to be preserved is "quite meaningful in conveying the significance of the property," and will continue to communicate the importance of the Santa Monica Plan.

SMMUSD officials worked with the Santa Monica Conservancy to protect as much historic resource as possible, with the organization eventually endorsing the approval of the plan. Conservancy Executive Director Kaitlin Drisko added that the plan will "reveal and celebrate a meaningful part of the history of Santa Monica and school building design."

The tenants of the Santa Monica Plan will be in place on the updated Roosevelt campus, as Architect James O'Connor explained that the new complex will utilize the "great asset" of the school's South Court. He explained that the Court will be repurposed for outdoor learning spaces, similar to what it was used for in the 1930s and 1940s.

Phase 1 of the plan, which was funded by November's passage of Measure QS and is expected to commence construction in June 2025, will also include outdoor learning canopies for Kindergarten students. Both kindergarten and TK students are a major focus of Phase 1, part of an overall plan to expand TK/K classrooms to 1,350 square feet in size.

SMMUSD Board Vice President Jon Kean said he has been talking with other educational leaders about TK's rise since the 2000s, when it was called Pre-K, and that this approved campus plan is 20 years in the making.

"I think this is a way to respect the neighborhood, it's a way to respect the history of the campus, which is not insignificant, and I think it's a way to maximize what is a very, very tight floor plan," Kean said. "I think it answers the questions that we challenged (the operations team on), and I think it does it in a very elegant way."

thomas@smdp.com



Courtesy Graphic

CONSTRUCTION: A graphic rendering shows what Roosevelt Elementary School in Santa Monica, California will look like after renovations.

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BMH & POD OFFICE HOURS
4 - 6 p.m. Park Center Building, Virginia Avenue Park, 2200 Virginia Ave. The Housing Division will be hosting office workshops for community members about the City's Below Market Housing (BMH) and Preserving Our Diversity (POD) programs. No appointment necessary, first come basis.

FREE WALK-IN LEGAL CLINIC
4:30 - 7 p.m. Virginia Avenue Park, 2200 Virginia Ave. Santa Monica residents can meet one on one with a lawyer with Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles for help with housing issues. Immediate assistance is available by calling LAFLA directly at 800-399-4529 or visit lafla.org/gethelp.

PLANNING COMMISSION
6 p.m. City Council Chambers, Santa Monica City Hall, 1685 Main St. Established in 1946, the Planning Commission envisions Santa Monica as a city of wellbeing, sustainability, and equity, and seeks to balance the many needs and priorities within our community in accordance with the City's General Plan and Specific Plans. The Commission acts through open and civil discourse that is informed by public input, impartial analysis, and best practices in land use and planning.

THURSDAY | DECEMBER 19

LA LAW LIBRARY OFFICE HOURS
2 - 6 p.m. Lobby, Santa Monica Main Library, 601 Santa Monica Blvd. A legal research specialist helps patrons find answers to legal questions. Legal research specialists are not attorneys and cannot provide legal advice, help fill out forms or interpret the law.

RECREATION AND PARKS COMMISSION
6 - 8 p.m. City Council Chambers, Santa Monica City Hall, 1685 Main St. The Commission shall act in an advisory capacity to the City Council and Director of Community Services in all matters pertaining to public recreation including playgrounds, music and entertainment. The Commission will consider the budget of the Community and Cultural Services Department and make recommendations to the City Manager and the City Council.

MONTANA BRANCH BOOK GROUP
6 - 7:30 p.m. Montana Branch Library, 1704 Montana Ave. This community-led, monthly book discussion group meets in person to discuss a mix of fiction and nonfiction titles, often on topics chosen from current events. To register, email library@santamonica.gov. This month's title is "River of the Gods" by Candice Millard.

FRIDAY | DECEMBER 20

DARDEN IN THE GARDEN
6:30 - 8:30 p.m. Merrihew's Sunset Gardens, 1526 Ocean Park Blvd. Celebrate the start of winter with live music under the stars, featuring Darden, a family of five siblings from the OC with a unique spin on Alternative Americana. Opening for them are local favorites Guitrras Hermanas. Tickets $25, to purchase visit: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/darden-in-the-garden-tickets-1096855517379.

MURDER MYSTERY DINNER
7 - 10 p.m. Jamaica Bay Inn, 4175 Admiralty Way, Marina del Rey. Join Jamaica Bay Inn for "The Most Wonderful Crime of the Year," where a jolly standup performance quickly turns into a murder investigation. Bribe, barter and gather clues from other guests as you try to figure out whodunit. Includes a welcome drink and buffet menu, cash bar available. Tickets $85, to purchase visit: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/the-most-wonderful-crime-of-the-year-a-murder-mystery-dinner-tickets-1049231398357.

JOHN BEASLEY'S HOLIDAZE
7:30 - 9 p.m. BroadStage, 1310 11th St. Grammy-winning composer, arranger, pianist and local Santa Monica legend John Beasley is back, setting his sights on the holiday season. Holidaze is a joyous collection and reimagination of timeless Christmas songs. Beasley and his trio are teaming up with emerging virtuoso vocalist, composer, and one of the most acclaimed and versatile voices in music today, Michael Mayo. For more information, visit Broadstage.org.

SATURDAY | DECEMBER 21

TOY SWAP AND FRUIT TREE REPOTTING PARTY
9 - 11 a.m. Ishihara Park Learning Garden, 2909 Exposition Blvd. The Ishihara Park Learning Garden's monthly community breakfast will have some lightly used toys and children's books should you know someone that would benefit from some holiday cheer. Bring one to swap, bring one to donate, or simply show up and take one for regifting. The morning will also have repotting of fruit trees, garden pancakes on the griddle, chalk art, and compost and veggie seeds for your home garden.

UC MASTER GARDENERS AT PICO FARMERS MARKET:
10 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Virginia Avenue Park, 2200 Virginia Ave. Visit with the UC Master Gardeners, with a booth filled with free advice on how to care for plants, how to troubleshoot a gardening problem, and much more. Free seeds and seedlings are available on a limited basis.

NOTABLE FICTION BOOK GROUP
11 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Virtual. This community-led, monthly book discussion group meets virtually to discuss prize-winning fiction titles. To register, email library@santamonica.gov. This month's title is "North Woods" by Daniel Mason.

SANTACON CRAWL
1 p.m. Barney's Beanery, 1351 Third Street Promenade. Celebrate the holiday season with an unforgettable night out at the Santa Monica SantaCon Bar Crawl. From holiday spirits to festive brews, revel in the merry-making with drink specials designed to warm your heart and ignite holiday cheer. Tickets $15, to purchase visit: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/santa-monica-santacon-crawl-2024-tickets-1092511133209.

HOLIDAY CONCERT & UKULELE STRUM-ALONG
2 - 3:15 p.m. MLK Jr. Auditorium, Santa Monica Main Library, 601 Santa Monica Blvd. Experience the joy of making music with others at a festive and fun-filled ukulele concert, strum-along and sing-along featuring Cali Rose and The CC Strumers. Bring your own uke, borrow one or check out a Ukulele RED Kit with a SMPL library card. For uke players and singers of all levels, space and instruments limited and available on a first-arrival basis.

Dr. Nancy J. Yee, DDS

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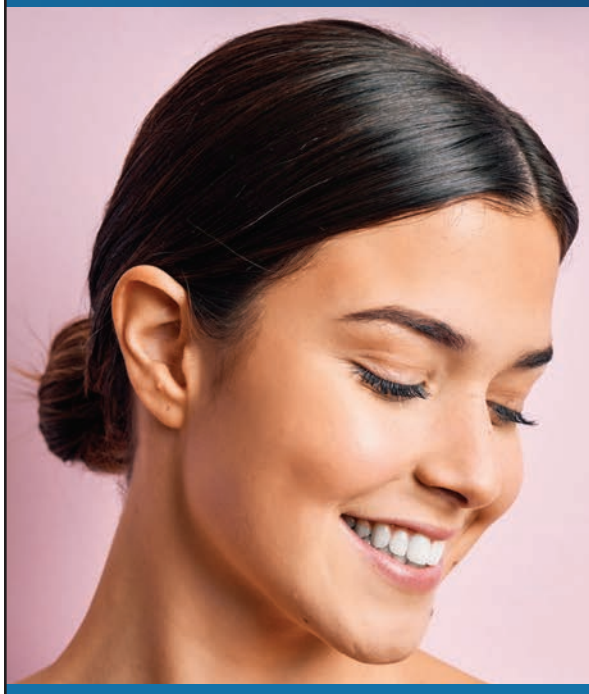
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