2 **School Board**
Talks interim budgets.

3 **Homelessness**
Persisting despite funding.

4 **Noteworthy**
Best of local concerts.

6 & 7 **Events Map**
Make your holiday plans.

smdp
Santa Monica Daily Press

Volume 24 Issue 25 THURSDAY 12/19/24 smdp.com

Scout Troop 2 sells out of Christmas trees in record time



Photo by Scott Snowden

TOP OF THE TREE: Just some of the boys from Troop 2 Santa Monica that made this year's efforts such a success, enabling funds to be raised for activities next year.

SCOTT SNOWDEN
SMDP Staff Writer

A journey further afield potential awaits you if you haven't already purchased your Christmas tree because one of Santa Monica's most trusted sources has unexpectedly sold out already.

Every holiday season, Troop 2 Santa Monica of the Boy Scouts of America, sets up a lot where the boys, together with parents and volunteers, sell freshly cut Noble and Douglas Firs from Oregon, wreaths and other festive paraphernalia and normally they just about manage to clear their stock before Christmas Day rolls around once more.

However, this year, instead of the more usual two-week period it takes, every tree and decorative item was sold — including numerous resupplies — by 4pm on Sunday. Much like previous years, this year the troop was able to set up in the space in front of the Staghorn nursery at 2923 Wilshire Blvd, formerly the site of Jerry's Liquor.

Janet McLaughlin, volunteer and mother of a 16-year-old Star scout, Lucky Basseri, says that she'd heard folk say that they'd come all the way from Mar Vista and Pacific Palisades to get their trees here.

"The boys unloaded a huge delivery on Thanksgiving weekend, then several hundred more trees the following week, a huge truckload Wednesday night, then another Friday night. At 4 o'clock on Sunday we sold our last tree to a young couple who were celebrating their baby's first Christmas," she said, adding, "We all burst into applause, handed them free ornaments and a wooden and pine reindeer made by our boys, and popped a bottle of champagne. For me, closing down the lot is always bittersweet, but we'll be back again next year."

There are many reasons why this is such a beneficial exercise, least of all the residents of Santa Monica get to purchase high quality Christmas trees, but the boys of Troop 2 learn all manner of important life lessons, including business and organizational management, human interaction and even

SEE **SCOUT** PAGE 11



District interim budget boosted by 23-24 ending fund balance

THOMAS LEFFLER
SMDP Staff Writer

The first interim budget for the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District (SMMUSD) was bolstered by surpluses seen at the end of the 2023-24 fiscal year.

At the SMMUSD Board of Education meeting on Dec. 12, Director of Fiscal Services Gerado Cruz and Assistant Superintendent of Business & Fiscal Services Melody Canady walked the board through the first interim report for 2024-25, covering changes between the adopted budget on July 1 and the interim budget as of October 31.

The major revenue change to the SMMUSD budget was roughly $20.43 million added from the 2023-24 ending fund balance, broken down into $12.64 million added revenues as well as unspent monies. Of the revenue, the top culprit for the boost was $7.72 million into Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) via Redevelopment Agency Funds (RDA).

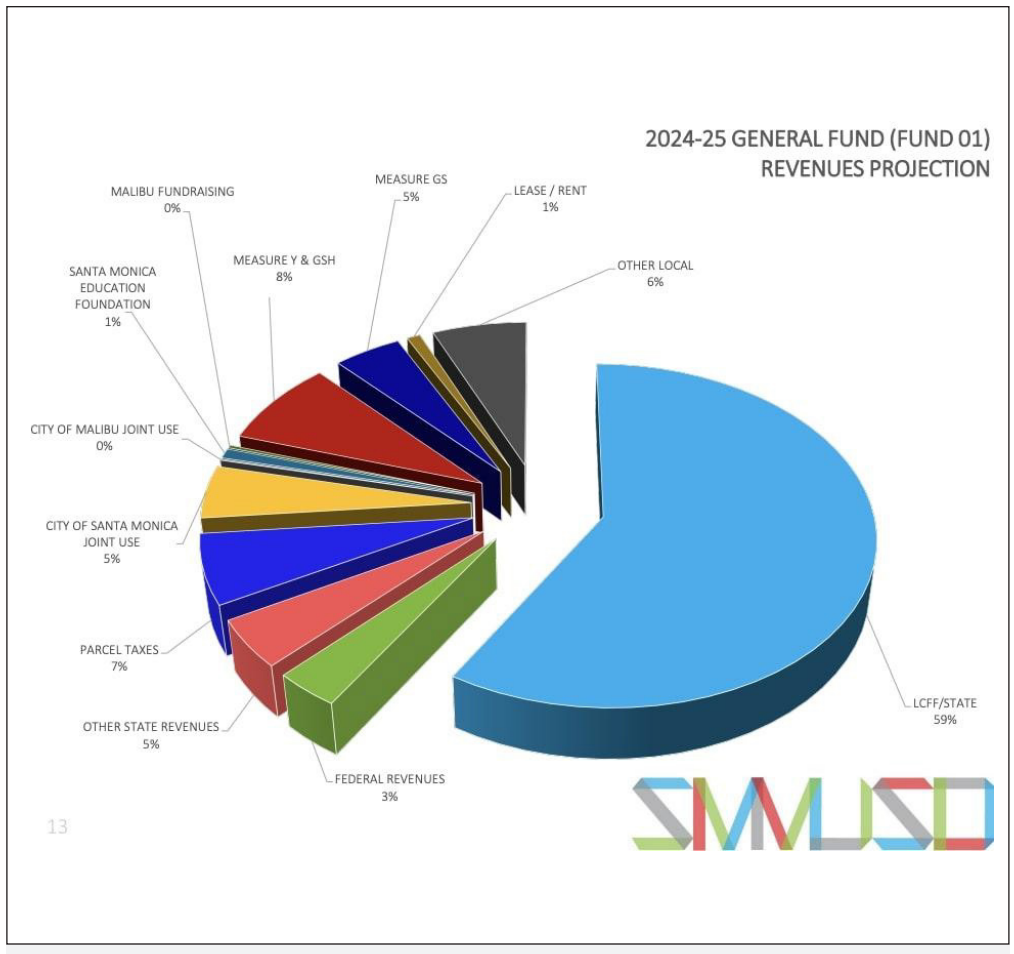
Cruz noted that the larger ending fund balance came from "events of a one-time nature," such as the additional RDA monies and not spending on salaries and benefits in the general fund, as those costs were paid from the restricted general fund via one-time COVID-19 funding.

Along with the ending fund balance, the first interim report also added $4 million in RDA revenue, with Cruz stating that the revenue stream should be factored into budgets more regularly so there isn't a "big swing" in future reports for the "volatile" revenue source.

> These dollars are being spent in the classroom with all of these programs, and the funds that are being used are at all the school sites ... all of these pieces here are directly affecting teaching and learning
>
> - Gerado Cruz, Director of Fiscal Services

Throughout the budget, Cruz added that it was "common" to see an increase in

SEE **BUDGET** PAGE 8



Courtesy Graphic

BUDGET: Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District's majority of revenues come from Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and state funding, including a bump in Redevelopment Agency Funds (RDA) monies.

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GUEST COMMENTARY

Send comments to editor@smdp.com

Billions of dollars later, California's homeless crisis persists under Newsom



Photo by Mike Blake, Reuters

HOMELESS CRISIS: Gov. Gavin Newsom helps cleanup a homeless encampment along a freeway in San Diego, on Jan. 12, 2022.

When asked by pollsters, Californians repeatedly rate homelessness as one of their top concerns — and for good reason.

This year's federal count of Californians who lack housing neared 186,000, by far the most of any state and about 5,000 people higher than the previous year.

Gavin Newsom began his governorship six years ago with many promises of decisive action on major issues, among them housing and homelessness. He pledged to appoint a homelessness czar to attack the crisis, and he and the Legislature allocated billions of dollars.

A 2023 report by the Legislative Analyst's Office pegged direct spending by four state agencies since Newsom became governor at $20 billion, but didn't include spending by other agencies or local governments. The state's auditor, Grant Parks, cited $24 billion by nine state agencies in a report last spring that castigated Newsom's Interagency Council on Homelessness for failing to fully track how billions of dollars were spent or determining which programs were effective.

As the crisis continued, reporters questioned Newsom about having a czar who could cut through red tape and attack homelessness effectively. Newsom snapped back, "You want to know who's the homeless czar? I'm the homeless czar in the state of California."

While seemingly taking personal responsibility for combating homelessness — and despite the state auditor's criticism of his administration — Newsom has more recently blamed local governments for failing to spend state homelessness grants effectively, often threatening to cut off their money if they didn't make a serious dent in the crisis.

A few weeks after Parks issued his report, Newsom and legislators reached a deal to maintain homelessness grants to local governments but he reiterated demands that they do a better job.

> What's happening on the streets has to be a top priority
>
> - Gavin Newsom

"What's happening on the streets has to be a top priority," Newsom said, declaring that local officials will be held accountable for what happens. "People have to see and feel the progress and the change and if they're not … I am not interested in continuing the status quo.

SEE **HOMELESS** PAGE 11



Surf report

WATER TEMP: **57.0**

THURSDAY
POOR TO FAIR

SURF: Shin to knee 0-1FT

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.

FRIDAY
POOR TO FAIR

SURF: Knee to thigh 1-2FT

Another fun day of combo surf as NW swell mix eases and small S swell lingers. Wind looks favorable for the morning with a mid-going-high tide.

Weather

Thursday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 76. North northeast wind around 5 mph.
Thursday Night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 53. Calm wind.
Friday: Sunny, with a high near 66. Calm wind becoming south southwest around 5 mph.
Friday Night: Patchy fog after 10pm. Otherwise, mostly cloudy, with a low around 50.

Date	Day	Time (LST/LDT)	Predicted (ft)	High/Low
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
2024/12/22	Sun	2:18 PM	3.35	H
2024/12/22	Sun	8:56 PM	1.27	L
2024/12/23	Mon	04:12 AM	4.38	H
2024/12/23	Mon	10:59 AM	2.01	L

Daily Lottery

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

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

Fantasy 5
Draw Date: 12/17
10 14 27 29 35

MEGA MILLIONS
Draw Date: 12/17
56 66 67 68 69
Mega#: 18
Jackpot: 825 M

Daily 3
Draw Date: 12/17
EVENING: 1 7 5
Draw Date: 12/17
MIDDAY: 3 8 1

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

Daily Derby
Draw Date: 12/17
1st: 12 - Lucky Charms
2nd: 05 - California Classic
3rd: 04 - Big Ben
Race Time: 1:40.72

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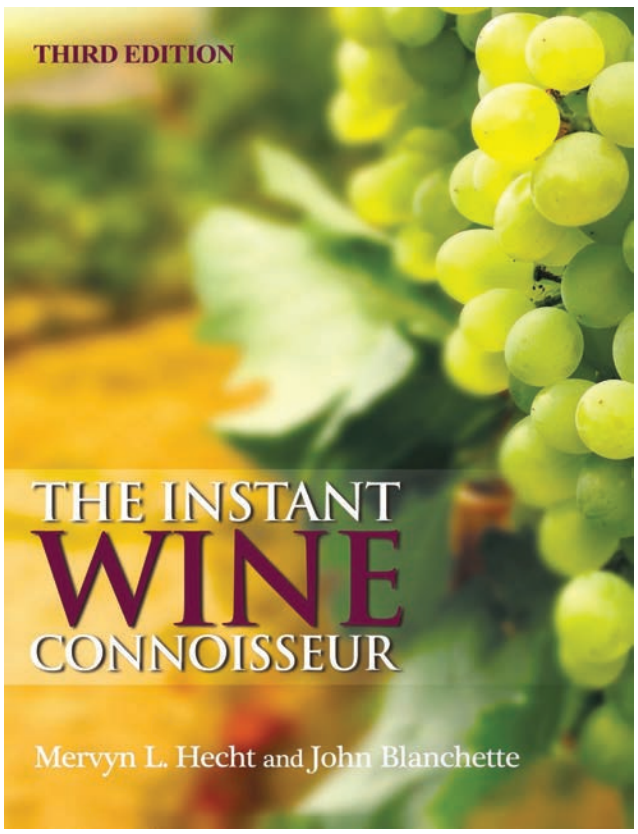
The Santa Monica Daily Press publishes Monday - Saturday with a circulation of 8,200 on weekdays and 8,000 on the weekend. The Daily Press is adjudicated as a newspaper of general circulation in the County of Los Angeles and covers news relevant to the City of Santa Monica. The Daily Press is a member of the California Newspaper Publisher's Association, the National Newspaper Association and the Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce. The paper you're reading this on is composed of 100% post consumer content and the ink used to print these words is soy based. We are proud recipients of multiple honors for outstanding news coverage from the California Newspaper Publishers Association as well as a Santa Monica Sustainable Quality Award.

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Santa Monica Daily Press

★★★★★ A light-hearted fun read.
★★★★★ Well written, particularly useful, instantly accessible.
★★★★★ ...Hecht has a joyful eye and fabulous taste



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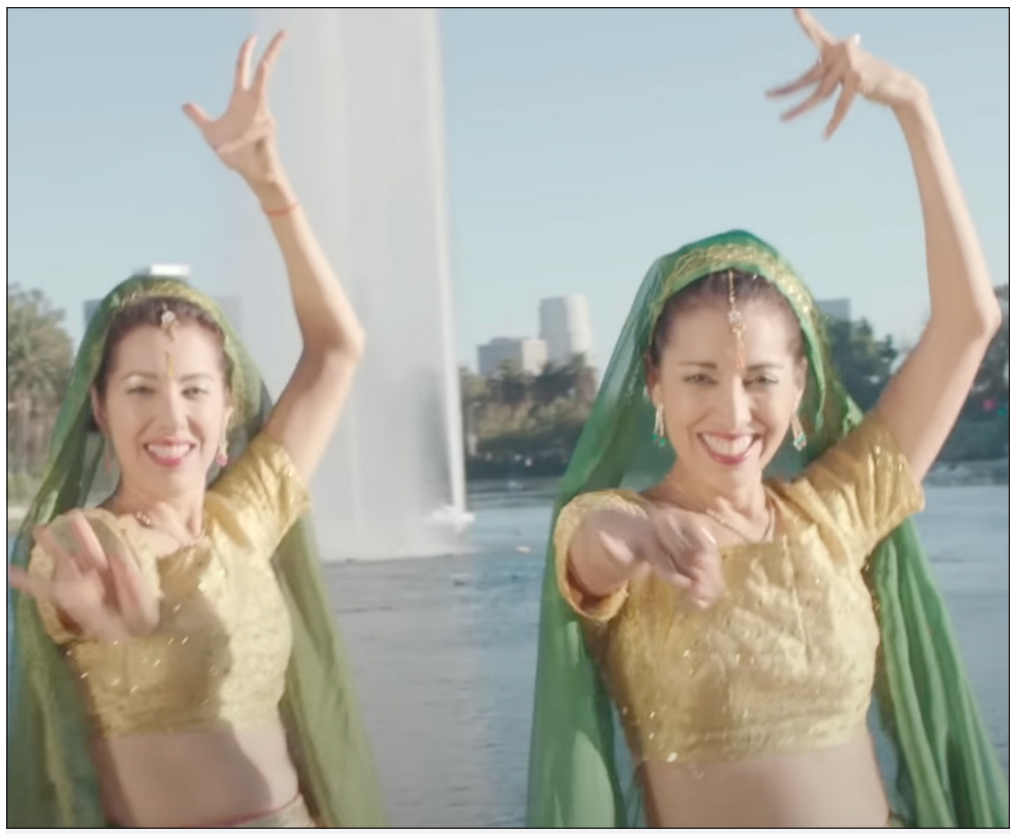


OPINION **NOTEWORTHY**

Charles Andrews

Send comments to editor@smdp.com

One Love, Y'all



Courtesy Photo

MUSIC: "Let's get together and feel alright."

PICK ME UP, BOB-STYLE

At a dark moment when I spied a photo of our newly-(s)elected City Council, agonized through the reporting of yet another, another, another horrid school shooting, and an hour of lies from t-Rump that he called a press conference (aren't "the press" supposed to ask hard questions, to get at the truth?), I bumped into this sunny video made for the Bob Marley-Curtis Mayfield song, "One Love," and it made me smile and lifted my spirits. The world seems so complicated, and overpowering, and downright evil sometimes, that I needed to be reminded that people are all the same, and they're good, and the truth is simple. The video is a parade of all sorts of people mouthing the words. "One Love." Not a bad notion.

View the video online at: HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=QMB-VPFTTEUS&LIST=RDJG7QSW8QBOE&INDEX=29

RECOMMENDED:

Tonight - SWEET HONEY IN THE ROCK – OK, maybe it has been almost 50 years since I saw them perform at UNM, but this is the kind of ensemble built around a timeless idea that doesn't lose much if they keep the changing personnel top quality, and I'm guessing they have if they are still around and still touring the world. That idea, birthed in D.C., was a quartet of African-American women singing four (now five) part harmonies a cappella, and dancing and storytelling (with signing), about their heritages and lives. All this sounds perhaps culturally academic and dry, but it isn't. Their blended voices, vocal improvisations, and choral-stacked spiritual/gospel and jazz traditions are unique and lively. It may be a trek to Northridge but you won't find a performance like this under any other rock. And oh yeah, they've added a bass player. Thur 8 p.m., The Soraya, Northridge, $75.

Tonight -"KOOZA," CIRQUE DU SOLEIL – Now you don't have to drive to Vegas! This is a good bet as HIGHLY RECOMMENDED, and hopefully I will be able to report back on that, but a couple of friends gave it high marks. No one else really does what they do, on this scale. They invented it. I've only seen a few of their shows but they seem to have retained their high standards all these years, ever since I saw their first one also here on SM Beach, by the Pier, 37 years ago, that launched them to great international success. I think they know they have a rep to maintain with Santa Monicans. Thurs, Fri, next Thurs 8 p.m., Sat 1 p.m., Sun 5:30 p.m., Santa Monica Pier, $79-310.

BILLIE EILISH – It took my millennial daughter about two minutes to get why Billie Eilish Pirate Baird O'Connell became THAT hugely popular so fast; dad maybe two years, because I didn't sit down and listen to an entire album. But song by unique song I began to understand what a special, rare talent she is. Along with her brilliant songwriting-producing brother Finneas, they were homeschooled by their creative parents to pursue all the

SEE **NOTEWORTHY** PAGE 8

AROUND TOWN

Send comments to editor@smdp.com

Holiday Happenings

SMDP's Weekly Guide to Food & Entertainment Goings-On In & Around Town includes Locals' Night Holiday Cheer on the Pier, and much more!



Courtesy image

WEEKEND: There's a holiday car show on the Pier this week.

Locals' Night Holiday Cheer on the Pier: The SaMo Pier is bringing the holiday cheer this year with holiday music and performances, puppetry, singalongs, and holiday cheer. Thursday, Dec. 19, 4:00 - 8:00p.m. https://www.santamonicapier.org/cheeronthepier/

3rd St. Promenade "Holiday Thursday": Gather around the tree for festive fun! Hand deliver your letter to Santa, sip hot cocoa, make holiday crafts, and enjoy live holiday music. Local Girl Scouts will be on hand to wrap gifts, and the Promenade will be decked out in its holiday best. This Thursday will be Santa's final visit to the Promenade, so don't miss it! Free. Thursday, Dec. 19, 5:00 - 9:00p.m.

Micro-Amusement Park "Two Bit Circus" Opens Pop-Up on The Promenade: The high-tech entertainment company known for its immersive and interactive experiences, has launched a pop-up arcade where guests can enjoy unlimited gameplay for $25, including a VR-enhanced "Cocktail Shooter" game. 1220 3rd St Promenade. https://twobitcircus.com/

AJA Vineyards Ugly Sweater Party: Join for a helluva night with an ugly sweater catwalk and competition! Enjoy some AJA wines and sign up with your best ugly sweater. Winners will receive AJA wines and merch. Thursday, Dec. 19, 7:30p.m., 1417 2nd St. https://ajavineyards.orderport.net/reservations

In Your Presence at Gallery 33: Curated for this holiday season is a new showcase featuring thirty captivating artworks from an esteemed group of local and international artists, renowned for their talent and unique perspectives. Their work explores themes of connection, perception, and introspection. Dec. 19, 10:00a.m. - 7:00p.m., Georgian Hotel, 1415 Ocean Ave. https://www.gallery33sm.com

Babybel Holiday Chalet: Cheese fans can bring gifts for the merry helpers, known as the Babybelves, to wrap while they take a few moments to themselves as they unwrap Babybel's iconic red wax and enjoy the free gift wrapping, hot cocoa and complimentary cheeses. Friday, Dec. 20, 9:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m., 395 Santa Monica Place https://belbrandsusa.com/news/babybel-gives-the-ultimate-holiday-gift-of-me-time-at-the-babybelves-holiday-village/

SEE **AROUND TOWN** PAGE 11



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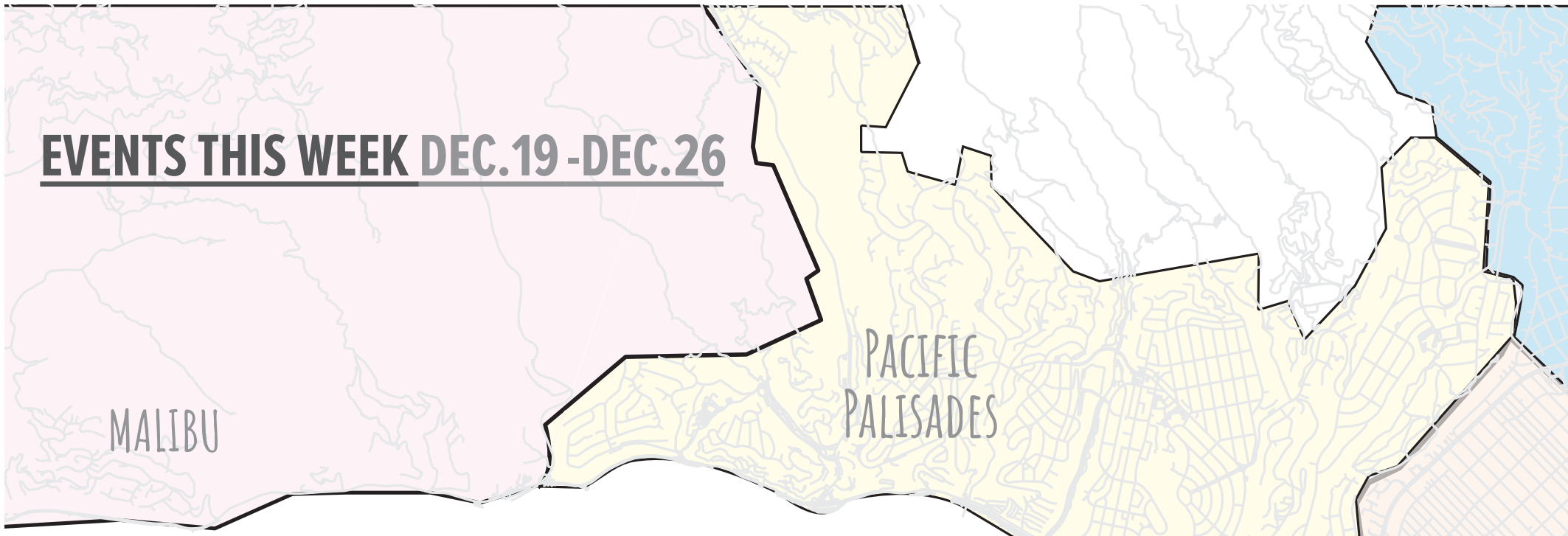
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EVENTS THIS WEEK DEC.19 -DEC.26



UC Master Gardeners at Pico Farmers Market

Saturday, December 21, 2024 , 10:00am-12:30pm

Santa Monica, CA

Cost: Free

https://smdp.com/events/#/details/uc-master-gardeners-at-pi-co-farmers-market/13766365/2024-12-21T10

Visit with the UC Master Gardeners at the Saturday Pico Farmers Market. The booth is 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. Market attendance is subject to change based on weather and holidays.

Open mic music

Friday, December 20, 2024 , 7:00pm-10:00pm

Unurban Coffee 3301 pico blvd

Cost: Free

https://smdp.com/events/#/details/open-mic-music-/11686579/2024-12-20T19

Open mic music every Friday at 7pm to 10pm. At Unurban coffeehouse 3301 pico Blvd Santa Monica ca. 90405. Open to all ages no alcohol, open to all. They have a professional sound system and lighting system now. Just come in and play. They sell tickets for event until there is no more room. You get 2 songs or ten mins.

Friends of Venice Library: Pilates - Core Work

Friday, December 20, 2024 , 11:00am-12:00pm

Venice Branch Library 501 S Venice Blvd.

Cost: Free

https://smdp.com/events/#/details/friends-of-venice-library-pi-lates-core-work/14548475/2024-12-20T11

Develop strength, flexibility and balance through the fusion of Pilates mat movement. All levels welcome. Please be EARLY. Class starts on-time at 11am. No entry after the first ten minutes. No class the day before the Friends' Book Sales. For ADA accommodations, call (213) 228-7430 at least 72 hours prior to the event. Para ajustes razonables según la ley de ADA, llama al (213) 228-7430 al menos 72 horas antes del evento.

Electric Lodge - Holiday Spark

Friday, December 20, 2024

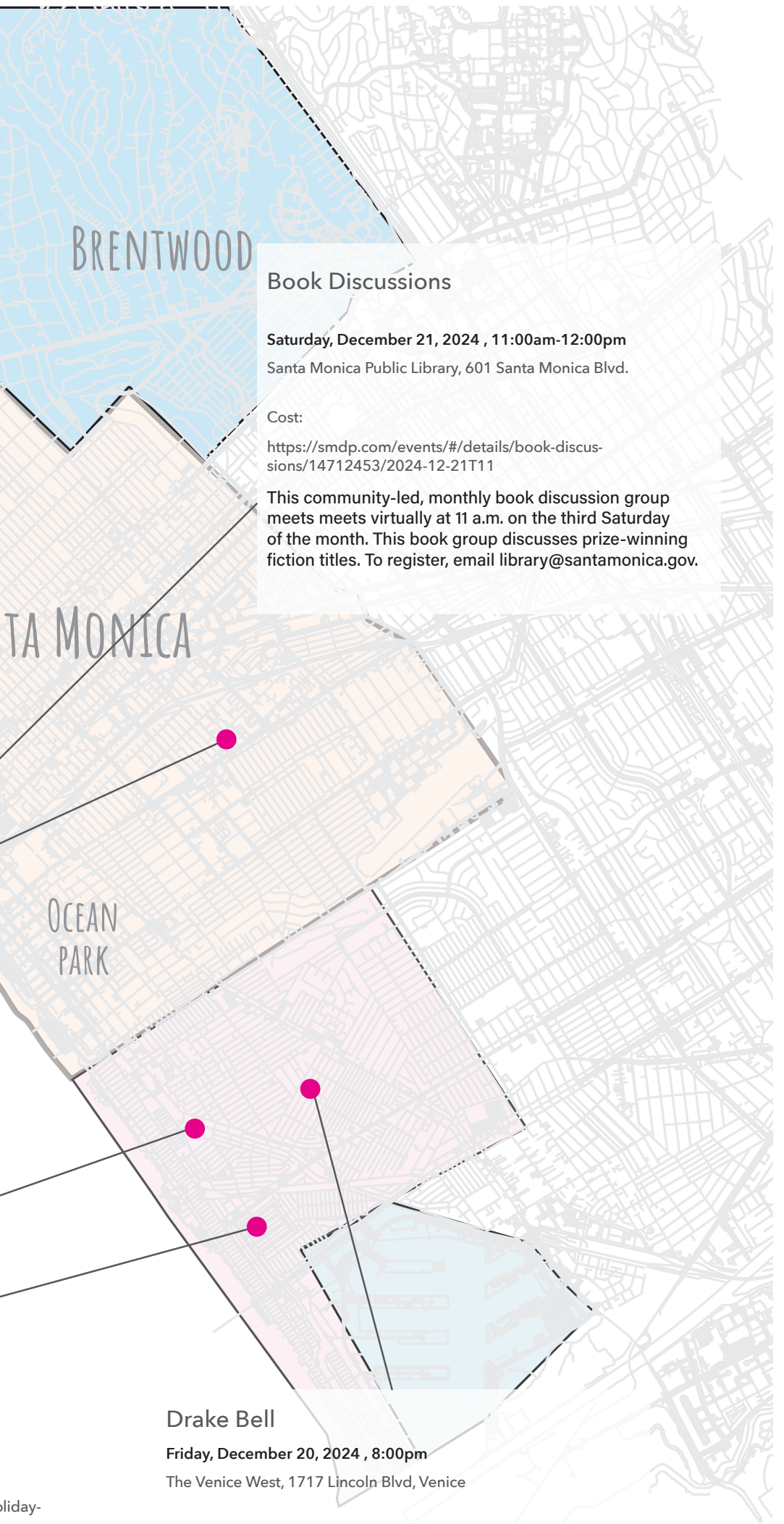
Electric Lodge 1416 Electric Avenue, Los Angele

Cost: Adults: $50 / Kids: $30

https://smdp.com/events/#/details/electric-lodge-ho spark/14721171/2024-12-20T00

An Original, Immersive, Family-Friendly Holiday Song, Dance, Comedy, Cirque, and More! Direct Haves Bring the whole family this holiday seaso Electric Lodge for an immersive 90 minute expe original holiday show will be full of song, dance, cirque that will leave you mesmerized well into t Price of ticket includes complimentry drink upo show immersive experience and a post show re Weekend Only! Friday, December 20 at 7:30 PM

Check out more events at: smdp.com/events



Book Discussions

Saturday, December 21, 2024 , 11:00am-12:00pm

Santa Monica Public Library, 601 Santa Monica Blvd.

Cost:

https://smdp.com/events/#/details/book-discussions/14712453/2024-12-21T11

This community-led, monthly book discussion group meets meets virtually at 11 a.m. on the third Saturday of the month. This book group discusses prize-winning fiction titles. To register, email library@santamonica.gov.

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Show with
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, comedy, and
the New Year!
n entry, a pre-
ception. One
l Saturday,

Drake Bell

Friday, December 20, 2024 , 8:00pm

The Venice West, 1717 Lincoln Blvd, Venice

Cost: $28.00 to $128.00

https://smdp.com/events/#/details/drake-bell/14257172/2024-12-20T20

This event is 21 and over. Any ticket holder unable to present valid identification indicating that they are at least 21 years of age will not be admitted to this event, and will not be eligible for a refund.



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.

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.

NO SMILING

An exhibition of photography by Serene Meshel-Dillman. Open Dec. 21 and 22, 4 - 8 p.m. Curated by Connor and Tessa Dillman. West End, 10730 Pico Blvd.

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 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.

SWINGIN' INTO CHRISTMAS

8 - 9:30 p.m. Moss Theater at New Roads School, 3131 Olympic Blvd. Pianist Loston Harris blends traditional jazz, gospel and blues with his own unique style. Tickets $40, to purchase visit: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/loston-harris-trio-swingin-into-christmas-tickets-1049967369667.

CTHULHU CHRISTMAS

9 - 11:59 p.m. Santa Monica Bay Women's Club, 1210 4th St. This foray into the mind of HP Lovecraft will be a night full of incredible performances including sideshow, burlesque, cyr wheel, wandering magic, contortion and live music; all to celebrate the unique madness of this world. In addition to the live performances, there will be a selection of curated vendors for those of the eldritch, macabre and gothic tastes. Tickets $50-$75, to purchase visit: https://www.ticketleap.events/tickets/amberlee-productions/cthulhu-christmas.





BUDGET

FROM PAGE 2

expenditures for certificated salaries and a decrease in expenditures for classified salaries. This was due to the district putting into place multi-phased salary schedule adjustments based on a contract made with SEIU Local 99. The agreement, made in May, included a 5% wage increase plus retroactive pay to January, a 3% wage increase effective July 1 of this year, and two-step adjustment wage increases of 5% during the 2024-25 and 2025-26 school years.

Operational costs in the general fund also saw a $813,000 increase in consultant resources, something Cruz said has been "directly impacting teaching and learning in the classroom" after past concerns about what consultants bring to the district. Of the $814,000 increase, nearly half went toward education services like PS Arts, K12 Insight and The Hanover.

"These dollars are being spent in the classroom with all of these programs, and the funds that are being used are at all the school sites ... all of these pieces here are directly affecting teaching and learning," Cruz said.

The district's current reserves bumped up in the interim report, going up from 16.07% at the adopted budget to 16.76%, close to the state recommended 17% minimum level for unified districts. The interim report shows the district has a $25.02 million reserve for up to two months of general fund expenditures, also inching closer to the recommended amount of $26.8 million.

SMMUSD's Board of Education will be moving into more administrative items in its final meeting of 2024, set for Thursday. The meeting will set an administrative appointment for Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, as well as two short-term classroom teacher hires for John Adams Middle School. The board will also be commending Dr. Mark Kelly, who will be leaving his post as the district's Deputy Superintendent.

thomas@smdp.com

NOTEWORTHY

FROM PAGE 4

arts, and by 13 Billie was working with Finneas out of their Highland Park home to release a successful EP at 16 and two years later her debut album shot straight to the top of both US and UK charts. She has 32 Grammy nominations and 9 wins, Finneas has 17 noms and 10 wins. She did a James Bond theme song, for Pete's sake, as a teen – and won an Oscar. She was diagnosed with Tourettes at 11. She seems to eschew the glittery trappings of pop stardom, and that's refreshing. I hope she lives to be 100. Fri, Sat 7 p.m., Kia Forum, Inglewood, $230 (but you'll have to beg a ticket, sold out, five shows, 85,000 tickets!).

SAMANTHA FISH, JESSE DAYTON – You'll immediately sign up for handsome country rock star Dayton's fan club as soon as you hear him croon, take an attitude or plant his boots planted Chuck Berry-style, but this is Fish's show and the first moment she peels off a jaw dropping fusillade of stinging blues notes you will undoubtedly wonder how in hell you had so far missed this phenomenon, and will instantly install her in your pantheon of the best guitar slingers you have ever heard. Such a treat to have her and Dayton touring together. Sat 8:30 p.m., Fonda Theatre, Hollywood, $40-84.

TOLEDO DIAMOND – His decades-long Sunday night residency at Santa Monica's Harvelle's, the oldest blues bar in LA (almost a century!), is a treasure that you shouldn't assume will always be there. Toledo choreographs (literally) a truly unique show, a blend of '50s hipster jazz and his dancing dames and a most modern smokin' hot band that gets better all the time. Every Sunday 9:30 p.m., Harvelle's, Santa Monica, $12

ARTURO SANDOVAL "Swinging 'Deck the Hall' Holiday Concerts" – I don't usually go to or recommend "holiday concerts," but... trumpeter-pianist-composer Sandoval is an LA treasure who was just in the news for receiving the very prestigious Kennedy Center Honors (to go with his Emmy, 10 Grammys and the Presidential Medal of Freedom), and he could make "Mary Had a Little Lamb" swing like crazy. Mon 8 p.m., Walt Disney Concert Hall, LA, $45-150.

TONY GILKYSON, RICK HOLMSTROM – Got the holiday blues? Feeling guilty because you're drawn to this friendly little Culver City watering hole with live music and no cover, when you should be genuflecting in church, in meditation on your sinful ways, on Christmas Eve, for Christ's sake? Well, there are many ways to worship, to elevate your soul to heaven, and if God didn't want music to be such a heavenly, healing thing She wouldn't have made voices and gee-tars sound that good, would She? Gilkyson is a master of voice and guitar, and the Holmstrom Band is as good as anyone could want behind a master. This should be a very holy night. Tues 9 p.m., Cinema Bar, Culver City, no cover.

COMING ATTRACTIONS (also recommended): SWEET HONEY IN THE ROCK, The Soraya, 12/19; "KOOZA," CIRQUE DU SOLEIL, Santa Monica Pier, 12/19, 20, 21, 22, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31; BILLIE EILISH, Kia Forum, 12/20, 21; TOLEDO DIAMOND, Harvelle's, 12/22, 29; HOT CLUB OF LOS ANGELES, Cinema Bar, 12/23, 30; LOSTON HARRIS, Jazz Bakery, 12/21; SAMANTHA FISH, Fonda, 12/21; TONY GILKYSON, RICK HOLMSTROM, Cinema Bar, 12/24.

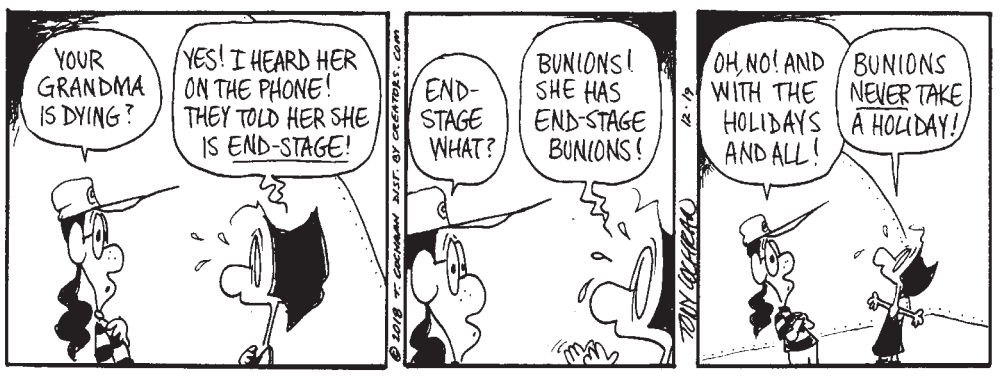
Charles Andrews has listened to a lot of music of all kinds, including more than 3,000 live shows. He has lived in Santa Monica for 38 years and wouldn't live anywhere else in the world. Really. Send love and/or hate mail to: therealmrmusic@gmail.com

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

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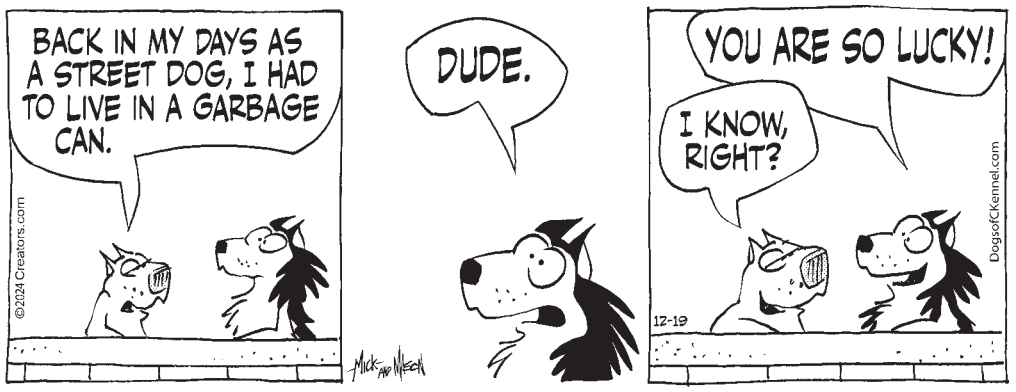
Agnes

By TONY COCHRAN



Dogs of C-Kennel

By MICK & MASON MASTROIANNI & JOHNNY HART



Zack Hill

By JOHN DEERING & JOHN NEWCOMBE



Heathcliff

By PETER GALLAGHER



"WE GOT A TALKING SCALE BY MISTAKE."

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

© australianwordgames.com.au 6429

Choosing a name

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

Aaron	Christine	Jesse	Olivia
Aidan	Dennis	John	Owen
Ajax	Donna	Joshua	Paul
Albert	Elizabeth	Julie	Ralph
Aldous	Emily	Kayla	Ruth
Alexander	Emma	Kyle	Sara
Allan	Eric	Linda	Stewart
Amos	Helen	Lisa	Susan
Ashley	Henry	Louis	Terry
Billy	Jack	Mary	Tiffany
Bryan	Janet	Nancy	Victoria
Carl	Jason	Ninian	
Cheryl	Jean	Noah	

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smdp Santa Monica Daily Press

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (Dec. 19)

Your specialty will be paving the way for others and you'll be celebrated as a trailblazer, elevated as a teacher and followed as a star. More highlights: Your third eye has a more vivid and vibrant focus, enhancing your predictions of the future as well as your sensual experience of the moment. Also, a fitness journey invigorates your physical and personal life at once. Libra and Taurus adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 9, 10, 2, 21 and 13.

HOROSCOPES

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Fate smiles on your approach to ordinary interest with extraordinary passion. Be reasonable with your expectations. No one requires you to be an expert right out of the gate.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). It is no mistake that people feel their most creative when they are around you. You have a talent for recognizing and nurturing the gifts of others. They trust you and follow you down unfamiliar paths because they feel safe in your guidance.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Presentation counts for a lot usually, and it counts for even more today. You're trying to create something beautiful, and there is pressure to get it done fast, but you need time to get the details right. Stand by your own pacing, even if you have to extend the deadline.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). You feel it when people want something but aren't saying what it is. It's as though the unspoken has an actual weight. You're exceptionally charming now, and you should be able to tease out any information you want.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). A good life includes many experiments. Working up the guts to walk into strange territory and bear the raw vulnerability that comes with trying new things is no small feat, but all the courage you need is already in you. Tap into the endless spring.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). The joke is funny because it's true. Humor reveals the essence of a person's nature today. "Wit is a treacherous dart. It is perhaps the only weapon with which it is possible to stab oneself in one's own back." - Dorothy Parker

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). For a relationship to work, an adjustment must be made. With directness and honesty, it's possible the adjustment will be cooperative and complete and made only once. Avoid confrontation and the adjustment will be a continuous solo project.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). No one can get things done with a lot of drama swirling around the work environment. This is where libraries, churches, nature trails and quiet spaces come into the equation, so you can leave the theatrics for the sanctuary that will provide a clear mind.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Positive feedback is only as helpful as it is sincere. You appreciate honesty and extend leeway to those you trust. Even if people say things that don't quite land, you'd rather hear their thoughts than anything from people less genuine.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Today, there is nothing more exciting than the sizzling potential in a room full of strangers. This is the place you can be anyone you want to be. Fresh faces are always a fresh start.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Things don't always play out in the world the way they do in your mind. It may seem, at times, that your efforts are in vain and your lessons are irrelevant, but rest assured it's not true, just a mood that will pass.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). You never really know someone until you've glimpsed their vulnerabilities and quirks. A new person may enter the scene like a superstar, but superstars are human, too. The star quality dazzles, but it's humanity that wins your heart.

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

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

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

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

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

Newsday Crossword

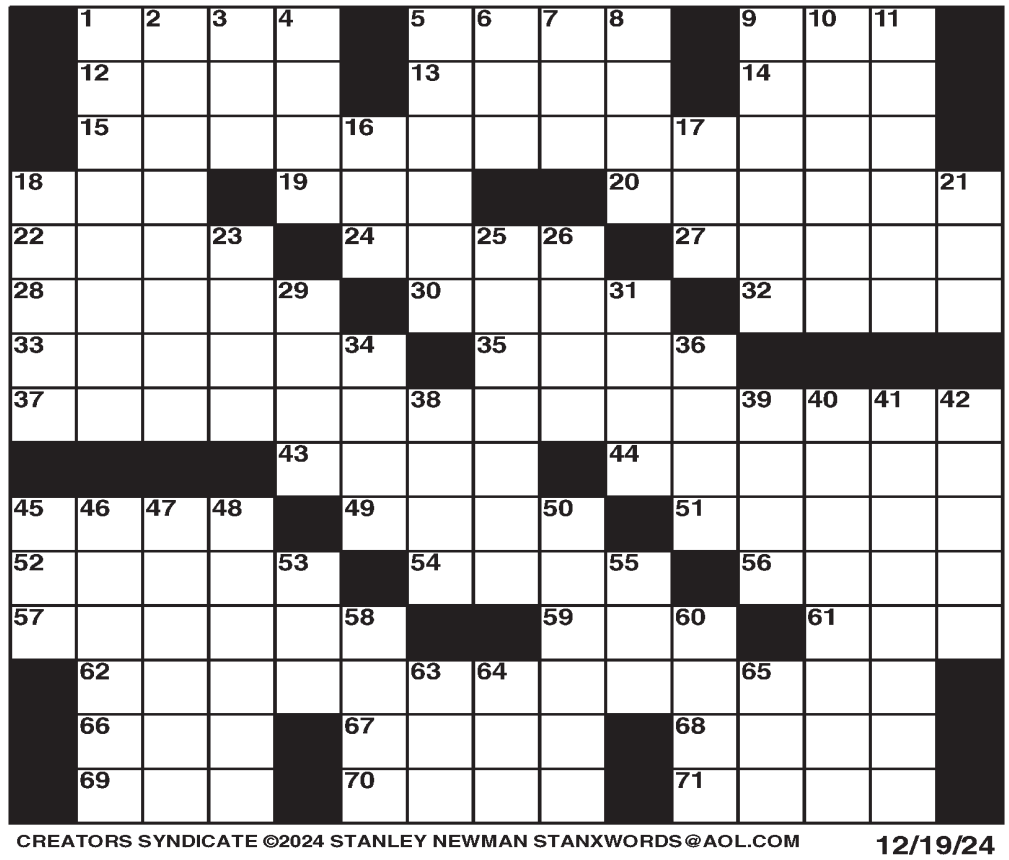
SHORT AND SWEET by S. N.
Edited by Stanley Newman
www.stanxwords.com

ACROSS

1 Fruit centers
5 Came out even
9 Hoop group
12 OPEC member
13 Cow catcher
14 Graceless person
15 Two of a septet
18 Mid-11th-century date
19 Inventor of the PC
20 Something to dunk
22 Pet store purchase
24 Little bits
27 Stone Age spouse
28 For any reason
30 Paper mill material
32 List with ease, with "off"
33 Italian Renaissance artist
35 Hold back, with "in"
37 Two of a septet
43 Restaurant rating site
44 Jazz trumpeter Sandoval
45 Low-pH
49 Canvas covering
51 Ready to go home
52 Gimlet garnishes
54 French evening
56 Central point
57 Be enjoyable
59 Numerical suffix
61 It's nothing
62 Three of a septet
66 Bracket shape
67 Family nickname
68 Roll for a hole
69 Starfish arm
70 Action film superheroes
71 Keats creations

DOWN

1 Amscray, for instance
2 Hose down, say
3 Frat letter
4 Any of the USA's 3.8 million
5 Dust collector
6 Plunder
7 MPG monitor
8 Needle point
9 "That's cheating!"
10 Showy ornament
11 Burning
16 Vegan lunch
17 Chop down
18 Dr. hopefuls' hurdles
21 Pump meas.
23 Writer Wiesel
25 Start getting paid to play
26 Cold weather carrier
29 Slothful
31 It's 8-Down of Florence
34 Security Council veto
36 Union election agcy.
38 "Regrettably..."
39 Where Aldous Huxley once taught
40 Bill in Barcelona
41 Forecasts
42 Falsetto refrain
45 Just like
46 Do arithmetic
47 Gazelle cousin
48 With much feeling
50 Ersatz Frisbee
53 Dolt
55 GPS offering
58 Forest feline
60 Shot, for short
63 Current stopper
64 What's not a 40-Down
65 Clunker



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12/19/24

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

SCOUT

FROM PAGE 1

just a little bit of labor-intensive work.

"Working at the Troop 2 Boy Scout Christmas Tree lot teaches me teamwork, leadership, customer service, salesmanship, and the value of hard work," said Basseri, adding, "It was a delightful experience to be able to provide some Christmas joy and happiness for our customers. I'm particularly proud of how many trees we sold in such a short amount of time, I'm so excited to be part of such a great troop."

Added to which, all profits and tips that the boys receive are used to fund, frankly amazing activities for each age group.

"The goal is to provide funds for general troop activities throughout the year, like summer camp, which will probably be a week in California somewhere and then there's backpacking or canoing expeditions, like a 50 mile trek," said Roger O'Brient, Christmas Tree Lot Chair.

"Last summer we organized a trip for younger scouts to the Ozark Mountains in Missouri and we canoed down a river for 50 miles and some caving as well and he older scouts circumnavigated Catalina Island in these large war canoes," O'Brient said, adding that next year a trip to Peru is planned where the older boys will spend a week working with an indigenous Amazonian tribe that the Scout foundation helps.

"I've been volunteering at the Troop 2 tree lot for a dozen years, and look forward to it more every time. All the customers are cheerful and so happy when they see our beautiful selection. We have people who have been buying their Christmas trees from us for 50 years," McLaughlin said.

"They really appreciate having the boys help them pick out trees, tie them onto their cars, or deliver them to their homes. And in turn, they feel good about helping fund troop activities [and] all the proceeds after expenses goes to the boys, none of us take salaries. This year, we sold hundreds of feet of garland, wreaths, reindeers, gnomes, and nearly two thousand trees. We couldn't stock them fast enough."

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HOMELESS

FROM PAGE 3

"I'm not interested in funding failure any longer," he added. "So I'm going to speak for myself, just one guy that's got three more appropriation cycles in front of him. I want to see results. Everybody wants to see results."

Local officials clearly resent Newsom's blame-shifting, arguing that receiving only annual grants makes it difficult for them to establish long-term programs to lift homeless people from their plight and prevent more Californians from joining their ranks.

They have a point, but it's also true that local efforts to combat homelessness have run afoul of the same bureaucratic inertia as state programs — very visibly in Los Angeles, the epicenter of California's homelessness crisis.

The Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, created by the city of Los Angeles and Los Angeles County to deal with homelessness, has an $875 million budget. Last month, the county's auditor-controller issued an audit that excoriated the agency for routinely late payments to contractors, failing to track how money is spent, and shifting money from one program to another despite differing purposes.

County Supervisor Lindsey Horvath, who requested the audit, said she will seek to shift the agency's duties to a new county-only department.

"The audit findings make clear the structure we have for service delivery is not working. We need greater accountability and bold action," Horvath said. "The public is frustrated and there is no time to waste in delivering meaningful results."

> "The audit findings make clear the structure we have for service delivery is not working. We need greater accountability and bold action"
> - Lindsey Horvath, County Supervisor

Newsom's governorship will end in two years, after which he will likely mount a campaign for president. It's certain that California's homelessness crisis will still be highly visible and a weapon for Newsom's opponents.

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

AROUND TOWN

FROM PAGE 5

Festive Holiday Market at Siete: Santa Monica Proper will offer a curated holiday market featuring a selection of goods and delicacies from neighborhood partners, such as The New Bar, Siesta Co., Ghia, Doladira Isa Isa, and bites from acclaimed French pastry chef François Daubinet, Mr. T x François Daubinet pastries, and seasonal coffee, teas and beverages. Friday - Sunday, Dec. 20 - 22, 700 Wilshire Blvd. https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1X4D8qpr5w/

Cthulhu Christmas: This is an immersive literature-based event with a foray into the mind of HP Lovecraft. It "will be a night full of incredible performances including sideshow, burlesque, cyr wheel, wandering magic, contortion, and live music; all to celebrate the unique madness of this world." Saturday, Dec. 21, 9:00p.m., 1210 4th St. https://www.literatievents.com/

Holiday Concert & Ukulele Strum-Along: Cali Rose and the CC Strummers invite you to strum along, sing along, and enjoy festive holiday and popular songs. Bring your own uke, borrow one of theirs. Saturday, Dec. 21, 2p.m., Main Library, 601 Santa Monica Blvd.

Nightly Menorah Lightings on 3rd St. Promenade: Celebrate the Festival of Lights with nightly ceremonies from Dec. 25 - Jan. 2 at 5:45 p.m. 1300 Block Third Street Promenade https://downtownsm.com/holiday-happenings

ONGOING: Cirque du Soleil Kooza (until 1/5); Ice @ Santa Monica (until 1/20); LiteBrite Experience

WHAT TO EAT & DRINK?

Papille Gustative Christmas Cookie Giveaway: The Main St. cafe is offering FREE fresh-baked cookies on Tuesday, Dec. 24 and Wednesday, Dec. 25. No purchase necessary...they are gifts from Santa! Choose from a variety of Chocolate Chip, Granola, Coffee, Pistachio, Gooey. 2823 Main St. https://papillegustativela.com/

Holiday High Tea at the Georgian: Cozy up with delightful bites and exquisite teas as Chef Thessa curates a festive and whimsical menu. Sunday, Dec. 22, 3:00p.m. https://resy.com/cities/santa-monica-ca/venues/sirena-restaurant/events/high-tea-at-sirena-12-22-2024-12-22

Ayessha Curry Opens Sweet July Cafe at Regent SaMo: This Jamaican inspired cafe founded by Steph Curry's wife croissants and other pastries. 1700 Ocean Ave. https://www.instagram.com/reel/DDfMDz-y2Ep/

Feast of the 7 Fishes at Blue Plate Oysterette: Join this Italian-American holiday tradition with a prix-fixe feast. Dec. 20 - 29, 1355 Ocean Ave. https://www.eventbrite.com/e/feast-of-the-seven-fishes-tickets-1090313209159

Orla Christmas Day Dinner: Enjoy ocean views and a celebratory prix fixe holiday dinner with a Mediterranean twist, blending seasonal flavors for an exceptional dining experience from Chef Michael Mina. Price: $125 for adults and $45 for children ages 3-10 Wednesday, Dec. 25, 2pm - 8pm; https://www.sevenrooms.com/experiences/orlasantamonicabeach/christmas-day-at-orla-santa-monica-5226084198006784

Hotel Casa del Mar Christmas Day Brunch & Dinner: Brunch includes an appetizer such as butternut squash soup or French toast as well as an entrée such as Dungeness crab cake benedict or glazed ham. Dinner includes appetizers such as winter kale salad or Dungeness crab tart and an entrée such as prime rib roast or stuffed conchiglioni. Both include desserts such as sticky toffee cakes, apple pie, eggnog crème brulee, peppermint brownies, gingerbread holiday cookies, and more. $125/person. Wednesday, Dec. 25. https://www.hotelcasadelmar.com/dining/terrazza-lounge

Further Afield: Los Angeles Ballet's The Nutcracker Dec. 13 – 28 https://www.losangelesballet.org/2024-2025-season/the-nutcracker

Looking Ahead: Feast of the 7 Fishes at Blue Plate Oysterette (12/20 - 29); New Years Events at Cassia, The Georgian Room, Orla, Rustic Canyon, Xuntos, Cayton Children's Museum, Ice @ Santa Monica

If there's something you think is worth highlighting, you can reach out directly to me at sean@smdp.com.

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