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Santa Monica Daily Press

WEEKEND EDITION
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Drought conditions persist even in face of recent record rainfall

EMILY SAWICKI
SMDP Staff Writer

Rainwater may be pouring through Santa Monica's storm drains, but the precious resource is running straight into the ocean, not into the city's thirsty groundwater basin.

Despite Santa Monica's astronomical rainfall over the past 31 days, the persistent drought is not yet a thing of the past, according to City of Santa

SEE **DROUGHT** PAGE 6



Emily Sawicki

WET: Residents may still need to conserve despite recent rains.

Effort to recall SMMUSD board members fails

The county clerk reported no signatures were submitted by the deadline to appear on a 2022 special election ballot

EMILY SAWICKI
SMDP Staff Writer

The most recent petition drive seeking to remove Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District (SMMUSD) Board of Education members Laurie Lieberman, Maria Leon-Vasquez and Jon Kean from office has failed.

In an email this week, a spokesperson from the Los Angeles Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk's office confirmed the effort was

SEE **RECALL** PAGE 4

Winter storm closes sections of PCH

EMILY SAWICKI
SMDP Staff Writer

Northbound Pacific Coast Highway was closed at the Incline heading toward Malibu on Thursday morning, Dec. 30, due to a deluge of rain that dropped several inches of precipitation on Santa Monica in the last days of 2021.

At 9:25 a.m., a Caltrans social media post reported: "northbound State Route 1 (PCH) closed at the Santa Monica bluffs/Ocean Ave. onramp due to a mudslide. Traffic being taken off westbound I-10 at Lincoln Blvd. off ramp. City of Santa Monica is clearing drains at top of the bluffs." Earth movers could be seen removing debris from the roadway into the late morning.

Santa Monica Fire Department (SMFD) spokesperson Captain Patrick Nulty reported there were no injuries associated with that

SEE **RAIN** PAGE 7

Leon-Vazquez to lead newly reorganized board

EMILY SAWICKI
SMDP Staff Writer

An internal election at the most recent Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District (SMMUSD) Board of Education meeting on Dec. 16 has installed Maria Leon-Vazquez — the district's longest-serving representative — to her third term as president. Leon-Vazquez was first elected to the school board in 2000; she was re-elected for her sixth term on the board in 2020.

Richard Tahvildaran-Jesswein, now in his second term on the board, was elected to sit as board vice president. Tahvildaran-Jesswein previously served as president in 2018 and again in 2019.

SEE **LEADERSHIP** PAGE 4



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DAILY FIRE LOG

SMDP STAFF CHOSE THE FOLLOWING FROM 45 CALLS ON DECEMBER 29

Ladder Request 2300blk 27th St 12:14 a.m.
Traffic Collision With Physical Rescue 17th St / Olympic Blvd 12:45 a.m.
EMS 2900blk Main St 1:00 a.m.
EMS 300blk Arizona Ave 5:39 a.m.
EMS 2300blk Ocean Park Blvd 6:10 a.m.
EMS 800blk Ocean Ave 8:18 a.m.
EMS 1300blk 15th St 8:51 a.m.
Automatic Alarm 2400blk 16th St 8:56 a.m.
Smoke Investigation 1200blk 23rd St 9:03 a.m.
EMS 2700blk Pico Blvd 9:12 a.m.
Automatic Alarm 1300blk Ocean Ave 9:13 a.m.
Public Assist 1200blk 16th St 9:26 a.m.
EMS 500blk Olympic Blvd W 9:35 a.m.
EMS 1300blk 26th St 9:37 a.m.
Automatic Alarm 1300blk Ocean Ave 9:40 a.m.
EMS 800blk Bay St 9:56 a.m.
EMS 2100blk Ocean Ave 10:38 a.m.
Traffic Collision With Injury Lincoln Blvd / Pier Ave 10:50 a.m.
Public Assist 1500blk 4th St 10:52 a.m.
EMS 900blk Euclid St 11:05 a.m.
EMS 300blk Olympic Dr 11:08 a.m.
EMS 2400blk Wilshire Blvd 11:46 a.m.
EMS 1300blk 15th St 1:12 p.m.
EMS 1300blk 3rd Street Prom 1:42 p.m.
EMS 1200blk 5th St 2:08 p.m.
Automatic Alarm 1400blk 4th St 2:29 p.m.
Smoke Investigation 800blk Arizona Ave 3:19 p.m.
EMS 1300blk 17th St 3:26 p.m.
EMS 1400blk 5th St 3:59 p.m.
EMS 1100blk 4th St 4:59 p.m.
EMS 1100blk Pico Blvd 5:22 p.m.
Automatic Alarm 600blk Pico Blvd 6:09 p.m.
Automatic Alarm 1600blk Lincoln Blvd 6:28 p.m.
EMS 2400blk Wilshire Blvd 7:06 p.m.
Traffic Collision With Injury 16th St / Wilshire Blvd 7:37 p.m.
EMS 2400blk Hill St 7:56 p.m.
EMS 1600blk Lincoln Blvd 8:28 p.m.
EMS 1300blk 20th St 9:10 p.m.
EMS 1700blk Ocean Ave 9:19 p.m.
EMS 500blk Wilshire Blvd 9:53 p.m.
EMS 1500blk 5th St 10:10 p.m.
EMS 700blk Ocean Ave 10:17 p.m.
Automatic Alarm 1200blk 6th St 10:18 p.m.
EMS 14th St / Wilshire Blvd 10:31 p.m.
EMS 1100blk 7th St 10:55 p.m.

Resolutions and optimism from the Santa Monica community going into the new year

RHIANNA ROGERS DIRECTOR, RAND CORPORATION'S CENTER TO ADVANCE RACIAL EQUITY POLICY

My resolution is part professional, and definitely personal. As a multiracial woman, I know how important it is to "level the playing field." To me, this means drawing together folks from different cultural perspectives to speak with and learn from one another – to develop cross-cultural understanding. I resolve to create more such spaces. I resolve to bring together diverse groups of individuals to deliberate timely topics, discuss social issues, promote cultural awareness among multiple viewpoints, and create actionable outcomes. My hope is that if we can work together to communicate effectively, we can find ways to make the world better for all.

KINGSLEY FIFE

I'm looking forward in 2022 to watching USC & UCLA play each other at the end of "March Madness" for the College Basketball Championship. It could happen because this year both teams are ranked & very good. It would also be great for our community!

JEFFREY MERRIHUE

Heroic Italian wishes Covid to go away immediately so our lovely seaside community can return to live, work and play in some semblance of a normal way. Happy New Year!

NANCY COLEMAN, CHAIR NOMA (NORTH OF MONTANA NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION)

My wish for 2022: That we all stay healthy and happy, meet our challenges successfully, and as a country, hold onto the principles of democracy. I hope that we can respect our differences and learn to listen, collaborate and work together. Santa Monica is so beautiful and we are fortunate to live here. The best to those who live, visit and work here in 2022.

EVAN MEYER

This year, I'm looking forward to continuing educating and creating communities that honor civility first, where we respect the notion that another's belief differs from our own, enriching and balancing each other through those very differences; where solutions-oriented approaches to problems are foundationally built on common ground; where learning and perspective are our primary motivations toward discourse and civic engagement; where we point fingers at ourselves to create the solutions needed for the world we want to live in.

MAYOR HIMMELRICH

My resolution for 2022 is to silence anger with love, ill-nature with kindness, greed with generosity, and lies with truth. Credit to Buddha.

DAILY POLICE LOG

SMDP STAFF CHOSE THE FOLLOWING FROM 216 CALLS ON DECEMBER 29

Traffic Collision - No Injuries City Prop Involved 17th St / Olympic Blvd 12:41 a.m.
Transport Prisoner 300blk Olympic Dr 1:34 a.m.
Trespassing 600blk Santa Monica Blvd 1:48 a.m.
Vandalism 1200blk Grant St 2:16 a.m.
Grand Theft 1300blk 20th St 3:45 a.m.
Petty Theft 4th St / Broadway 4:35 a.m.
Vandalism 1700blk Ocean Front Walk 4:44 a.m.
Auto Burglary 1500blk The Beach 5:36 a.m.
Trespassing 1900blk Ocean Ave 5:37 a.m.
Lewd Activity 1000blk Wilshire Blvd 5:48 a.m.
Hit And Run Misdemeanor Investigation Lincoln Blvd / Pico Blvd 6:04 a.m.
Vandalism 800blk Bay St 7:02 a.m.
Hit And Run Misdemeanor Investigation Lincoln Blvd / Pico Blvd 7:23 a.m.
Mark & Tag Abandoned Vehicle 2700blk 11th St 8:02 a.m.
Traffic Hazard Ocean Ave / Pico Blvd 8:04 a.m.
Battery 900blk 3rd St 8:52 a.m.
General Parking Problem 300blk Olympic Dr 9:04 a.m.
Vandalism 1500blk 6th St 9:07 a.m.
Transport Prisoner 300blk Olympic Dr 9:09 a.m.
Battery 500blk Broadway 9:22 a.m.
Exhibition Of Speed Ocean Ave / Arizona Ave 9:29 a.m.
Traffic Hazard 4th St / Olympic Blvd W 9:34 a.m.
Traffic Collision - No Injuries City Prop Involved Cloverfield Blvd / Kansas Ave 9:35 a.m.
Vandalism 2000blk Ocean Ave 9:41 a.m.
Mark & Tag Abandoned Vehicle 1000blk 16th St 9:47 a.m.
Vandalism 1400blk Berkeley St 10:25 a.m.
Petty Theft 1400blk Lincoln Blvd 10:30 a.m.
Grand Theft Auto 500blk Pico Blvd 10:49 a.m.
Traffic Collision With Injuries Lincoln Blvd / Pier Ave 10:50 a.m.
Traffic Control Request - Level 1 Lincoln Blvd / Pier Ave 10:52 a.m.
Battery 1500blk 2nd St 10:56 a.m.
Trespassing 400blk Broadway 11:14 a.m.
Trespassing 2500blk Main St 11:17 a.m.
Mark & Tag Abandoned Vehicle 1200blk 11th St 11:29 a.m.
Identity Theft 1100blk 22nd St 11:31 a.m.
Mark & Tag Abandoned Vehicle 1200blk 11th St 11:32 a.m.
Trespassing 2500blk Main St 11:37 a.m.
Burglary 700blk Ocean Ave 11:39 a.m.
Person With A Gun Euclid St / Wilshire Blvd 11:45 a.m.
Extortion Investigation 1400blk 23rd St 12:06 p.m.
Mark & Tag Abandoned Vehicle 1900blk Alta Ave 12:08 p.m.
Mark & Tag Abandoned Vehicle 1800blk Ashland Ave 12:08 p.m.
Fraud 1200blk 4th St 12:18 p.m.
Prowler 2000blk Main St 12:53 p.m.
Trespassing 1300blk 3rd Street Prom 1:21 p.m.
Battery 800blk Broadway 1:28 p.m.
Encampment 900blk 16th St 1:51 p.m.
Traffic Hazard 1600blk Lincoln Blvd 2:04 p.m.
General Parking Problem 11th St / Montana Ave 2:09 p.m.
Trespassing 200blk California Ave 2:15 p.m.
Child Molestation 500blk San Vicente Blvd 2:26 p.m.
Fraud 1700blk Sunset Ave 2:36 p.m.
Grand Theft Auto 1300blk Franklin St 2:43 p.m.
Traffic Hazard 23rd St / Pico Blvd 2:45 p.m.
Petty Theft 2200blk The Beach 2:45 p.m.
Loitering 4th St / Ocean Park Blvd 2:47 p.m.
Mark & Tag Abandoned Vehicle 100blk Wadsworth Ave 3:09 p.m.
Found Senile Person 7th St / Santa Monica Blvd 3:23 p.m.
Trespassing 2200blk 20th St 3:56 p.m.
Trespassing 700blk Santa Monica Blvd 3:59 p.m.
Vandalism 1200blk 4th St 4:51 p.m.
Traffic Collision - No Injuries Lincoln Blvd / California Ave 5:09 p.m.
Traffic Collision - No Injuries 28th St / Ocean Park Blvd 5:26 p.m.
Hit And Run Misdemeanor Investigation 500blk Santa Monica Blvd 5:59 p.m.
Traffic Hazard 2nd St / Santa Monica Blvd 6:27 p.m.
Petty Theft 200blk Broadway 6:28 p.m.
Prowler 2000blk Main St 6:33 p.m.
Petty Theft 2300blk 5th St 7:15 p.m.
Petty Theft 1400blk 3rd Street Prom 7:17 p.m.
Traffic Collision - No Injuries 16th St / Wilshire Blvd 7:36 p.m.
Assault W/Deadly Weapon 1600blk Lincoln Blvd 8:12 p.m.
Grand Theft 1800blk Wilshire Blvd 8:12 p.m.
Petty Theft 200blk Broadway 8:16 p.m.
Traffic Control Request - Level 1 2nd St / Arizona Ave 8:41 p.m.
Trespassing 2300blk 14th St 8:58 p.m.
Trespassing 600blk Pacific St 9:14 p.m.
Trespassing 100blk Washington Ave 9:56 p.m.
Death Investigation 1500blk 5th St 10:18 p.m.
Traffic Hazard 7th St / Montana Ave 10:58 p.m.

CRIME WATCH BY DAILY PRESS STAFF

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

ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 16 10:40 AT P.M.

SMPD officers observed a vehicle driving erratically and reckless. The Officers conducted a traffic stop and proceeded with a series of sobriety tests. Daniel Zana Rushakoff was ultimately arrested for Driving Under the Influence.

US children hospitalized with COVID in near-record numbers

MARTHA BELLISLE
Associated Press

The omicron-fueled surge that is sending COVID-19 cases rocketing in the U.S. is putting children in the hospital in close to record numbers, and experts lament that most of the youngsters are not vaccinated.

"It's just so heartbreaking," said Dr. Paul Offit, an infectious-disease expert at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. "It was hard enough last year, but now you know that you have a way to prevent all this."

During the week of Dec. 21-27, an average of 334 children 17 and under were admitted per day to hospitals with the coronavirus, a 58% increase from the week before, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The previous peak over the course of the pandemic was in early September, when child hospitalizations averaged 342 per day, the CDC said.

On a more hopeful note, children continue to represent a small percentage of those being hospitalized with COVID-19: An average of over 9,400 people of all ages were admitted per day during the same week in December. And many doctors say the youngsters coming in now seem less sick than those seen during the delta surge over the summer.

Two months after vaccinations were approved for 5- to 11-year-olds, about 14% are fully protected, CDC data shows. The rate is higher for 12- to 17-year-olds, at about 53%.

The issue is timing in many cases, said Dr. Albert Ko, professor of epidemiology and infectious diseases at the Yale School of Public Health. Younger children were not approved for the vaccine until November, and many are only now coming up on their second dose, he said.

Offit said none of the vaccine-eligible children receiving care at his hospital about a week ago had been vaccinated, even though two-thirds had underlying conditions that put them at risk — either chronic lung disease or, more commonly, obesity. Only one was under the vaccination age of 5.

The scenes are heart-wrenching.

"They're struggling to breathe, coughing, coughing, coughing," Offit said. "A handful were sent to the ICU to be sedated. We put the attachment down their throat that's attached to a ventilator, and the parents are crying."

None of the parents or siblings was vaccinated either, he said.

The next four to six weeks are going to be rough, he said: "This is a virus that thrives in the winter."

Overall, new cases in Americans of all ages have skyrocketed to the highest levels on record: an average of 300,000 per day, or 2 1/2 times the figure just two weeks ago. The highly contagious omicron accounted for 59% of new cases last week, according to the CDC.

Still, there are early indications that the variant causes milder illness than previous versions, and that the combination of the vaccine and the booster seems to protect people from its worst effects.

In California, 80 COVID-19-infected children were admitted to the hospital during the week of Dec. 20-26, compared with 50 in the last week of November, health officials said.

Seattle Children's also reported a bump in the number of children admitted over the past week. And while they are less seriously ill than those hospitalized over the summer, Dr. John McGuire cautioned that it is early in the omicron wave, and the full effect will become apparent over the next several weeks.

New York health authorities have also sounded the alarm.

The number of children admitted to the hospital per week in New York City with COVID-19 went from 22 to 109 between Dec. 5 and Dec. 24. Across all of New York state, it went from 70 to 184. Overall, almost 5,000 people in New York were in the hospital with COVID-19.

"A fourfold increase makes everybody jump with concern, but it's a small percentage," Ko said of the New York City figures. "Children have a low risk of being hospitalized, but those who do are unvaccinated."

Dr. Al Sacchetti, chief of emergency services at Our Lady of Lourdes Medical Center in Camden, New Jersey, likewise said vaccinated children are handling the omicron outbreak extremely well.

"It makes a big difference in how these kids tolerate the disease, particularly if the child's got some medical issues," he said.

COVID-19 deaths have proved rare among children over the course of the pandemic. As of last week, 721 in the U.S. had died of the disease, according to data reported to the American Academy of Pediatrics. The overall U.S. death toll is more than 800,000.

Almost 199,000 child COVID-19 cases were reported in the week of Dec. 16-23, the pediatrics group said. That was about 20% of the more than 950,000 total cases reported that week.

While many of these children will recover at home, they may have contact with others who are at much greater risk, said Dr. Jason Terk, a pediatrician in North Texas. He cared for a 10-year-old boy with COVID-19 who managed the disease well, but his father got sick and died, he said.

"The death of a parent is devastating, but the toxic stress for a young person in this situation is difficult to measure," he said.

Santa Monica Daily Press editor@smdp.com



Judge halts California earlier releases for repeat offenders

DON THOMPSON
Associated Press

A judge on Wednesday temporarily halted California's plans to speed the potential prison release dates for repeat offenders with serious and violent criminal histories under the state's "three strikes" law.

California corrections officials had filed emergency regulations to boost good conduct credits for second-strike inmates serving time for nonviolent offenses who are housed at minimum-security prisons and camps.

Their daily credits were to have increased from half off their sentences to two-thirds off their sentences starting with the new year Saturday.

Twenty-eight of California's 58 district attorneys moved to block the rule.

A Sacramento County judge imposed a temporary restraining order barring the change until a hearing next month.

The prosecutors argued that it would apply to those convicted of, among other things, domestic violence, human trafficking, animal cruelty and possession of weapons by inmates who have previous convictions for serious and violent felonies. California has a narrow definition of what constitutes a violent crime.

Prison officials said they are reviewing the judge's order and will proceed with other portions of the regulations that were not blocked.

"Many of these so-called nonviolent second-strikers have long and violent criminal histories — including repeat felony domestic violence convictions, sexual assaults and gun violence," said Sacramento County District Attorney Anne Marie Schubert.

She led the effort and is running for state attorney general on a law-and-order platform. The prosecutors did not oppose related changes in how good conduct credits are awarded to inmate firefighters.

"No one is contesting good conduct credits for fire camp work, but sneaking in another class of individuals with serious and violent criminal histories goes too far," Schubert said.

Corrections officials responded in a statement that their primary mission is public safety.

"As part of that mission we will continue to ensure incarcerated people who are making efforts towards their own rehabilitation by maintaining good behavior and participating in programming and rehabilitative opportunities are afforded the chance to earn credits for their efforts," they said.

LEADERSHIP

FROM PAGE 1

Leon-Vazquez takes over from outgoing SMMUSD President Jon Kean, who served as President in 2020 and 2021, and Vice President Laurie Lieberman, who has served as either president or vice president in seven of the past 10 years.

"It was a rough year — a very, very rough year, and it continues," Leon-Vazquez reflected in comments toward outgoing president Kean. "But, you know, for all intents and purposes, you led the charge. You and Laurie both led the charge. And I appreciate that, despite, like I said, the hard times we had to go through. But thank you. There's a lot of work that goes [on] behind [the scenes] in terms of getting ready for these meetings and putting everything in line for us to get ready for these meetings and all these other committee meetings. So, thank you both. I think you've done a great job and you're still part of the board, so we're all going to be working together. My dear, dear, thank you, sir, for all the hard work that you've done. And also, I hope you'll be able to sleep better after this."

Kean praised Lieberman.

"I want to thank you for your moral clarity [and] your high level of ethics," Kean said of his vice president. "You are — those who know you know that you are beyond reproach, which is why it's interesting that people who don't know you may make aspersions. But I just want to say, I can't imagine having a better partner for these two years."

He also addressed divisiveness in the Santa Monica school community, which he said has grown over the years he sat as president.

"The past two years have led to a division in our community, a lack of trust among segments. We know that it is a smaller group of our population, of our community, that harbors these feelings," Kean said. "I truly hope that as Laurie and I move into other chairs ... that hopefully the members of this community that support the direction of this district and support learning and opportunities for all students in this district will come together and once again champion the work of this district moving forward—as opposed to trying to burn it down, they will build it up and support the new leadership and support this board. And if me not holding this gavel is a step in the right direction, I am all for it."

DISTRICT STAFF

At the same meeting, the SMMUSD Board revealed it had given Superintendent Ben Drati a unanimous satisfactory evaluation during a closed-door hearing the previous week. The board voted to renew Drati's contract, which was set to expire in June 2022, for an additional three years.

Drati's new contract runs through June 30, 2025, and offers an annual base salary of $265,000, with a built-in minimum 3 percent annual raise, meaning Drati will make at least $272,950 for the 2023-24 school year and $281,138 for the 2024-25 school year, as long as he earns a satisfactory performance evaluation from the board each year.

Drati was first hired by the district in 2016.

CITY COUNCIL

City Council will not be selecting a new mayor and mayor pro tempore to serve in 2022, with current Mayor Sue Himmelrich and Mayor Pro Tem Kristin McCowan retaining their titles into the new year. In December 2020, both Himmelrich and McCowan broke with precedent and declined nominations for one-year terms.

Himmelrich said she would only accept a two-year term, citing her personal need for a longer term to justify scaling back her legal work and a community need for continuity in leadership during the pandemic.

emily@smdp.com

RECALL

FROM PAGE 1

unsuccessful, writing: "The deadline for the proponents to submit the recall petitions with signatures was Thursday, 12/23/21. There was no submission, so this recall attempt is done."

Spokespeople for the recall effort did not respond to requests for comment.

The effort to recall the three board members began with a petition filed in March 2021, which also targeted a fourth board member: Richard Tahvaldaran-Jesswein. That attempt was swiftly rejected by county officials due to a shortage of signatures; the second petition effort was launched in August.

"This recall is all about the Board's failure to focus on educating and protecting its students. No matter how many times Santa Monica parents and Malibu parents remind them to focus on what's best for the students, the board continues to ignore us," Malibu parent Beth Lucas said in a news release when the first petition was filed. "Now, Santa Monica and Malibu parents stand together to say, 'No more!'"

In that same press release, proponents alleged "serious malfeasance" on the part of the four board members. "Rather than focus on educating students, the board has focused on real estate purchases, construction projects, and fighting parents' lawsuits while failing to give parents, teachers, and school staff a meaningful seat at the table," the proponents alleged.

It was not clear why the recall effort failed, but as of Tuesday, Dec. 28, the group's Facebook page "Recall SMMUSD School Board" had been scrubbed from the site. Other social media pages had not been updated since the summer.

At the time the first attempt was filed, Lieberman linked the attempts to the style of political discourse popularized by former President Donald Trump.

"The recall proponents are legitimizing and creating a toxic local culture by employing mean-spirited and dishonest tactics that gained ground nationally during the Trump presidency," Lieberman said at the time. "Leaders of the recall are driven by the desire to punish existing Board members with whom they have personal, policy or political disagreements and to squeeze the School Board into changing decisions that have been made thoughtfully but with which certain people disagree."

emily@smdp.com



PUBLISHER
Ross Furukawa
ross@smdp.com

PARTNER
Todd James
todd@smdp.com

EDITOR IN CHIEF
Matthew Hall
matt@smdp.com

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
Charles Andrews,
Jack Neworth,
David Pisarra,
Matthew King,
Kimberly Jaffe.

CIRCULATION
Guadalupe Navarro
ross@smdp.com
Keith Wyatt
ross@smdp.com

AWARD WINNER

STAFF WRITERS
Clara Harter
clara@smdp.com

Emily Sawicki
emily@smdp.com

DIRECTOR OF ADVERTISING
Cindy Moreno
cindy@smdp.com

ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE
Dina Araniva
dina@smdp.com

PRODUCTION
Esteban Inchaustegui
production@smdp.com
Diana Corona
diana@smdp.com
Julio Davalos
julio@smdp.com

AWARD WINNER

Santa Monica Daily Press

1640 5th Street, Suite 218
Santa Monica, CA 90401
OFFICE (310) 458-PRESS (7737)
FAX (310) 576-9913

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WINNER

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Nursing home workers are urged to get boosters as cases soar

RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR
Associated Press

Federal health officials on Thursday pressed nursing home workers to get their booster shots amid a spike in COVID-19 cases among staffers and a concerning lag in booster vaccination for residents and staff.

The omicron variant "is lightning fast, and we cannot afford another COVID-19 surge in nursing homes," Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra said in a livestreamed appeal to the industry. "You know that. I know that. Higher numbers of COVID cases would likely once again have a devastating impact on our loved ones."

Nursing homes are a testing ground for President Joe Biden's assertion that the United States is much better prepared to handle a surging virus than it was last winter. Although residents are a tiny proportion of the population, they represent a disproportionate share of Americans who have died in the coronavirus pandemic. Earlier this year the advent of vaccines brought the virus under control in nursing homes and allowed them to reopen to visitors. But that return to normalcy could be in jeopardy as omicron pushes COVID-19 cases to new highs.

Cases among nursing home staffers jumped to 10,353 for the week ending Dec. 27, a rise of nearly 80% from the previous week, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Staff deaths increased to 58, tripling from the previous week. Among residents, who are more heavily vaccinated, cases went up slightly and the data showed no increase in deaths.

With medical experts advising that a booster shot is critical to defend against omicron, Becerra said only 57% of nursing home residents and 25% of staff and have gotten boosters. That's clearly behind a booster rate of nearly 66% among people age 65 or older and about 45% for the adult population, according to statistics from the White House.

"We've got to change that," Becerra said.

The administration is urging some 1,400 federally funded community health centers across the land to partner with local nursing homes in a renewed vaccination campaign.

Nursing home workers were supposed to be fully vaccinated by Jan. 4 under an earlier order issued by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, which required staff at health care facilities that receive government money to get their shots. That directive got ensnared in litigation and the Supreme Court has set a special session next week to hear arguments on it, along with the much broader Biden administration vaccine mandate for workers at larger companies of all kinds. Together the orders would affect about 100 million employees.

"Once again nursing homes are really the ground zero," said Harvard health policy professor David Grabowski, who has tracked the impact of the pandemic on residents and staff. "How well we do in combating this virus can often be discerned by just looking at the nursing homes."

Grabowski said the Biden administration is right to raise the alarm now. "We see this time and time again: When staff (infection) rates go up, resident rates go up," he explained. Staffers unwittingly bring in the virus from surrounding communities, a common trigger for nursing home outbreaks.

Vaccines enabled nursing homes to weather the delta variant surge earlier this year, and timely booster shots should go a long way toward blocking omicron. "The more vaccines and boosters we have, the more lives we are going to save over the course of the winter," Grabowski said.

But some states are already seeing trouble.

COVID-19 outbreaks in Mississippi nursing homes have almost doubled in the past week, and officials say that indicates the state is probably heading into another major surge of virus cases and hospitalizations.

There were 63 outbreaks in Mississippi nursing homes Monday, about twice the number reported last week, state epidemiologist Dr. Paul Byers wrote in a midweek memo to Mississippi hospitals and health care providers.

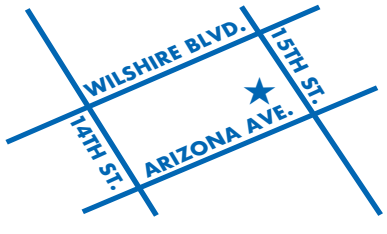
Along with other data, that points to "very rapid growth of COVID-19 infection and transmission...we have now entered our 5th wave of COVID-19 in the state," Byers wrote.

One of the major nursing home industry groups is backing the administration's push on boosters.

The American Health Care Association said in a statement it's asking members to "double down on their efforts to get as many residents and staff fully vaccinated and boosted as soon as possible."

Associated Press writer Leah Willingham in Jackson, Mississippi, contributed to this report.

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Santa Monica Daily Press editor@smdp.com

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DROUGHT

FROM PAGE 1

Monica Water Resources Manager Sunny Wang.

"Two big rain events doesn't mean we're out of the woods. You know, if you look at where we are—between a wet year and a severe dry year, with this rain event, we're actually right in the middle right now," Wang said in a recent interview with the Daily Press. "So, the next two months are actually very critical. If it continues to rain like this, then we'll be in good shape. But if it doesn't, [if] it just stops, then we might start going down to that drought position again. So, we're kind of right in the middle right now.

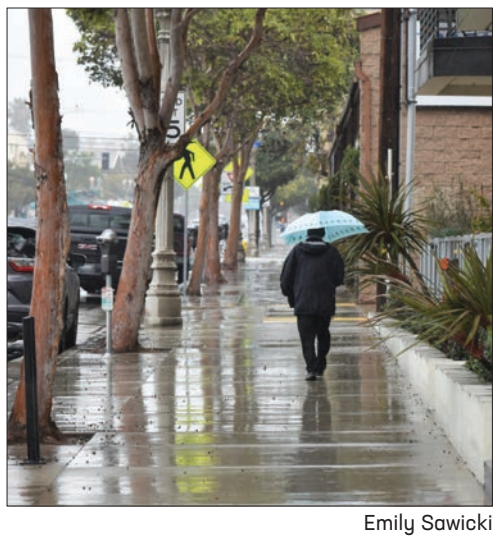
"It's nothing to get excited about," Wang continued. "It's great. We want rain, but the drought is definitely not over yet."

Wang and Santa Monica sustainability analyst Tom Fleming spoke to the SMDP to describe how Santa Monica's water is sourced, how drought and recent rain affect the supply, and programs in place to help residents and businesses cut back on use.

While approximately 29 percent of Santa Monica's water is imported from the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, which is sourced from the State Water Project or the Colorado River, another 50 percent comes from local groundwater sources. That means that even while the Sierra snowpack and reservoirs around the state swell, the city's primary water source is much slower to show the effects of a single rain event.

According to Wang, the groundwater supply is measured in five- to 10-year cycles, wherein local agencies evaluate the sustainability of the amount of groundwater sourced from particular wells. The good news is that the city's current draw is considered sustainable.

"Water being recharged in the basin doesn't happen overnight; it happens over decades," Wang described. "Groundwater movement could be anywhere from months to years. So, we have to look at it in terms of a longer period for groundwater, but … we are within our sustainable yield limits in our groundwater production."



Emily Sawicki

WATER: While it may feel like the city got a lot of water recently, it won't make a real difference to the ongoing drought.

As for the snowpack, Wang said that climate change has diminished how reliable the snowpack can be as a measure of future water supply; essentially, snow that's measured in the winter can melt and evaporate away to nothing before it ever makes it into an aquifer.

Wang recalled a briefing the California Department of Water Resources provided to Southern California water agencies around the middle of 2021. According to the agency, last winter's snowpack had virtually disappeared when the spring thaw came.

"When they went out in April this year to survey the snowpack, they had about 70 percent of normal. They were like, 'Oh, that's not too bad, 70 percent of normal and summer's coming.' But when they went back in May, I want to say it went down to like 10 [or] 15 percent of normal," Wang recalled. "Because of how dry and hot [it was] and how quickly it heated up over that one-month period, the ground was so dry that when the snow melted, instead of making it to … rivers and waterways that ultimately end up in our reservoirs, it all just seeped into the ground and evaporated. So, all that snowpack was not captured into our reservoirs. It melted."

U.S. Drought Monitor maps that show data captured through Dec. 28 showed that most of L.A. County had moved from D3 "extreme drought" to the slightly-less-grim D2 "severe drought" conditions, proof that the drought was easing across the state; however, there were no regions of California not in drought.

"Even with the rains, using the science and the U.S. Drought monitor's scale, the entire state is still in some form of drought," Fleming pointed out.

What does that mean for Santa Monica's residents and business owners going into 2022?

According to Wang, water rates themselves will not increase; however, the Metropolitan Water District may decrease the allotment of water it sells to Santa Monica at the standard "Tier 1" price. Instead of raising the price of water, the suppliers reduce the standard amount allocated to customers (meaning municipalities), and any water purchased above the allocation is sold at a higher, "Tier 2" price.

Wang contrasted the payment model to that of a gas station, which raises prices based on supply and demand. Water prices cannot go up even when supply is down, Wang described, but as resources diminish, less becomes available and "Tier 1" allocations diminish. Wang also pointed out that, due to Prop 218, which passed in 1996, water is sold essentially at-cost, with no profits coming in from the sale.

Fleming detailed the many City resources available to residents who wish to cut back on household water use, including incentives to switch to more water efficient appliances and rain barrel rebates.

"We do provide cash for grass. This is the main program for reducing outdoor water use, our landscape rebate programs. Grass is a highly water intensive plant and we encourage taking that out and replacing it with climate-appropriate drought tolerant plants," Fleming said. Many residents, according to Fleming, were under the impression that the program ceased when the MWD program lost its funding—not so.

The programs have proven to be effective so far. Fleming pointed to a 20 percent overall reduction in water use citywide since goals were set in 2013.

"We're looking to keep continuing to increase that in the long term," Wang said. "Because conservation is not something that happens overnight. It's both, you know, installing more water efficient fixtures as well as changes in brain behavior from the end user, so that takes time to mature."

emily@smdp.com

RAIN

FROM PAGE 1

mudslide.

"The SMFD has been busy due to the rain event over Southern California," Nulty wrote in an email on Thursday morning. "This morning we responded to several reported mud slides on Palisades Beach Road from the Bluffs, all of them were minor but required clean up and did impact traffic. No reported injuries as a result."

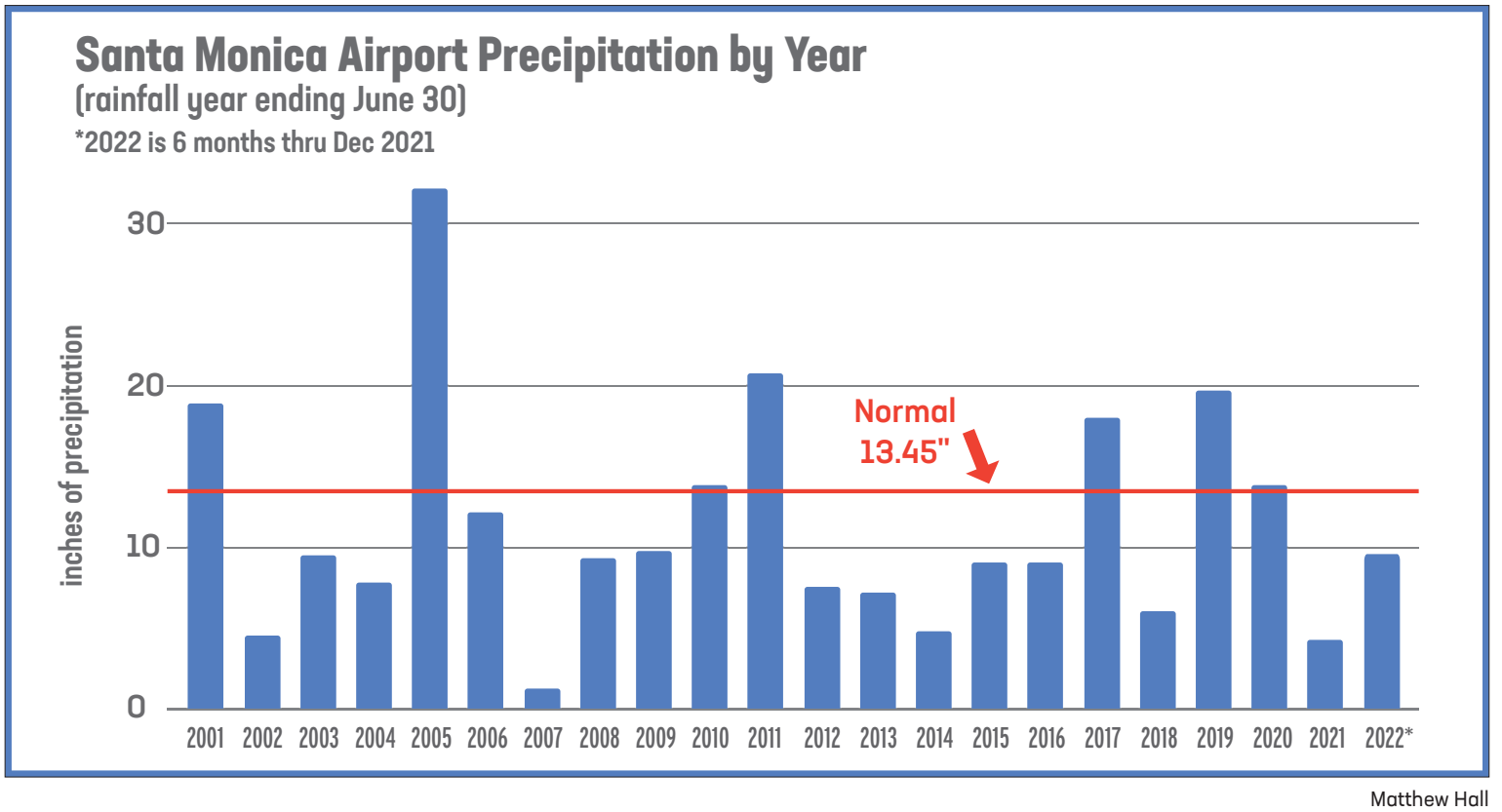
Nulty also reported many of the service calls were false fire alarms or electrical shorts, all due to the rain, but none of them causing any injuries.

Overnight from Wednesday into Thursday, SMFD responded to an urban search and rescue call, or USAR, which also did not result in any injuries.

"Last night we responded to a report of a 'Building Collapse' which ended up being a partial ceiling collapse as a result of an accumulation of rain water on [the] roof top," Nulty wrote. "Firefighters assisted the occupant with clean up and water evacuation. No injuries reported."

The call was reported at the 1000 Block of 20th Street around 10:30 p.m. Wednesday.

The National Weather Service reported two-day rainfall totals of about 3.7 inches at Santa Monica Airport; Topanga Canyon received 5.38 inches of rain in the same span, with the highest rainfall totals recorded in Los Angeles County being in the Angeles National Forest east of LA, where more than 7 inches of rain fell at Cogswell Dam.



Matthew Hall

RAIN: A week of steady rain took its toll on local roads with sections of PCH experiencing localized flooding or mudslides.

The heavy rainfall caused dangerous conditions around Southern California, including necessitating the rescue of 22 campers at Leo Carrillo in Malibu, where they were stranded due to rising creek water in the early morning hours of Thursday. The City of Malibu reported all 22 people were evacuated to safety thanks to the combined efforts of the Ventura and LA County fire departments, together with LA County Lifeguards and California Highway Patrol.

The Grapevine was closed over the Tejon Pass for part of Thursday, but all roads reopened later in the day.

On Thursday afternoon, the NWS published a "tidbit" saying the official NWS observation site in downtown Los Angeles would have had its third wettest month of December on record by the end of the day. The wettest was in 1889 with 15.80 inches and the second was in 2010 when 10.23 inches was recorded.

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By TONY COCHRAN



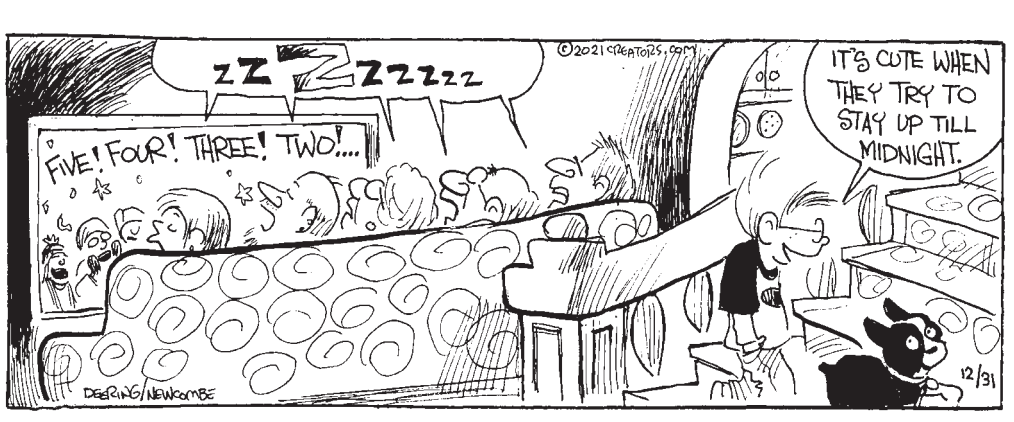
Dogs of C-Kennel

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Zack Hill

By JOHN DEERING & JOHN NEWCOMBE



Heathcliff

By PETER GALLAGHER



Strange Brew

By JOHN DEERING





SURF FORECASTS

WATER TEMP: 57.4°

FRIDAY - **POOR** - SURF: 2-3ft Thigh to waist high occ. 4 ft
Shorter period WNW swell mix builds in the afternoon. Low confidence on size and wind with storm close to the coast, but most likely winds lightest out of the N early shifting more W-WNW. Stay tuned.

SATURDAY - **POOR TO FAIR** - SURF: 2-3ft+ Waist to stomach high
Deep AM tide. Short period NW swell eases through the AM as new SW fills in. Winds look lighter and more variable, with potential offshores in the AM. Stay tuned.

WEATHER

Friday: Sunny, with a high near 57. North northwest wind 5 to 10 mph.
Friday Night: Mostly clear, with a low around 42. North northeast wind 10 to 15 mph.
Saturday: Sunny, with a high near 56. Northeast wind around 5 mph.

Date	Day	Time (LST/LDT)	Predicted (ft)	High/Low
2021/12/31	Fri	12:05 AM	1.79	L
2021/12/31	Fri	06:37 AM	6.66	H
2021/12/31	Fri	1:56 PM	-1.31	L
2021/12/31	Fri	8:24 PM	3.72	H
2022/01/01	Sat	12:52 AM	2.00	L
2022/01/01	Sat	07:20 AM	7.00	H
2022/01/01	Sat	2:43 PM	-1.80	L
2022/01/01	Sat	9:13 PM	3.85	H
2022/01/02	Sun	01:42 AM	2.01	L
2022/01/02	Sun	08:06 AM	7.16	H
2022/01/02	Sun	3:29 PM	-1.97	L
2022/01/02	Sun	10:00 PM	3.93	H
2022/01/03	Mon	02:32 AM	2.00	L
2022/01/03	Mon	08:52 AM	7.10	H
2022/01/03	Mon	4:15 PM	-1.90	L
2022/01/03	Mon	10:48 PM	3.98	H
2022/01/04	Tue	03:24 AM	2.02	L
2022/01/04	Tue	09:39 AM	6.79	H
2022/01/04	Tue	5:01 PM	-1.61	L
2022/01/04	Tue	11:37 PM	4.03	H
2022/01/05	Wed	04:19 AM	2.08	L

DAILY LOTTERY

POWERBALL calottery
Draw Date: 12/29
2 6 9 33 39
Power#: 11
Jackpot: 483 M

MEGA MILLIONS calottery
Draw Date: 12/28
3 5 8 31 38
Mega#: 4
Jackpot: 221 M

SuperLotto PLUS calottery
Draw Date: 12/29
1 29 30 43 47
Mega#: 3
Jackpot: 11 M

Fantasy 5 calottery
Draw Date: 12/29
9 12 18 34 39

Daily 3 calottery
Draw Date: 12/29
EVENING: 6 5 6

Draw Date: 12/29
MIDDAY: 3 3 5

Daily Derby calottery
Draw Date: 12/29
1st: 11 - Money Bags
2nd: 10 - Solid Gold
3rd: 05 - California Classic
Race Time: 1:46.72

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TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (DECEMBER 31)

You'll express what others need to hear and lead a group into clarity and success. The spirit of receptivity also visits your personal life. Your connections grow stronger, your relationships more vibrant as you make the sort of bold choices that are only possible between people who truly trust one another. Aries and Libra adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 8, 14, 33, 40 and 15.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). To maneuver well, make sure you're in the same reality as what you're trying to influence. Once you accept the way things are, you have power in the situation. Drop all resistance to what is.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). It will be as easy to make a big change as it is to make a small one. So, as long as you are envisioning a change, go for one that will make a huge difference in your life.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Most of what needs organizing is emotional, but it can be handled through the physical moving of objects. You process feelings as you tidy up and arrange your possessions in a pleasing manner.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). You'll look at things like a true and inclusive optimist. That means the glass is neither half full, nor is it half empty. It's all the way filled and brimming over. It's just that some of the content is water and some of it is air.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). One moment you're tuned in to the people around you and present to the conversation and work at hand; the next you are focused on experiencing your inner world. Alternating between these two forms of mindfulness will serve you well.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). One way to keep someone's attention is to dangle a promise in the air, then yank it back. It's the old carrot-on-a-string trick, not for the faint of heart, though it keeps things interesting.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). You've been so busy watching the entertainment around you that you forgot to get up and show the world what you can do. Take your turn in the spotlight.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). You'll find creative ways to use what you have. You'll tinker and fix things and assemble your resources in such a way that the result is greater than the sum of its parts.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Plan for future good times. The fun you anticipate will bring your endorphins up almost as much as the fun you're actually having. You love to be surprised by humor and camaraderie.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Life is not a dress rehearsal. You're fully aware that the show will go on regardless of the level of energy of your performance, and this is why you give it your all.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Removing yourself from a scene will help you see it for what it is. Tonight, someone you know needs to hear words of love. Lead with compassion.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). To learn from your mistakes, you have to be willing to make them in the first place. Your habit of being hard on yourself after the fact isn't helping. Ease up. It's okay not to get it right every time.

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

S	U	M	A	C	■	A	F	A	R	■	S	Q	M	I
A	B	A	S	H	■	I	O	T	A	■	H	U	E	D
L	O	C	K	E	R	R	O	O	M	■	E	I	R	E
T	A	R	■	R	E	E	L	■	A	M	A	Z	E	D
S	T	O	R	I	E	D	■	O	D	O	R	S	■	■
■	■	■	U	S	S	■	S	N	A	P	S	H	O	T
C	L	O	T	H	E	S	L	I	N	E	■	O	D	E
R	U	N	S	■	■	O	O	O	■	■	T	W	I	X
A	B	C	■	L	I	N	E	N	C	L	O	S	E	T
M	E	E	T	I	N	G	S	■	Z	I	P	■	■	■
■	■	A	M	E	S	S	■	C	A	S	S	A	T	T
U	N	W	I	S	E	■	D	A	R	T	■	C	A	Y
C	O	E	N	■	C	R	U	I	S	E	S	H	I	P
L	I	E	U	■	T	H	O	R	■	N	O	O	N	E
A	R	K	S	■	S	O	S	O	■	S	P	O	T	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	8	3	7	4	6	2	9
7	9	4	8	2	6	5	1	3
2	3	6	1	9	5	4	7	8
3	5	7	9	4	2	1	8	6
6	2	1	7	3	8	9	5	4
8	4	9	6	5	1	2	3	7
1	7	3	2	6	9	8	4	5
9	8	5	4	1	7	3	6	2
4	6	2	5	8	3	7	9	1

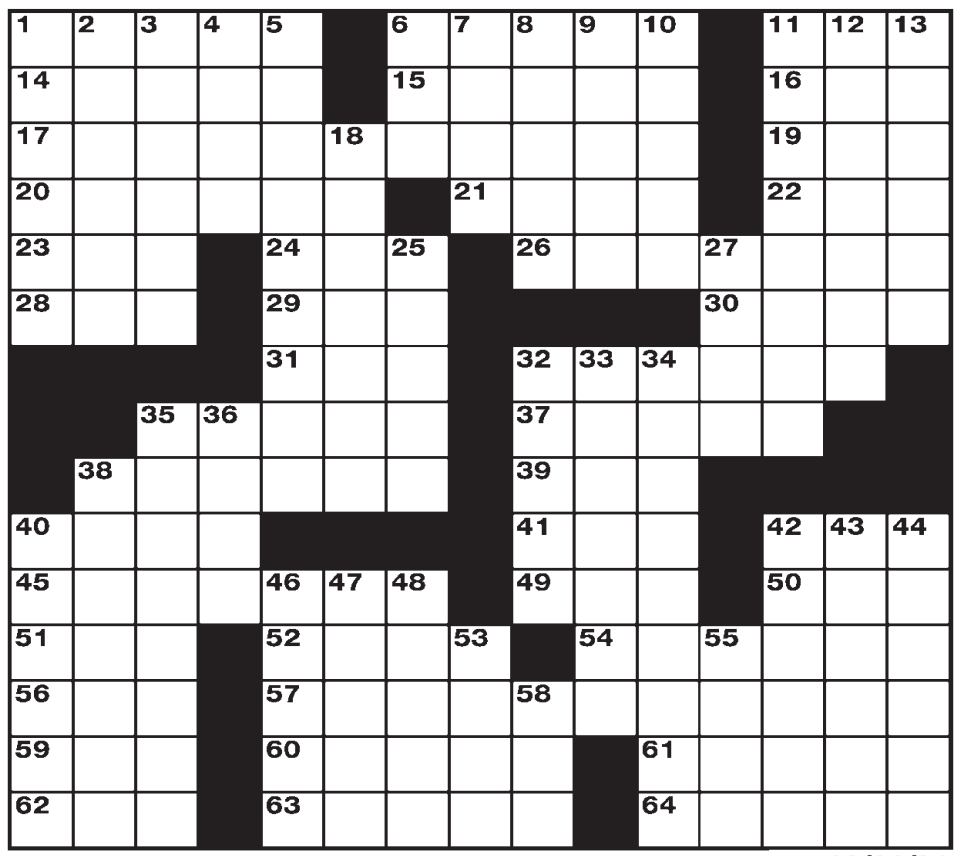
	9			4				3
1	5		2				7	
4				6	8	9		
5			3					8
		4		9		2		
3					2			4
		1	4	7				9
	2				3		4	1
8				2			6	

Newsday Crossword

EXPERIENCE COUNTS by S.N.
Edited by Stanley Newman
www.stanxwords.com

ACROSS
1 Big dipper
6 *"¿__ español?"*
11 Posture supporters
14 Ancient war story
15 It's near Mt. Holyoke
16 Fulfilled
17 Start of a quote
19 Not-so-great bond rating
20 Access granted
21 Glut
22 Key for a fast exit
23 Seller of gifts for troops
24 Email subject-line letters
26 Part 2 of quote
28 Mail ctrs.
29 Supporter's shout
30 Hardly vivid
31 Shakers founder
32 Flinty-eyed
35 With 37 Across, source of quote
37 See 35 Across
38 Bonus number
39 Go on to say
40 Individual effort
41 Curtain holder
42 ID since 1936
45 Part 3 of quote
49 What Earth is called in "Joy to the World"
50 Author who inspired Verne
51 Metric prefix
52 "Joy to the World," for one
54 Drama student's study
56 Container, in product names
57 End of quote
59 Let ripen
60 Short-article news website
61 Stop more squeaks
62 Golden: Fr.
63 Dost witness
64 Big name in blush

DOWN
1 Create a queue
2 King in *The Tempest*
3 Ancestors of photocopies
4 Fearful feline portrayer
5 Soprano player
6 Warm welcome
7 Invoice nos.
8 Religion originated in Iran
9 Exams for some srs.
10 In __ (agitated)
11 Brewpub product
12 Horrid
13 Hair that sounds like a hoard
18 What's tomorrow
25 Agribusiness biggie
27 Commentary section
32 Evidence of mowing
33 Most impressive, as a profit
34 What assisted living provides
35 Eyewitness
36 Dilapidated vessel
38 Way, way back
40 YouTube "move on" button
42 Flow controller
43 Meryl's second Oscar role
44 Exasperate
46 Early potato farmers
47 Have __ to grind
48 Spirit in a bottle
53 Certain Wall St. takeovers
55 Isn't proud of
58 Since, on some signs



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Binary Puzzle

Each cell should contain a zero or a one. No more than two similar numbers below or next to each other are allowed. Each row and each column is unique and contains as many zeros as ones.

						I					O
					O		I		O	O	
									O		
						O					
											I
		O			I					O	
							O	O			I
	I		I		O						
					O			I			O
O				I						I	
			I	I				O			O
O	I		I			O		O		I	I



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FIND THE WORDS

This is a theme puzzle with the subject stated below. Find the listed words in the grid. (They may run in any direction but always in a straight line. Some letters are used more than once.) Ring each word as you find it and when you have completed the puzzle, there will be 16 letters left over. They spell out the alternative theme of the puzzle.

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Escape to the country

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

Abide
Arrival
Avoca
Bega
Bena
Borders
Bridge
Cafe
Cairns
Caravan parks
Construction
Crest
Dubbo
Eden
Fuel
Highett
Kiata
Kynuna
Lane
Late
Lima
Lost
Maps
Mildura
New South Wales
Nhill
Nowra
Nyah
Omeo
Passenger
Pira
Radio
Return
Scania
Sleep
Slow
Snack
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Notices

NOTICE OF PETITION TO ADMINISTER ESTATE OF: Robert L. Dent, AKA The Dent Living Trust of 2016 CASE NUMBER: 21STPB10428 To all heirs, beneficiaries, creditors, contingent creditors, and persons who may otherwise be interested in the will or estate, or both of Robert L Dent and Robert Lewis Dent. A Petition for Probate has been filed by Christopher R Dent in the Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles-Stanley Mosk Courthouse. The Petition for Probate requests Christopher R Dent be appointed as personal representative to administer the estate of the decedent. The petition requests the decedent's will and codicils, if any, be admitted to probate. The will and codicils are available for examination in the file kept by the court. The petition requests authority to administer the estate under the Independent Administration of Estates Act. (This authority will allow the personal representative to take many actions without obtaining court approval. Before taking certain very important actions, however, the personal representative will be required to give notice to interested persons unless they have waived notice or consented to the proposed action.) The independent administration authority will be granted unless an interested person files an objection to the petition and shows good cause why the court should not grant the authority. A hearing on the petition will be held in this court as follows: Date: January 5, 2022 Time: 8:30 a.m Dept. 67 Room - Address of Court: 111 N. Hill St Los Angeles, CA 90012 If you object to the granting of the petition, you should appear at the hearing and state your objections or file written objections with the court before the hearing. Your appearance may be in person or by your attorney. If you are a creditor or a contingent creditor of the decedent, you must file your claim with the court and mail a copy to the personal representative appointed by the court within the later of either (1) four months from the date of first issuance of letters to a general personal representative, as defined in section 58(b) of the California Probate Code, or (2) 60 days from the date of mailing or personal delivery to you of a notice under section 9052 of the California Probate Code. Other California statutes and legal authority may affect your rights as a creditor. You may want to consult with an attorney knowledgeable in California law. You may examine the file kept by the court. If you are a person interested in the estate, you may file with the court a Request for Special Notice (form DE-154) of the filing of an inventory and appraisal of estate assets or of any petition or account as provided in Probate Code section 1250. A Request for Special Notice form is available from the court clerk. Attorney or Party without Attorney: Christopher R Dent, In Pro Per 2009 18th St Santa Monica, CA Telephone (818) 859-3158 Published In The Santa Monica Daily Press: 12/06/21, 12/13/21, 12/20/21

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