



Magical memories begin for young children when they start baking holiday recipes with other family members.

Sharing Family Holiday Recipes

Each December, I invite our readers to share their favorite holiday recipes. It seems that many of us have fond memories of making cookies or a special dish with a family member when we were young. When we grow up, we want to make the recipe the exact same way as our family member did. It seems to bring back memories that we want to relive during the holiday season.

This month, Evelyn Rudie sent a

Feechen's Sugar Cookies

By Evelyn Rudie

I used to help my godmother make these cookies when I was a child. She brought the recipe from Germany where she learned it from her mum. Then, I taught it to my husband, and now we make them every holiday season, and for not-holidays, too.

You can serve 8 people. You can make 12 to 24 cookies, depending on size of cookie cutter. It takes 45 minutes to bake the cookies.

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sugar cookie recipe that she used to make with her godmother. Chef Pierre Sauvaget sent in his recipe for Choucroute. Our columnist Stacy McClendon sent in two recipes her friends make that she especially enjoys. I selected a Chicken Cacciatore recipe that is very easy to make. They are printed throughout this issue. Enjoy preparing your delicious holiday meals this year.

—D.M.



Evelyn Rudie with her godmother, Fee Malten, having tea and sugar cookies on Fee's 93rd birthday in Berlin.

Give to Local Nonprofit Charities This Month

By Gigi Appelbaum-Schwartz

This holiday season, when themes of gift-giving and community connection are so prevalent, supporting nonprofit charities is a wonderful way to give back to your community and to contribute to the compassion and joy that make up the holiday spirit. Here are a few nonprofits that would greatly benefit from donations:

- **Samson's Sanctuary** is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that rescues dogs from high-kill shelters and from the meat trade in South Korea. Samson's believes that every animal deserves a loving home, and they work hard

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This instructor is showing how to decorate frosted holiday cookies.

Take a class at the Gourmandise School of Sweets & Savories at Santa Monica Place to learn to create your own family holiday favorites.

Photo by Tanya Gilbert

Easy Entertaining Ideas



You can have festive table settings by using colorful paper and plastic goods that are available in many big box or party stores.

By Maureen Molé

As the worst of the pandemic is over and the world faces global unrest, we see the need – more than ever – to connect with people. So as the holidays arrive, whether it's Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, or Las Posadas, start to plan your party with family and friends.

Top Ten Holiday Party Tips for Easy Entertaining

1. Host a Holiday Dessert Party. It's easy when you serve all finger-food desserts – cookies, candy canes, peppermint bark, and bite-size cake – no utensils needed. The bar might include a mulled cider or holiday punch. Set everything out in advance and enjoy.
2. At your holiday dinner, place a tree ornament at each person's place setting. Put their names on it and they'll really feel special.
3. At the table, a good conversa-

tion starter is, "What is your favorite holiday memory?"

4. Do you find your guests are always gathering in only the kitchen? Dim the kitchen lights and set up the bar in one room and the food in another room. This encourages your guests to mingle in rooms other than the kitchen.

5. Invite your friends for wine and

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Do You Recognize This Neighborhood Celebrity?

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Preserve Your Brain Health

Brain-Boosting Fitness Strategies: An Expert Guide



By Ryan Glatt, MS, CPT, NBC-HWC, and



Shannel Kassis Elhelou, PsyD

• **Reaching Our Goals for the New Year** - As the new year approaches, many of us find ourselves reflecting on the past and contemplating the future. During this time, well-intentioned individuals often establish New Year's resolutions centered on health goals. However, many resolutions

are often abandoned within the first few weeks or months of the year.

There are several reasons why people struggle to maintain their New Year's resolutions. One common reason is setting unrealistic goals or trying to make drastic changes too quickly. It is important to set achievable and measurable goals, and to break down larger goals into smaller, attainable goals. Likewise, it is essential to celebrate when reaching these milestones, no matter how small, to reinforce positive behavior and the belief in one's ability to change.

For those looking to improve their health, engaging in group activities or sharing fitness goals

with friends and family creates a supportive environment that enhances motivation and accountability. In addition, loved ones can support health goals by offering encouragement and avoiding situations that might lead to unhealthy choices. Having support boosts motivation, ensures accountability, and provides emotional reinforcement, facilitating the establishment of lasting lifestyle changes.

• **Ten Fitness Tips for Healthy Aging** - As we age, maintaining fitness routines becomes increasingly important. Cognitive decline is a natural aspect of aging, but there are ways to slow the decline, such as regular exercise.

Physical activity benefits our

bodies and brain health, enhancing memory, focus, and cognitive function. However, what is common knowledge is not always common practice. To help implement an exercise routine that supports cognitive health, here are ten essential tips for both body and brain:

- 1) Select activities you genuinely enjoy. Whether walking, swimming, dancing, or tai chi, choose exercises that bring joy, increasing adherence.
- 2) Consistency is key. Establish a weekly exercise routine, scheduling specific days and times.
- 3) Seek social support to enjoy exercise more. Consider joining fitness classes for motivation, or exercising with a partner.
- 4) Start slowly, especially if you are new to exercising. Gradually increase intensity and duration to prevent injuries and maintain motivation.
- 5) Variety is essential. Different exercises keep it interesting and challenge your brain. Aim to incorporate aerobics, strengthening, and coordination exercises.

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Santa Monica Rotarians Support Our Community Through Hands-On Service Programs

By Sharon Gavin

As people of action, Rotarians from the Rotary Club of Santa Monica have been busy these past few months with hands-on service programs to support our community.

In August, Rotarians teamed up with the Westside Food Bank to sort donated food. The Westside Food Bank is an independent non-profit corporation that provides food to more than 70 local agencies, including food pantries, shelters, and transitional living sites.

We partnered with the American



Red Cross and the Santa Monica Family YMCA in September to donate blood to those in need. Also in September, Rotarians gathered together to assemble backpacks to

benefit the students who participate in School on Wheels. School on Wheels is a non-profit dedicated to helping children from K-12 who do not have permanent housing.

Our Club partnered with Upward Bound House (UBH) in October to pack 1,500 breakfast Grab 'N' Go bags to benefit the students living at that facility. High school members of our local Santa Monica Rotaract chapter joined us as well. UBH is a non-profit organization based in Santa Monica whose mission is to eliminate homelessness among families with children in the community by providing housing, supportive services, and advocacy.

In early November, we continued our Meals on Wheels West Rotary route and delivered meals to homebound individuals. Later that month, we helped serve meals at the police station to officers who are working on Thanksgiving.

This month, we will continue our annual tradition of hosting a toy drive, followed by the wrapping and distributing of gifts to families in need. This activity

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Making backpacks for students in School on Wheels are from left, Kathy and daughter Alanna Shepard, Judy Neveau, Tanya Gilbert, Andrea Gressinger, and Sharon Gavin.



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- Mike Cvejich, Dee Menzies, Aaron Leland, Bill Bubar, RoseMary Regalbuto, JR Dzubak, Bob Sullivan, Judi Barker, Herb Roney, Gita Runkle, Julie Thomas, Frank Lavac, Vicky Curtis, Joyce Margolin, Gretchen Clore, Monika White, Carl McKinzie, Tammy Andrews, Scott Ferguson, Zachary Perez, Carole Mullaney, Monty McCormick, Chuck Hustung, Bill Kleinheidt, Susan Annett, Glenn Ricard, Taylor Swift, and Mike Gitchell.**

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424-581-6005

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www.thesantamonicastar.com
Email: smstarewspaper@gmail.com

Editor and Publisher:

Diane Margolin

Editorial Assistants:

Miceala Shocklee, Pamela Lawrence

Advertising Sales: Diane Margolin

Ad Graphics: Dynamic Graphic

Artwork: Joe Analco

Contributing Writers:

Dr. Frank Lavac, Qin Stubis, Michael Margolin, Lisa Alexander, Eduardo Lowe, Gigi Appelbaum-Schwartz, Richard Lombardi, Pat Webber, Susan Barry, Stacy McClendon, and Cheryl Thode.

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The Real Estate Advisor

The Santa Monica Building Boom Building Up



By Richard Lombari

In Santa Monica, it seems every month another fence goes up; heavy machinery moves in to begin demolishing an existing structure, and construction of yet another multifamily building commences.

Don't expect the sudden burst of multifamily construction to slow anytime soon. Thanks to Santa Monica's compliance failure, the next batch of projects is in the works.

The story begins in 1969, when California required via the Housing Element Law, that every ten years local governments submit a plan to meet the housing needs of everyone in the community. Even with this plan in place, and despite builder interest in developing, many local governments did not meet their housing growth plans.

In 1982, California enacted the California Housing Accountability Act. This law was enacted to address the lack of housing by limiting local governments from restricting housing development. In 2017, an amendment was passed modifying the law to allow

judges to award attorney fees and fine cities in violation of the law.

Santa Monica's Housing Element was out of compliance in 2022 with the Housing Accountability Act from February until October. This noncompliance resulted in the state suspending the city's ability to reject applications for housing developments as long as they included at least 20% affordable units or 100% moderate units under a policy referred to as "builder's remedy."

During this nine month window, developers submitted plans under the "builder's remedy," proposing 16 projects representing over 4,000 units allowing them to bypass the city's authorization process.

It appears that the state's intent of increasing housing density and increased affordable housing will be realized with thousands of units in buildings that may reach as high as 15 stories.

The Santa Monica building boom is indeed building up.

Richard Lombari has been in real estate sales for over three decades. Richard is an author, speaker, coach, and trainer. To learn more about Richard visit <https://lombariestatewealthadvisors.com/about>, email Richard@TheLombariGroup.com, or call 310-903-6509.

Local Filmmaker Receives Top Awards at Mystic Film Festival

Nicholas Sennott, a local resident, was named Best Emerging Director at the 2023 Mystic Film Festival for his debut film, *The No Problem Zone*, a short independent film starring Eric Roberts.

Nicholas was also presented the Grand Jury Prize for Narrative Short, the festival's highest award for short films.

Nicholas has also been recognized at the Austin Film Festival and the Richmond Film Festival.

He is currently working on a full-length film that he expects to be filming next year.



Here's a photo of director Nicholas Sennott, center, with producers Brad Simanski, left, and Chris Zerwas, right.



From Me to You...



By Diane Margolin

Although shopping online is very easy, give some thought to the merchants in your neighborhood.

The Montana Avenue merchants have met monthly to discuss how to make their stores and streets festive and inviting. They also serve refreshments and often have holiday music and special sales. They are looking forward to meeting their neighbors who are out doing their shopping.

It is always rewarding to donate your time to one of our local charities. Meals on Wheels West can use volunteers to deliver meals or to check on homebound clients to

see how they are doing, and to help with delivering meals.

Chris Baca said that during Thanksgiving his volunteers delivered almost 400 turkey dinners with pies to their clients. Contact Chris at Meals on Wheels West at 310-394-5133 for more information on how to help.

At holiday times we miss many friends who are no longer with us, even more than usual. Their faces are in our thoughts. A warm addition to the tapestry of my life were Gary Bernard, Vic Gilbert, Jean McNeil Wyner, Sharon Johnson, Gwen and Lew Kirk, and Florence Kinney. And, to those who have moved away, Joan Sitnick, Renee Reid, Becky Mejia, Isabelle and Cyril Viguier, you are missed.

Best wishes for a very happy and healthy new year to come.



Several artists received cash prizes. Three students from Samohi entered and Emmaline Thorpe won first prize. Jeff Jarow coordinated the event.

California Sister Cities' Young Artists Expo Displaying Over 100 Pieces of Art From Finalists in Kiosk on Third Street Promenade and Arizona

This year's artwork has been on the kiosk since the 4th of July.

Students from all over and California have visited the kiosk with their families to see the entries.

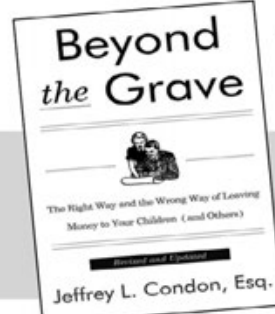
Next year, the art will be exhibited in a museum in Harajuku, Tokyo and the Fuji Five Lakes area operated by Akademeia 21st Century.

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Reflections From The East

Fond Memories of a White Christmas



By Qin Sun Stubis
I lived on the north shore of Long Island for some 20 years before my family moved down to

the Washington Metro area. For a girl from Shanghai, it was the northernmost place I had ever lived, cold enough to generate large whiteout snowstorms. And yet, I can only remember a couple of times when snow fell right on Christmas.

Winter weather often behaved like an indulgent child and a mystery man combined. Just as we thought we would have a cold winter with lots of snow, the weather would decide to give us a warming trend; or it could just as likely hit us with a surprise freeze and

dump two feet of snow on us overnight. When that happened, we wished it was Christmas because when that happened . . . it was magical.

Every Christmas Eve, our entire neighborhood was ablaze with tens of thousands of sparkling fairy lights, etching out the outlines of nearby homes with their festive holiday decorations. Our Christmas tree was adorned with ornaments and wrapped in twinkling lights, beneath which sat a crowd of presents screaming for attention. When our noses were tempted by the delicious smell of roasted meat, we knew our holiday celebration was about to begin.

But, before we sat down for the feast, we never failed to open the back door to inhale the night air, scented with smoke escaping from

many roaring fires through their chimneys. We wanted to sniff out that particular and distinctive smell of chilly, moist air that was a hopeful sign of a white Christmas to come.

Once every few years, we blinked our eyes in disbelief when our lashes caught a melting piece of fluff or two, our shocked eyelids savoring those desirable and delicate flakes. We were excited: Now we knew for sure that it would be the best Christmas ever.

Before we turned off our bedside lights and went to sleep, we wanted to take one long last look at the thin layer of white blanketing our lawn and the intricate six-sided crystal formations spinning sparkling lace around our windows. We knew that as we slept, Nature would be making us a thick, white quilt to go over our

house and make us extra warm this holiday season. We could not wait to get up the next day.

A white Christmas morning was magically quiet, undisturbed by shovels, plows, or salt trucks. For once, in the middle of a crowded neighborhood street, all was silent under the magic spell of pristine white snow. Everything was postcard-perfect, even if just for a few hours, or half a day. As I enjoyed a hot breakfast by the window, sipping my steaming cocoa topped with a melting marshmallow, I imagined myself playing a part in a fairytale at the edge of an enchanted forest.

Since our move to Maryland 12 years ago, we have had many snowfalls, mostly light with just a few inches of accumulation and

(Continued on Page 5)

Maintaining Our Feelings of “Joy” During the Holidays



By Cheryl Thode
Hello December! 2023 is almost in the rearview mirror. Can you believe it? The last few months have been event

packed, leading up to where we are now, the thick of the holiday season and preparing for 2024!

While I am glad to be post COVID and back into the swing of family events and gatherings, at times, I find myself overwhelmed, overcommitted, and overworked. As a result, rather than enjoying this wonderful time of year with my friends and family, I end up feeling resentful, tired, and just not happy. Talking with other parents and friends, I know that I am not alone. We all at times suffer from this self-inflicted feeling of anxiety or insecurity over the possibility of missing out on something.

Whether we call it FOMO (the fear of missing out) or the tried and true “Keeping up with the Joneses,” when we as parents find

ourselves no longer experiencing joy or happiness, we need to stop, reevaluate our priorities, and change what we are doing.

This time of year means many different things to everyone. However, universally it is a time for giving, being joyful, spending time with family and preparing for the new year. It is not a time to work our hands to the bone and exhaust ourselves emotionally and physically. Our goal during this time, especially as parents, should be to get ourselves recharged, reenergized, and excited for the new year.

But, how do we do this when there are events scheduled for every weekend, nightly (it seems), holiday gatherings, and countless appointments for various family members? Well, first, BREATHE.

Second, remember that as a parent you are the manager and CEO of your family. Like any good leader, you, yourself, need to be in a good mental space to lead. If you are not in a good place, your family and those around you will not be in a good place. As a result, all

the good you do and all the effort you take to make this time of year special for your family will be overshadowed by the fact that YOU are losing it.

During particularly stressful stretches of time, like the holidays, it’s important to commit to taking care of ourselves and our minds. After all, how can we truly show up for others when we ourselves are exhausted, on edge, or overwhelmed?

So, while we know we need joy, how can we maintain it during this crazy time? First, find short periods of time to sit quietly throughout your day. Just taking a few minutes to stop and breathe in the car before grocery shopping, or before you go into a family dinner, can do wonders to center your mind and spirit.

Second, let yourself play. During this time of year, we easily get sucked up into the planning and executing of lists and tasks, making December one big to-do list.

Instead, set some time aside to just play: watch a holiday movie,

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Do You Recognize This Neighborhood Celebrity?

(Continued from Page 1)



Hodge Patterson became the new CEO of the Santa Monica Family YMCA this summer. He has made an effort to reach out to the community to introduce more neighbors to the special programs at the YMCA. The Y is at 1332 6th St. between Arizona and Santa Monica Blvd.

Mini Message Bulletin Board

Have a wonderful holiday season. If anything goes wrong, call Bret R. Carter, Esq. 213-629-5700



Best Wishes for a Happy and Healthy Holiday Season and New Year!



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When Life Gets So Full, Remember . . .



By Rev. Matthew Hardin

A favorite spiritual teacher of mine, James Finley, once recounted in an interview one of his earliest memories. He was

around three years old, and he was with his mom at church.

It was Christmas time, and the church was very crowded. At one point a baby started crying, and it echoed throughout the sanctuary.

Finley remembers leaning over to his mother and whispering in her ear, “Mommy, is that the baby Jesus crying?”

His mother leaned down and whispered back, “Yes, dear. Yes, it is!”

“I believed her!” Finley said in the interview. “And to this day, 74 years later, I still believe her. Not in a naïve sense, but in the sense that we are all children of God. Each of us is loved unconditionally. Each having deep within us a childlike purity. A childlike goodness.”

One of the gifts of Christmas is that it invites us to experience again that childlike sense of wonder and hope that comes from knowing, deep in our bones, that we are all children of God.

It is all too easy in this complicated world to forget this, and to lose touch with that sense of wonder and hope. We bury it under layers of fear and pain, piles of stress and guilt, and tons of meetings, emails, and errands.

Life is full. Life is busy. Life is chaotic at times, sometimes by our own doing and sometimes simply because, well, that’s just the way life goes.

So it was for Mary and Joseph,

Maintaining Our Feelings of “Joy”
(Continued from Page 4)

read a good book, go for a walk, participate in a daily Advent calendar, enjoy a nightly cup of tea, plan a family game night, or just be, and give yourself time to look out your window at nature.

Third, let go of insane expectations. For whatever reason, this time of year brings out the crazy in most of us. We come up with these grandiose plans and schedules, knowing full well that they are impossible. Then, we are disappointed when things don’t go as planned. Instead, come up with the big-ticket items that you want to happen. Try not to fixate on how they will come to be, but rather what they are.

Do you want a family holiday dinner? Do you want to take your kids ice skating? Do you want time to go to a movie? What would make your holiday? Name it and work towards that goal. Basically, as the old adage goes, “Don’t sweat the small stuff.”

In short, let’s keep the JOY in December and all do small, mindful acts that help us preserve our sense of peace and stability, no matter how hectic this month might get. God Bless and Happy Holidays to you all.

too. Circumstances beyond their control forced them to travel a long way from home. As they made their way into Bethlehem to take part in the census they blended into the crowd – just two people among the many travelers who were there, not because they wanted to be, but because they had to be.

Surely, they were tired, weary, and at least a little resentful that they were in such a situation (not to mention confused and scared due to their rather unexpected pregnancy).

It is only fitting that there was no room for them at the inn. Sometimes, there is just no more room. Life gets so full that we just can’t fit any more into it. Much like Mary and Joseph, it’s all we can do to keep up with the day’s demands, the day’s emotions, and there just isn’t room for anything else.

But, the miracle of Christmas, and the hope that Christmas always offers us, is that God comes anyway. Be it when the inn is full, or our lives are full. Be it in the darkness of a stable, or the darkness of our world, God comes anyway. God is not deterred by any of our “No Vacancy” signs.

This Christmas season I hope you will take some time to step away from the chaos and go somewhere quiet and still. Gather in a place where you can listen for that newborn baby crying. Take a moment to pay attention to the presence of the Christ-child, the one who breaks into our busy world to remind us again that God is with us.

This Christmas let us all remind ourselves of the most basic truth that so easily gets forgotten due to the complexities of life: that no matter what, through it all, we are each beloved children of God.

Rev. Matthew Hardin is the pastor at the Pacific Palisades Presbyterian Church where services are held each Sunday at 10 a.m. in person and online.

Fond Memories
(Continued from Page 4)

never on Christmas. And yet, I still cannot let go of my habit of sniffing the cool night air in the hope that another white Christmas is coming my way.

You can always reach me at qstubis@gmail.com, or please visit me at www.QinSunStubis.com. You can find a copy of my book, “Once Our Lives,” online at www.Amazon.com.



- Joe Analco

Meet Me Under the Fig Tree on December 10

A tree is a gift that just keeps giving, and Fairmont Miramar Hotel & Bungalows’ historic Moreton Bay Fig at 101 Wilshire Blvd. has been giving since it was planted by Georgina Jones, one of the original founders of the Miramar, over 100 years ago.

Under its outstretched boughs, the hotel’s annual holiday tradition returns on December 10 from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Established over a decade ago, *Meet Me Under the Fig Tree* is a day for the whole family to enjoy. Guests can play in the snow, take their picture with Santa, and enjoy great food and drinks from FIG Restaurant and other local favorites. There will also be music, seasonal crafts, bounce houses, and activities for the entire family.



Santa will greet hotel visitors on Sunday, December 10 from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. at the hotel.

Meet Me Under the Fig Tree is proud to continue its partnership with Santa MoniCARES to benefit Westside Food Bank, and Chrysalis. Please bring nonperishable food items or gently worn clothing to contribute. Please see Page 7 for more details.

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Feechen's Sugar Cookies *(Continued from Page 1)*

Ingredients:

1 cube unsalted butter, soft (room temperature)
1 egg yolk (save the egg white for later)
1/2 cup granulated sugar
1-1/4 cups flour
Pecans or almonds for garnish

- Mix all of this by hand, please, in the good old-fashioned way.
- Knead the butter and flour together to get small crumbles.
- Knead in the sugar to get

smaller crumbles.

- Knead in the egg yolk until you get a not-sticky dough ball. You might have to add a bit more flour, but in any case don't add more than 1/4 cup.
- Roll out the dough on a floured board. Use a rolling pin or just flatten it with your hands.
- Pre-heat the oven to 350.
- Line a cookie sheet with baking parchment.
- Cut cookies, using a cookie cut-

ter in any shape. You can also make small 3/4" balls and flatten them with the bottom of a floured water glass.

- Press an almond or pecan into the middle of each cookie, if desired. You can also use a chocolate chip, a couple of raisins, or anything else that strikes your fancy.
- Lightly brush the cookies with the egg white using a small pastry brush. Don't have a brush? Take a small piece of paper towel and wrap it around the tines of a fork and hold it there with a rubber band.

- Bake cookies for 10-12 minutes, or until edges are light golden brown.

- Remove cookie sheet and place it on a rack. Don't have a rack? Stand the cookie sheet on two equal-sized cans of anything. While the cookies are still warm from the oven, dust them with granulated sugar.

- After about 5 minutes, remove cookies from cookie sheet and place on doily-covered plate for serving, or put them into a sealed container for later consumption.

Eat right away, or keep them for a party. Cookies will last 2-4 days in a sealed container. Do not refrigerate.

Stacy's Favorite Holiday Recipes

Stacy McClendon asked her friend, Sofia Ramirez, for the recipe for this hot fruit punch they only drink on Christmas at their family dinner. Serves 25.

Hot Fruit Punch

Ingredients:

4 oranges, 4 apples, 1 stick cinnamon, 6 dry plums, 1 cup of raisins, 6 guavas, 1 sugar cane, 10 hawthorn berries, and 2 cups brown sugar.

First, rinse your fresh fruits, but not the plums and raisins, get a knife and chopping board, and cut the fruit into squares.

Second, you put all the cut up fruit in a pot, fill it almost full of water, and let it boil for 25 min.

Finally, you can turn off stove, add sugar and it's ready to enjoy.

Stacy said, "This next recipe for Coconut Rice is special to me because coconut is used in many

(Continued on Page 11)



Chef Pierre Sauvaget

Local Chef Shares Favorite Winter Dish

Award-winning chef, Pierre Sauvaget, brings a recipe that reflects his innovative style of "clean palate cuisine." He believes in light food accented with basic spices and natural flavors. For 23 years, Pierre was the executive chef at the Bel Air Bay Club in the Pacific Palisades.

Choucroute

Ingredients:

2 pound package of sauerkraut (Serves four people)
1 medium yellow onion, chopped
1 Tbsp. minced garlic
2 carrots, peeled and chopped in 1-inch pieces
Bacon, cut into 1-inch pieces
2 cups chicken stock
1 cup white wine
Herbs: Fresh thyme, bay leaves, cloves, juniper berries, salt, and pepper

Potatoes: 2 small per person. Par-boil in salted water for about 5 minutes.

Pork: Chops or loin. One serving per person. Sauté in a touch of oil for about 8 minutes over medium heat.

Sausages: Variety as you choose – (My choice would be one smoky sausage such as Louisiana andouille, and an Italian sausage with herbs), cut into 4-inch pieces.

- Wash sauerkraut thoroughly and drain in colander. **This is most important to take out the acidity.**

- Sauté onion and garlic in 1-2 Tbsps. oil. Heat the oil a little bit before adding the onion and garlic. Cook just a couple of minutes, and then add carrots and the bacon. Don't let the garlic burn. Cook until the onion is translucent and the carrots have softened a little. The carrots and bacon will finish cooking throughout the process.

(Continued on Page 9)

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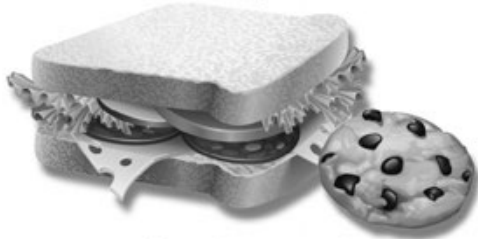
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Easy Entertaining Ideas

(Continued from Page 1)

cheese. Surprise them by taking a photo of their home, or from their social media, then insert it into a small Lucite frame with a ribbon, and hang it on your holiday tree. What a nice memento for them to take home.

- Holiday cocktail party chit-chat needn't be boring or superficial. Start the conversation by asking about the person's favorite holiday tradition or childhood holiday gift.

- Tie flatware and a napkin with colorful ribbon to make a handy and space-saving bundle at your buffet.

- Plan a Holiday Caroling Party and really encourage everyone to sing. Serve an easy menu – cup of soup, a six-foot-long deli sand-

wich, and holiday cookies for dessert.

- For better mixing at a cocktail party, never have enough chairs. You don't want all your guests sitting in one big circle.

- If you know anyone who is going to be alone, invite them to your holiday get-together.

Please remember, the two most important aspects of entertaining at home. First, be sure to make your guests feel welcome and special. Second, be sure to enjoy your own party. Happy Holidays.

Maureen Molé is the author of *The Book of Entertaining at Home*. You can email any questions to MaureenMole@gmail.com.



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Join us for Miramar’s Annual Holiday Gathering under the historic Moreton Bay Fig Tree.
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Traveling With Tanya

**Biking the Trans Dinarica:
A Culinary and Cultural Odyssey**



My mom and I hiked to San Giovanni Fortress and caught one of the locals enjoying the morning sunshine on our way back down (much more pleasant than the hike up!) We then had a wonderful lunch on the water in Perast. I have the best memories of Montenegro!

By Tanya Gilbert

The sun rises over the Trans Dinarica cycling trail, casting a golden hue on the rugged landscapes of the Dinaric Alps. For those with an insatiable thirst for exploration, grab your bikes and get ready to embark on a journey that promises not just scenic beauty, but a deep dive into the rich tapestry of local culture, history, and cuisine.

Winding through eight countries, the Trans Dinarica is more than just a trail; it's a gateway to the heart of the Balkans. The trail takes riders to the soul of the region, where ancient traditions meld seamlessly with modern life. Opening in 2024, this 1240-mile cycling trail is designed to spread sustainable tourism throughout the region. It is also named the Lonely Planet's Best in Travel for 2024.

Venturing into Slovenia, Croatia, or Montenegro, the trail offers more than just natural beauty. Here, one of my favorite adventure tour companies, Backroads, offers cycling, hiking, and multisport trips. For those who crave a touch of luxury with their adventure, Backroads meticulously plans

itineraries that allow you to travel at your own pace.

Expert guides lead you through picturesque countryside, ensuring that guests not only experience the thrill of the trail but also the comfort of world-class accommodations and gourmet meals. The experience is not just about active adventure; it's about immersing oneself in the essence of a place.

In the quaint villages dotting the trail, riders are also welcomed to an exploration of flavors – from Montenegro's seafood delicacies, to the hearty stews of Bosnia and Herzegovina. But, it's not just the food that is so captivating; it's the stories behind them, shared by locals with pride, passion, and exceptional hospitality.

The Trans Dinarica, with its blend of adventure, culture, and cuisine, offers a transformative experience. And, a reminder that travel is not just about destinations; it's about the journey and the stories that shape it.

Intrigued about exploring the region? Contact me for help designing your next adventure: Tanya@MariposaTravelAdvisors.com.



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This treasured Grandfather clock was an heirloom owned by three generations of one local family. It can now be yours!

**Congratulations to Madison Kim:
Winner of the Bird Drawing Contest**

Madison Kim, a talented seven-year-old artist, drew a picture of this owl that she and her mom had seen flying when they were walking in Rancho Park.

She was the winner of the Bird Drawing Contest sponsored by Wild Birds Unlimited. Madison will receive a \$50 gift certificate from Julie Rensink Hanson, owner of the store.

We hope Madison will continue to send in more of her drawings to share.



Mini Artificial Trees Make Joyful Gifts for Others and Yourself

By Charla King

Many people decorate tall trees to kick off their holiday season, but how many of you have decorated mini artificial trees?

They are a lovely way to bring a touch of holiday into individual rooms in your home or a small apartment where your space is limited. They are also meaningful and unexpected gifts for a single neighbor, someone in the hospital or home recovering from surgery, or a veteran who has served our country. They are easy to do, are everlasting, and you can decorate one rather quickly by yourself, with a friend, with a child, or how fun is this idea – with a beloved grandchild.

Here are some ideas I have learned from volunteers decorating mini trees at the JoyCatchers Annual Tree Trims that are given each year to seniors and veterans to bring them holiday joy.

• Trees, Colors, and Themes.

Tabletop trees are 12 to 18 inches. These (and mini decorations) are in craft and discount stores and online. Pick a color or theme. Traditional holiday, blue/white/silver for Hanukkah or coastal, or red, white, and blue for veterans. Sports, animals, poinsettia, gingerbread. Let your imagination run free.

Consider when giving the tree to someone. What are their favorite colors or things? What do they collect? I've seen great joy brought to a retired florist receiving a tree decorated in flowers. Another senior celebrating her final Christmas was thrilled with her tree filled



Christine, a Santa Monica resident and JoyCatchers volunteer, shows off a tree she just decorated.

with colorful, artificial butterflies – her favorites. A tree with little thank you notes or notes of well wishes hung from the branches, instead of a traditional card, are heartwarming gifts. Keep the tree 'quiet' (no ringing bells), easy to move anywhere (no lights needing cords), and keep decorations fragrance-free to avoid any allergic reactions.

• How to Decorate. Watch the short video tutorial on how to decorate a mini tree at <https://joycatchers.org/about-2/our-trees/>. Joyful holidays to all.

Charla King is the founder of JoyCatchers, a local nonprofit charitable organization whose mission is to "Bring joy to adults, one holiday tree at a time."

Mary's Chicken Cacciatore

This family recipe is so easy to prepare. The results are delicious.



- 1 2-1/2 lb. fryer, cut up
- 1 14 oz. bottle catsup
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 green pepper, chopped
- 3 stalks of celery, chopped
- 2 zucchini, sliced vertically
- Olive oil

- Flour, with your favorite seasonings added, or add garlic powder, Italian herb seasonings, and lemon pepper to the flour.
1. Drop pieces of chicken into a plastic or brown bag of seasoned flour. Coat well.
 2. Lightly brown onion in olive oil in a skillet. Add chicken and brown.
 3. Mix in vegetables.
 4. Pour on just enough catsup to cover the chicken. (Usually the whole bottle.) Cover the pan.
 5. Simmer 1 hour until tender. Be sure to stir the mixture every so often.
 6. Serve with hot white, brown, rice, or orzo.

If you have other vegetables at home, add them to the simmering mixture also. —D.M.

Local Chef Shares Favorite Winter Dish

(Continued from Page 6)

- Transfer to a large Dutch Oven pot. Add sauerkraut, sausage, chicken stock, herbs, and wine. Cover and cook for 45 minutes on stovetop at medium heat.
- On the side, cook the potatoes, and also cook the pork chops.
- Mix everything together. Maintain some warm chicken stock in case it looks too dry.
- Before serving, remove the herbs. Transfer into a roaster pan and add the pork chops and potatoes strategically. Cover with

- aluminum foil.
- Keep the roaster pan in the oven on very low (175°) heat and it will be ready to serve and impress your guests!

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People 'n' Pets



Ethan Furman and Herman, his Chiweenie, who will be six in December.



Carrie Weil and Teddy Bear at Marine Park.



Sandi Kerwin and Grace, her Great Dane, overlooking the Pacific Ocean.

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Include your name and phone number also.



Lions Celebrate 100 Years of Service



By Kingsley Fife

It was 100 years ago that a group of motivated Santa Monicans said, "Let's form a service club" and that's how the Santa Monica Lions Club started.

So, here we are today, a century later, and the Santa Monica-Pacific Palisades Lions Club is still going strong. We just recently noted our 100th year with a super birthday party – *The Roaring 20's Speakeasy Gala Centennial Celebration* at the Santa Monica Elks Lodge. Close to 100 people were there to enjoy the occasion. The festivities featured dancing to a fabulous local jazz band, The Jazz Cliffhangers, and classic cocktails from our colorful roaring 20's style bar. Special appetizers and a sumptuous buffet dinner were prepared by Chef Ann Bouchet. We also had silent and live auctions, and a raffle of wonderful handcrafted gift baskets.

Lions Dr. Kingsley Fife, Dr. Arnie

Levee, and Alan Parr were honored with the prestigious Progressive Melvin Jones Award for their many years of devoted service in Lionism.

Past District Governor Lion Carol Ann Emmitt gave a very fascinating history of our Club from inception to the present day.

Santa Monica City Councilman Lion Phil Brock served as emcee and auctioneer. We received special proclamations from our California senators, our U.S. senator, and the City of Santa Monica.

Dozens of Lions from other clubs throughout the Los Angeles area attended, in addition to influential people from Santa Monica, Pacific Palisades, and the surrounding area. It was a wonderful evening that none of us will ever forget!

Want to know more about Lionism? We'd love to have you be our guest at one of our dinner meetings. Please contact Lion Kingsley Fife at jkfife88@yahoo.com, or call 310-454-2960.



Phil Brock, Gail Litvack, and Pam Andrews



Arnie Levee, left and Kingsley Fife received the Progressive Melvin Jones Award from Kathy Boole for their many years of devoted service. Not shown, honoree Alan Parr.



Char and Dick Lawrence



The Girl Scouts served salads and desserts at the dinner.



James Fleming, Susan DeRemer, and Rae Kameny



Terry and JoAnn Green with Kathy Naylor, standing



Past District Governor Carol Emmitt and Tom Emmitt



Steve and Gail Litvack



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Paws and Claws

How Can I Calm My Pet When We Go to the Vet?



By Dr. Frank Lavac, MS, DVM
Q: My Lab becomes extremely anxious and fearful at the vet's office. He sometimes snaps at

people when he is scared at the hospital. What can be done to make him have a better experience?

A: Don't feel bad. This is not an uncommon scenario. If he has a history of anxiety and biting attempts at the hospital, please talk to your veterinarian about ways to reduce his stress.

There are medications including trazodone and gabapentin (and

occasionally melatonin and acepromazine) that can be a tremendous help. This reduces your Lab's stress as well as allows your veterinarian to perform a more thorough exam.

Other tips include making the first appt of the morning or afternoon, so that there is no waiting in the reception area and he can be escorted directly to the exam room.

Call the reception desk prior to entering the hospital, so that everyone can make his visit more expeditious. Some pets react better with the owner present and some become less anxious outside of the owner's presence during the exam.

Above all, there should be minimal or no struggling when restraint occurs. Sometimes muzzles are necessary to discourage escalation of a nervous dog. Occasionally, injectable sedatives can be helpful.

For further information on low stress handling, go to <https://www.aaha.org/aahaguidelines/behavior-management/low-stress-handling/>.

For any questions, you can contact Dr. Lavac at 310-828-4587.

Adopt a Pet



Meet Grampa Bluey, a 10-year-old Australian Cattle Dog who is looking for a loving home. Grampa is a sweet and loyal companion who loves to be around his person. He is good with gentle kids and older dogs. Go to www.samsimonfoundation.com/adoptable-pets.asp.



-Joe Analco

Give to Local Nonprofit Charities

(Continued from Page 1)

everyday to make that belief a reality. This holiday season, Samson's would greatly appreciate donations of pet supplies including: dog food, flea/tick prevention, heartworm prevention, toys, treats, playpens, crates, beds, and leashes. Monetary donations also allow Samson's to continue to rescue as many dogs as possible. You can visit their website, samsimon.org, for more information about their organization, and how to donate.

• **Pups Without Borders** is a 501(c)(3) dog rescue that works to rescue and care for homeless dogs in California and Mexico. While they do rescue all dogs in need, they specialize in helping pregnant and nursing mothers, as well as caring for their puppies. Pups Without Borders is in need of supplies similar to Samson's Sanctuary, and they always benefit from monetary donations as well. You can learn more about how to donate at pupswithoutborders.org.

• **Food Banks:** Los Angeles is home to many food banks that help to provide food to those in need. During the holidays, you might consider donating food or money to one of these organizations in order to help get food into

the mouths of as many people as possible. Food that food banks generally need includes: most canned goods (soup, fruit, vegetables, stew, fish, beans), as well as dry pasta, rice, and peanut butter.

Visit lafoodbank.org for more information about donating to food banks in Los Angeles, as well as what donations they can benefit from the most.

Stacy's Favorite

(Continued from Page 6)

of the dishes in Panama, which is where I'm from.

Coconut Rice

By Ana Buylding

Ingredients:

- 2 cups of rice
- 3 Tbsps. of coconut oil
- 1 can of coconut milk
- 2 cups of hot water
- ½ tsp salt
- Sauté 2 cups of rice with coconut oil for 2 to 3 minutes.
- Add 1 can coconut milk, 2 cups of hot water, and ½ tsp salt.
- Cover pot, cook over very low heat until rice is tender and all liquid has evaporated, for approximately 45 minutes.
- Serves 6-8.

An Update From ERBA Markets

It's the Soil That Makes the Difference



By Stephen Freedman

The growing of cannabis is no longer about planting seeds and waiting for harvest. The intricacy extends not only to the indoor or outdoor grow, but to the soil itself. One of the most popular and ecofriendly is living soil.

Living soil is a community of microbes such as bacteria, moss, peat, and compost, that when working together, help break down organic matter within the soil and are absorbed by the cannabis roots. This then releases essential nutrients for growth. One of the main benefits of living soil is being able to grow without the need for bottled or manufactured nutrients. In fact, when used correctly, the soil can be reused several times over.

Growing indoors ensures that the live soil is free from outdoor factors, such as pests and inclement weather conditions. This process creates new nutrients that can help sustain an ever-evolving and nutritious soil.

One of the most popular living soils is no-till. No-till soils are extremely popular with outdoor and greenhouse growers who do not want to disturb the soil after each grow. Instead, a nutritious organic compost is planted after each harvest. This is grown over the colder winter months to prevent erosion and prevent weeds. These "cover crops" are left to rot into the soil to provide eco-friendly manure without the need to disturb the soil surface. Through this process the soil should remain rich for many seasons, and many believe it produces the best flavors and terpene profiles. This also simplifies the grow while keeping costs low.

As with all cannabis, the effects and profiles are extremely subjective. But, as farming continues to evolve, so does the selection for the consumer. Those looking for an environmentally friendly, organic option, the living soil, and especially the no-till, are great options.

Stephen Freedman is the Regional Manager of the ERBA Markets, the WOODS, West LA, Venice, South Bay, and WeHo.

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Discover What's Happening on the Westside

By Pamela Lawrence

Ongoing until December 27 - Holiday Road - Stroll across the grounds of King Gillette Ranch as the Santa Monica Mountains hide-away is illuminated with a nearly mile-long walking trail. The event includes festive decor like a tree-top canopy of icicle lights, a small Christmas village, freestanding oversized decorations, and archways of lights. Hours from 4:30 p.m.-9:30 p.m. King Gillette Ranch, 26800 W. Mulholland Hwy., Calabasas. To buy tickets, visit: holidayroadusa.com.

Ongoing through December 31 - Made in L.A. 2023: Acts of Living - This art exhibition highlights the practices of artists working throughout greater Los Angeles, and it situates art as an expanded field of culture that is entangled with everyday life, community networks, queer affect, and indigenous and diasporic histories. There are 39 artists' works in the exhibition. 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Hammer Museum, 10899 Wilshire Blvd., L.A. Call 310-443-7000 for details. Free event.

December 4 to 7, and December 11 to 14 - Eight Nights at Birdie G's - Join the 2nd annual Hanukkah-ish dinner series. Chef Jeremy Fox of Birdie G's is bringing back his seasonal dinner series that welcomes notable chefs from across the country to cook at his restaurant. Feast on à la carte

specials from each chef, alongside some classic Birdie G's fare. 2421 Michigan Avenue, Santa Monica. For reservations, call 310-310-3616.

Thursday, December 7 - Hanukkah begins

Saturday, December 9 - The Friends Annual Holiday Book Sale - The sale will feature wonderful, gently-used books as well as a large donation of vinyl records. All proceeds benefit the Library. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Community Room, Kaufman Brentwood Branch Library, 11820 San Vicente Blvd. For more details, call 310-575-8273.

Saturday, December 9 - Holiday Concert: 'Tis the Season for Ukulele! - The friendly ukulele invites all to engage in traditional winter holiday songs from around the world. Bring the family to sing along with Heidi Swedberg and Daniel Ward, who love to share their energy and musical skills. 11 a.m.- Noon. S.M. Main Library, Martin Luther King, Jr. Auditorium. After the concert, decorate a festive musical ornament. For all ages.

Saturday, December 9 - Marina del Rey Holiday Boat Parade - 61st annual celebration of the Winter holidays. Enjoy a magical night on the marina full of enchantment and wonder. Featuring boats adorned with lights and decorations to celebrate the



Happy Hanukkah

Winter holiday season with entertainment for the whole family to enjoy. Holiday activities from 10 a.m.-9 p.m. Boat Parade from 6 p.m.-8 p.m.

Tuesday, December 12 - A Tasting of Holiday Cookies and Spices - Learn about different spices and flavorings (cardamom, cinnamon, vincotto) and how they're used in some favorite holiday recipes. 6:30 p.m. Kaufman Brentwood Branch Library, 11820 San Vicente Blvd.

Wednesday, December 13 - Winter Tales, Snacks and Crafts - Enjoy cozy Winter stories read by the library's teen volunteers, while

enjoying Winter-themed snacks and a craft. 4:30 p.m.- 5:30 p.m. S.M. Main Library, Children's Activity Room. For families.

Thursday, December 14 - Lyric Chorus: Songs of the Season - The Lyric Chorus of SMC Emeritus College puts you in the holiday mood with their seasonal favorites and festive Broadway tunes. 11 a.m.-Noon. S.M. Main Library, MLK Jr. Auditorium.

Thursday, December 21 - Winter Solstice - The first day of Winter

Monday, December 25 - Christmas Day - Jingle Bells!

Tuesday, December 26 - Kwanzaa week begins

Sunday, December 31 - New Year's Eve - Let's Ring in 2024!

Tell us about your upcoming January event.

Send details to smstarnewspaper@gmail.com by December 10.

Congratulations to Eula Fritz – New President of Santa Monica Kiwanis Club



Pictured from left, Kiwanis District Lt. Governor Guy Puckett, Jessica Handy, new Santa Monica President Eula Fritz, Maggie Hall, Neil Carrey, Abeer Sweis, and Charles Herbertson at the recent officer and board installation luncheon.

The Kiwanis Club of Santa Monica celebrated its 101st officers and board of directors installation with a lovely and lively luncheon last month. At this event Eula Fritz, the director of the Police Activities League, and longtime member of Kiwanis, was installed as this year's president. Also installed into the board of directors were Abeer Sweis, Tony Antich, Maggie Hall, Neil Carrey, Jessica Handy, Kathy Irby, and Joe Palazzolo.

As outgoing two-term president, Charles Herbertson presented the Kiwanian of the Year Award to Neil Carrey for his enthusiastic support of the Kiwanis-sponsored youth clubs, including the SaMo High School Key Club, Lincoln Builder's Club, and UCLA Circle. K. Neil Carrey, who is a past president of the Kiwanis Club, is also championing the upcoming installation of Kiwanis' generous donation of digital scoreboards at Belmar and Los Amigos Parks.

City council member, Kiwanian past president, and Lt. Governor Phil Brock presented a Commendation from The City of Santa Monica to Charles Herbertson for his leadership, and for establishing the now annual Kiwanis Youth

Chess Tournament at Virginia Avenue Park.

After being sworn in by the current District Lt. Governor, Guy Puckett, new President Eula's first official act was to swear in two new members to the Kiwanis Club of Santa Monica. Ann Hoover and Jaleh Mirhashemi were welcomed into the Club with a standing ovation. The event closed with a celebration of the League of Honor members – those who have been members of the Kiwanis Club for more than 25 years. Honored were Ray Carrier, Phyllis Baggesen, Joe Palazzolo, Maggie Hall, and Charlie Wiese.

Since 1922, the Kiwanis Club of Santa Monica has donated awards of over \$150,000 to our community in the form of grants, scholarships, and sponsorships. To join Kiwanis, or to donate to Kiwanis charities, visit their website, www.KiwanisClubSM.org.



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Planning Ahead

Death and Taxes



By Lisa Alexander, Esq.

When a person dies, someone must file a final income tax return for the deceased person. What makes it a final

return is as simple as writing the deceased person's date of death and the word "Deceased" at the top of the form.

The final income tax return otherwise looks like the usual returns filed during the person's lifetime, except the tax year for the return will end at the date of the decedent's death. In the case of a married couple that regularly filed jointly, the final income tax return will be a joint return for the couple, through the date of the deceased spouse's death. The exception is if the surviving spouse remarries before the end of the calendar year, then the final return for the deceased spouse must be filed as a married person filing separately. The surviving spouse will have a separate return for the remainder of the year.

The due date of the final income tax return is the same as for any taxpayer - the return is due in April of the next calendar year. Payment of tax owed is due at the same time.

The executor, administrator, trustee (referred to as the de-

ceased person's representative) or another person in charge of the property of the decedent is responsible for filing the final return. If there is no probate or trust, then any heir or beneficiary who receives property of the decedent is considered a "person charged with the property" of the decedent, and can be held responsible for filing the decedent's final return.

Taxes owed to the IRS must be paid before all other debts. The deceased person's representative may be liable if debts are paid without leaving enough money to pay taxes, or if the personal representative distributes assets before all the taxes are paid or provided for.

In addition to the final income tax return, the personal representative should make sure that all prior years' returns were filed. Information about past years can be obtained from the IRS.

Of course, nothing in this article should be taken as a substitute for good advice from a tax professional. When someone dies, the first call might be to the estate planning attorney, but the second call should be to the accountant.

**Lisa Alexander
Jakle, Alexander, and Patton. LLP
1250 Sixth Street, Suite 300
Santa Monica
Main Line: 310-395-6555
Direct Line: 310-656-4310**

Thoughts From a Second-Time Father

Learning When to Be Accountable



By Michael Margolin

As my children grow up and experience different situations, there are particular times when I know exactly how

they feel. Alexa is ten and we were at her coach's work location because her soccer team was there to watch their game film.

The business where they watched the film is based around cars and is in a big building. After the game film had been viewed, Jake and I went to pick Alexa up. Before we left, we and some other families got to take a look at some sharp classic cars that were on display in the company's showroom.

Some of the girls on the team and their siblings were allowed to get in and out of the cars and take some photos. No harm was done to any of the cars. Except, when Jake got into one of the cars and opened the door a bit too swiftly, the door dinged the wall next to it. The wall is one thing, the car is another.

Owning a classic car myself, which is not in the same condition these are, I am very particular about what is around it. Unfortunately, Jake did leave a ding in the door which is not visible when the door is closed and the nick itself is probably about the size of a pinhead.

Jake is seven and decided maybe he would not make me aware

of this transgression. That was left up to his sister who is generally more than willing to sell her little brother out. I saw the ding and asked Jake about it and he fessed up.

I then told him that we needed to tell Alexa's coach what happened since it was his place of employment. Jake put his hands to his face and said, "Right now?" I told him it had to be now and that is when I knew exactly how he felt. Alexa's coach is a nice guy and I figured he would not fly off the handle. I also knew he might be a little upset.

I wanted to make sure I used this as a teaching moment with Jake. When you screw up, the sooner you fess up, the better. Jake was in no hurry to explain what he had done. However, he was able to show Alexa's coach and explain what happened.

The coach appreciated Jake telling him and was able to let Jake know he would probably be in the clear. It is not always easy to look somebody in the eye and tell them something they do not want to hear. So, hopefully this moment in time is something that will stick with Jake so that confessing when need be, is something he is capable of.

And, maybe he will be a little more careful with a classic car, which will only help his standing in our household.

Mike Margolin has been writing for us since his daughter Alexa was born ten years ago.

Brain-Boosting Fitness Strategies

(Continued from Page 2)

6) Track your progress for motivation. Keep a journal or use fitness apps.

7) Strength training is vital for brain health. It maintains muscle mass and cognitive function.

8) Balanced nutrition and hydration are important for brain health and getting better results from your exercise.

9) Rest is necessary for muscle recovery and cognitive well-being. Try incorporating active rest (walking on non-exercise days).

10) Be patient with your progress; results take time. Try looking at your progress weekly or monthly, instead of daily.

True change takes time and effort. Stay patient and consistent. Believe in your ability to overcome challenges. Set yourself up for success with realistic goals and a supportive social network, while

celebrating small victories along the way. Wishing you a vibrant 2024, filled with wellness for both your body and mind, from PNI's Brain Wellness & Lifestyle Program team!

Ryan Glatt, MS, CPT, NBC-HWC, serves as the Senior Brain Health Coach & FitBrain Director at Pacific Neuroscience Institute's Brain Wellness & Lifestyle Program. Specializing in personalized interventions, he supports individuals to optimize their cognitive health.

Shannel Kassis Elhelou, PsyD, a geropsychology and neuropsychology fellow at Pacific Neuroscience Institute's Brain Wellness & Lifestyle Program, delivers lifestyle interventions and memory training to proactively address and prevent cognitive decline. PacificLifestyle.org/ 213-566-1270.



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Community Service on the Westside

What's Happening at the Santa Monica Family YMCA?



Participants from Safe Place for Youth (S.P.Y.), Santa Monica Family YMCA, and the San Diego YMCA joined forces at the Solidarity Journey to combat youth homelessness last month in the YMCA Community Room.



By Eduardo Lowe

Since its establishment in 1927, the Santa Monica Family YMCA has stood as a pillar of hope and assistance for its community. It

has consistently evolved to address the changing needs of its residents, providing vital services to tackle the varied challenges they encounter. The organization's unwavering dedication to enhancing the lives of individuals and families continues to resonate strongly today.

• Tackling Youth Homelessness Proactively

The Youth and Family Services (YFS) division of the YMCA has been instrumental in providing essential aid to more than 15,000 individuals annually in San Diego County. The Solidarity Journey initiative was born here, marking a commitment to confront youth homelessness. Participants in the journey forgo staying in hotels or homes, instead spending nights at local facilities as they travel to the state capital to engage with legislators on this critical issue.

• Cultivating Partnerships for Impact

The Santa Monica Family YMCA's 6th Street location recently hosted an event for leaders involved in the Solidarity Journey, fostering a sense of unity. The event's significance was heightened by the collaboration between the YMCA and Safe Place for Youth (S.P.Y.), a non-profit organization dedicated to eliminating youth homelessness in the area. S.P.Y.'s history of serving at-risk youth aligns with the YMCA's mission of promoting community welfare.

This partnership enables both

organizations to broaden their reach and offer a more robust support network, aiming to empower young people towards a more hopeful future.

The alliance between the Santa Monica Family YMCA and S.P.Y. goes beyond event coordination and awareness campaigns. It represents a deep-seated resolve to tackle the underlying causes of youth homelessness and to provide the youth with the resources and opportunities they need to escape the cycle of homelessness.

• Uniting for a Brighter Tomorrow

Reflecting on the Solidarity Journey event at the Santa Monica Family YMCA reinforces the profound effects of united efforts and the meaningful progress that can be made when organizations like the YMCA and Safe Place for Youth join forces for a shared purpose. Your involvement in the solidarity movement can contribute significantly to ending youth homelessness.

As a member of the community, you have the agency to effect change for young people facing homelessness. Support these initiatives and engage in the collective mission to eradicate youth homelessness, helping to secure a brighter future for everyone. Let's collaborate to build a society where every young person has a safe and stable place to call home.

• Engage with the Organizations

For more details about the Santa Monica Family YMCA, visit their website at YMCAsm.org.

To learn more about Safe Place for Youth and their work, visit SafePlaceForYouth.org.

For insights into the Solidarity Journey and how to get involved, visit SoJoCali.com.

Annual Holiday Party Kicks Off the Festive Winter Season



By Susan Barry

The Santa Monica Bay Woman's Club (SMBWC) began the season of celebration and giving with their annual holiday party on

December 5. It was an evening to introduce many new members and share conversation while enjoying a delightful dinner buffet in their Club ballroom.

SMBWC's board of directors continues to plan and oversee the restoration of our beautiful historic building. Much energy goes into keeping our lovely space available for our members and their activities, and a multitude of guests who pass through our doors each year. It's a time, too, of reflection on our accomplishments and end-of-the-year donations to Happy Trails and others.

From SMBWC to all our Santa

Monica Star readers, we wish you a holiday season surrounded by friends, family, abundance, joy, and peace.

Ongoing at the Club, canasta and bridge players meet every Monday at 11 a.m., and Crafts and Conversation meets every Tuesday morning from 10 a.m. to noon. Book Group will resume in January.

If you would like more information about membership or renting our facility for your next event or special occasion, please visit our website at SMBWC.org, email us at info@SMBWC.org, or call 310-395-1308. We especially encourage other non-profit organizations to host their events at SMBWC. Everyone is welcome to join our activities.

Update: SMBWC collected and donated 432 pairs of socks from the Socktober event!

Santa Monica Rotarians (Continued from Page 2)

will be in partnership with Connections for Children, a nonprofit that connects families and the early care and education community to resources, education, and economic support. We will also raise funds for the Salvation Army as part of our "Red Kettle" bell-ringing day.

The Rotary Club of Santa Monica changes lives. It just might change yours! To find out how you can make a real difference in our community, please contact us at admin@rotaryclubofsantamonica.org, or visit <https://www.rotaryclubofsantamonica.org/>.

Ideas for Hanukkah Celebrations

To get new ideas for celebrating Hanukkah, visit the PJ Library for free resources, crafts, and recipes.



Go online to the Hanukkah Hub. There are videos and movies to watch and a list of books about the holiday which you can request to be sent to your home.

The PJ Library is a program of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation which sends free books that provide values, traditions, and culture to Jewish families. Go to pjlibrary.org for details.

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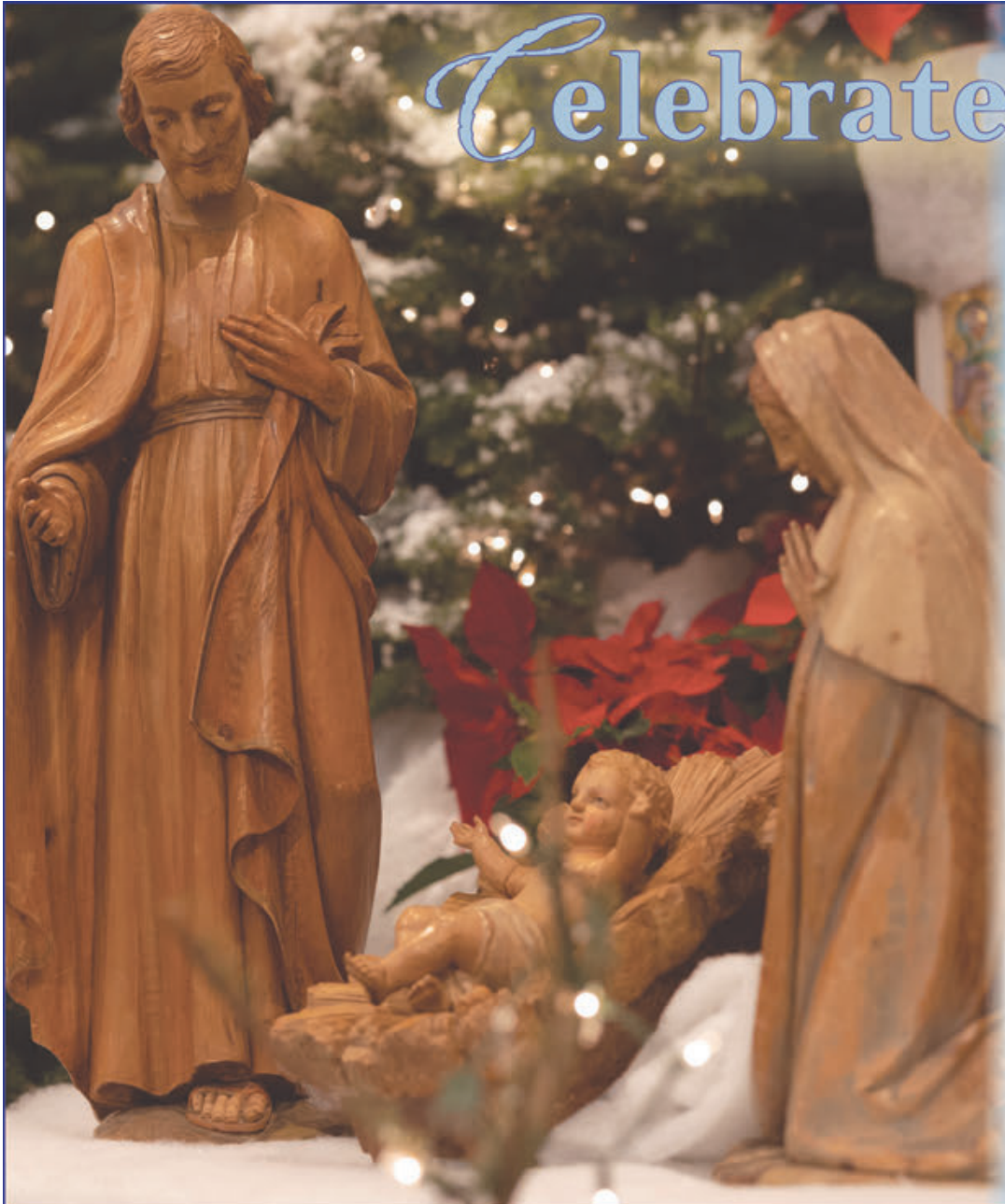


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