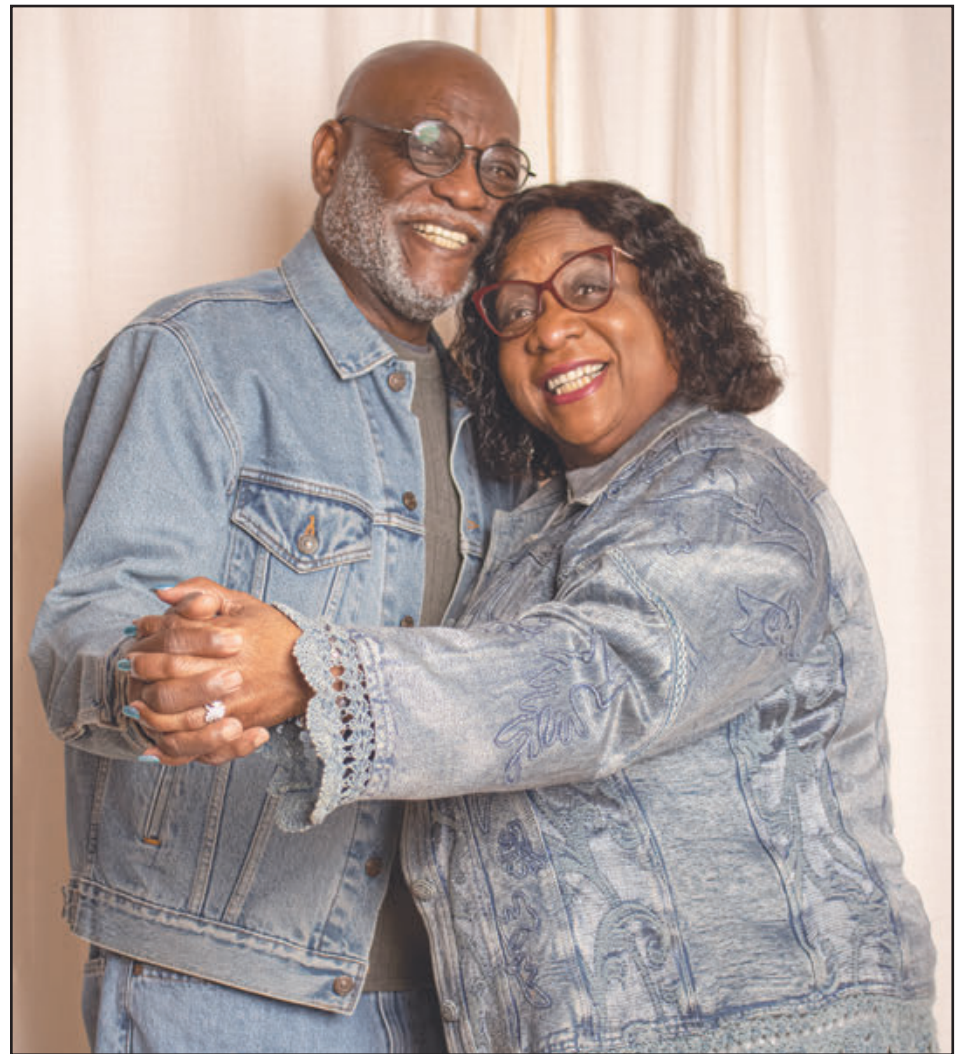




Make Valentine's Day fun for everyone in your family.

Couples Share Their Stories of How and When They Met



Larry Bell and Pastor Carolyn Baskin were introduced to each other by Larry's brother and his wife.

Photo by Brendan Minto

Editor's Note: Four years ago, Nadia Williamson from NWLA Bridal on Montana Avenue, asked me to select several residents who had been married for many years to participate in a photo shoot. We put their photos and stories in our paper and she displayed the photos in her store window.

Last fall, Nadia and I thought it would be fun to select couples who had been married for various numbers of years for another

photo shoot to put into our February issue. This time I asked them to tell us how they met. Behind the lens was photographer Brendan Minto who did a terrific job. Nadia welcomed all of the couples who definitely enjoyed the experience. Their stories and photos start below and continue to Pages 3, 9, and 11.

—D.M.

By Pastor Carolyn Baskin-Bell Larry Bell and Carolyn Baskin-Bell were united in Holy Matrimony on July 16, 1983. They met on October 18, 1981 at the home of Len and Janice, Larry's brother and sister-in-love.

Carolyn's colleague, Gwen, urged Carolyn to meet this eligible bachelor whom she described as a "good person." After their introduction, the two shared a great friendship through telephone conversations and a few dates over the next couple of months.

In Spring of 1982, Larry and

(Continued on Page 11)

Do You Recognize This Neighborhood Celebrity? (Answer on Page 4)



Celebrate Fun Holidays During the Month of February

By Gigi Appelbaum-Schwartz

February is a month of celebration filled with many holidays to enjoy. Some, like Black History Month or Valentine's Day, are more well-known, but others might come as a bit of a surprise.

To start, there's Black History Month, which, as implied, encompasses the entire month, and is happening at this very moment. Beginning as a week-long celebration in 1926, the holiday was created by historian Carter G. Woodson with the intention of it coinciding with the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass, two prominent figures in African American history. The celebration was expanded to span the entire month in 1976, providing an even more extensive opportunity to recognize and appreciate the significant impact of African Americans on the nation's history and culture.

Moving towards specific days, the first notable holiday of the month is Groundhog's Day, which takes place on February 2. Stay tuned to see if Punxsutawney Phil (the famous groundhog) will see his shadow, or if Spring will arrive



If you went to school in L.A., these posters of Presidents Abe and George were usually on your classroom walls in February.

early for us this year!

Maybe the most tasty holiday of the month: February 9 is National Pizza Day. Order a pie to celebrate – you deserve it.



Alexa and Jake are ready to celebrate National Pizza Day.

The next day, February 10, begins the Lunar New Year, the Year of the Dragon.

February 11 is Super Bowl Sunday, so get ready to root for your favorite team! (Alternatively, gear up for the Puppy Bowl – the true competition of the day).

Then, there's the famous February 14: Valentine's Day. The history of Valentine's Day is one shrouded in legend. One story tells how Saint Valentine, a priest in the third century AD, defied his emperor's marriage ban for young men, and continued to perform marriages for young couples in secret. Legend says he was executed on February 14 for his actions, memorializing the day forever in history. Another story claims that Valentine, while imprisoned, sent a letter to a girl signed, "From your Valentine," and the phrase has carried on to this very day. Either way, Valentine's Day is one to be spent with your loved ones, and we hope that yours is filled with joy.

Of course, the next day, February 15, is Singles Awareness Day (for everyone who missed out the day before). If you're single, look forward to focusing on self care

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Connecting With Citrus This February

By Isabel Filson
California Climate Action Corps Fellow

Each Winter, I am pleasantly surprised to realize it's harvest time for many citrus varieties. Whether the reminder is an unexpected bowl of Calamansi shared in the work kitchen or discovering blood oranges at the farmers market, it's always a welcome occurrence. There are many ways to connect with citrus in Santa Monica this season, including visiting the urban fruit orchard at Ishihara Park, which is located between the playground and the Learning Garden. Orchard visitors are free to visit with the trees and harvest a

few ripe lemons or limes!

Another option is stopping by one of Santa Monica's Farmers Markets to try out a new citrus or pick up a familiar favorite. Or consider your own dwarf citrus tree, growing in a big pot on your patio. You may also choose to use any excess citrus in unique ways this Winter. Oranges and grapefruits that are a tad too old to eat can be dried and used to create a decorative garland, while leftover lemon rinds can be frozen and defrosted whenever a recipe calls for lemon zest.

Or, if citrus season has piqued your curiosity about what goes into planting citrus trees, you may

be interested in joining the City of Santa Monica's Community Garden Program for a Citrus Pruning and Care Workshop at our monthly Pancakes in the Park event.

Join us for this great discussion on Saturday, February 17, from 9 a.m.-11 a.m. focusing on citrus care with hands-on pruning training led by our local UC Master Gardener Orchard Team. We will have garden pancakes, coffee, and crafts for kids. This event is free and open to all!

Find out more about this event and how to register by visiting www.santamonica.gov/events.



The Ishihara Learning Garden at 2909 Exposition Blvd. in Santa Monica will be the location of the Citrus Pruning and Care Workshop event.

Learn Line Dancing at the Venice Library

By Deborah Gray

Dancing is alive and well on the Westside. Marking its one year anniversary this February, Lunchtime Line Dance is being offered on Thursdays, 12:30 p.m. at the Venice-Abbot Kinney Memorial Branch Library.

Taught by Adult Librarian Danielle Dyer, it's an increasingly popular spot for having a little fun while exercising both your body and your brain.

Originally from Chattanooga, Tennessee, Danielle settled in Los Angeles in the mid-90s. She said she had batted around a few career ideas, such as elementary school teaching, guidance counselor, and nursing, before finding her niche as a librarian.



Danielle Dyer teaches line dancing at the library in Venice.

Photo by Bill Lasley

The Santa Monica Star: What led you to teaching this class? Danielle: "My formal training is in ballet, jazz, and musical theater. I began swing dancing in adulthood and became interested in line dancing. A couple of years ago, I hosted a program with Alzheimer's L.A., and one of the things they stressed is the importance of exercise in preventing Alzheimer's. I also read an article that said that dance, specifically, is one of the best types of exercise for cognitive decline.

"Dance is not only good for physical health, circulation, and cardiovascular disease, but line dance and social dance also helps people build social connections that may decrease as they age. Emotionally, dance helps with depression and anxiety because it's a mood booster and stress reliever. It's also very fun!

"I implemented a pilot program in the fall of 2022 and the response was positive so it became

(Continued on Page 10)

Storypalooza! Coming to the Santa Monica Public Library

By Jessica Handy

The Kiwanis Club of Santa Monica is once again sponsoring Storypalooza! at the Santa Monica Public Library. Every year for over 15 years, the library branches here in Santa Monica celebrate Dr. Seuss' birthday and Read Across America, with literacy activities, free book giveaways, and entertainment. This is a free event for the whole family on Saturday, March 2, between 10 a.m. and 12 noon, at the Main Library Branch at 601 Santa Monica Blvd. Kid-friendly performances are planned, there are lots of free books to choose from, and there will be a craft to do! At the same time at the Montana and Pico library branches, free books and craft "Take & Make" kits will be given out.

According to the National Education Association, reading for fun is at an all-time low, only 17% of children say they read every day for fun. It is thought that the increase in standardized testing forcing 'high stakes' reading is killing the joy of reading for children. National Book Foundation



fellow and teacher, R. Joseph Rodriguez, says the key to starting a revival of reading for fun is "providing students with access to good books-and the freedom to pick for themselves."

This is exactly what Storypalooza! provides. The Storypalooza! event encourages young children to learn to love to read with books that celebrate diversity, exploration, and wonder. And, they get to pick out their free book for themselves.

Volunteers at this event include Kiwanis Club of Santa Monica members, members of the KIWINIS and Key Club student organizations, and student leaders from PAL Santa Monica. This all-community event will be fun

for all ages.

Since 1922, the Kiwanis Club of Santa Monica has been the most active service organization in Santa Monica. Each year, the club awards over \$120,000 to our community in the form of grants, scholarships, and sponsorships. Regular club meetings are the third Wednesday of each month. To join us, or to donate to Kiwanis Charities, please visit our website, www.KiwanisClubSM.org, or follow us on Facebook at [kiwanisclubsm](https://www.facebook.com/kiwanisclubsm).



Happy February Birthdays to:

Jerry Dobkin, Libby Atwater, Sara Frank, Rick Kennedy, Ken Waltzer, Russ Warner, Timur Berberoglu, Priscilla Margolin, Pam Andrews, Darby Navin, Kylee Navin, Katie Parr Morgan, Shirley Wilson, Adam Barnard, and Daniel Bennett.

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Home is Where the Heart is



By Richard Lombari
Home is where the heart is, and as Valentine's Day approaches, our thoughts turn to the enduring love affair we have

with our homes. These cherished spaces hold the tapestry of our lives, weaving together memories that linger long after the paint has dried and the furniture has settled.

For many, childhood homes evoke a nostalgia that transcends the limitations of size or amenities. Perhaps lacking the sleek, modern features of today's residences, those homes were the backdrop to laughter, family gatherings, and the magic of holidays. They were not just structures, but vessels of love, where every nook and cranny held a story.

The journey of creating a first home is a testament to youthful ambition, filled with a sense of accomplishment, pride, and newfound independence. Young singles or couples, armed with dreams and paintbrushes, embark on the adventure of turning a house into a home. The to-do list grows, evolving in financially mandated phases, and with each

completed project, a milestone is etched in the story of their shared life.

As families expand and little feet patter through the hallways, homes can sometimes feel like they are shrinking. The need for more space, better schools, or a shorter commute begins to shape the narrative of the next move. The quest for a larger home becomes not just a physical upgrade, but a pursuit of enhanced comfort and convenience for the growing family.

Homes, whether modest or grand, serve as more than just shelters. They are vessels of memory, providers of security, and even markers of status. In each room and every corner, lives unfold, leaving imprints of joy, challenges overcome, and the passage of time. As we celebrate love on Valentine's Day, let us also celebrate the enduring love affair with our homes, where the heart finds its truest sanctuary.

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://lombarirealestatewealthadvisors.com/about>, email Richard@TheLombariGroup.com, or call 310-903-6509.

Byte by Byte

Technology, Travel, and a Year of Firsts



By Dr. Miceala Shocklee
Moving to the United Arab Emirates, or the UAE, has been a sequence of newness, some a translation from familiar spheres of life, and some an entirely novel experience unto itself. February of 2024 marks a year since I first visited the UAE and made the decision to accept a job offer that would once again shift my life halfway across the globe.

Moving itself was a whole new experience. The last time I hopped across the Atlantic, I had only myself and a couple suitcases. Moving with a partner, pets, furniture – all of which, from people to posters, needed to be screened, documented, and stamped in some way or other – was a larger, more staggered, and more bureaucratic process than what I had experienced before.

In contrast, traveling abroad while a resident here – a first I accomplished the last two weeks of 2023 for a trek through Sri Lanka – was astoundingly easy. I had the opportunity to fly out of the newly opened international airport in Abu Dhabi. The airport is a 15 minute taxi away from my apartment complex (which luckily avoided being under the routes of the reestablished flight paths), the terminals are well sign-posted, and the airport interior is nothing short of opulent (a standard I've come to expect of the UAE at large). Airy, immaculate, and gor-

geously designed in ways it didn't strictly need to be, the airport approached even being fun to navigate.

Returning to my new home was a similarly seamless process. Where I'd expected to wait in a customs queue for at least half an hour, the virtual customs station that logged my fingerprint, my face, and my passport and matched them to my visa-linked biometrics, made the process less than five minutes.

I'm still working through the longest period of adjustment to a new country that I've ever experienced, but the more ground I cover here, literally and figuratively, the more excited I become to experience even more firsts as I continue to adapt.

Dr. Miceala Shocklee is a part-time freelance writer and editor and a full-time staff veterinarian with SeaWorld Abu Dhabi Yas Island in the United Arab Emirates. Miceala started her career in Santa Monica and West Los Angeles and now writes of her adventures from other shores.



- Joe Analco

Couples Share Their Stories

(Continued from 1)



Char and Dick Lawrence

By Char Lawrence

We met at Hilton Carte Blanche Credit Card Co. in Hollywood. We were working the night shift while we both were going to college during the day. Dick was attending USC and I was going to Valley Junior College. He told my boss he would like to take me out and he told Dick that I would never go out with him unless he had a new car. So he went out and bought a used 1959 Chevrolet Impala convertible. He traded in his 1955 souped up Mercury and I told him later, "I would have loved that hot rod car."

We dated one year and were engaged for another year. We were married on June 23, 1962.



Hodge and Kelly Patterson

Hodge and Kelly recently celebrated their 13th wedding anniversary. The couple's journey began in 2005, when they crossed paths in Panama City Beach, Florida during their school years.

They tied the knot on January 22, 2011 at Reed Chapel on the campus of Samford University, where Kelly had attended college. The reception, filled with joy and laughter, took place at The Club, Inc. in Birmingham, Alabama before they headed to Jamaica for their honeymoon.

Photos by Brendan Minto

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Reflections From The East

A Valentine Rendezvous With a Mythical Creature From the Orient



By Qin Sun Stubis
Every year, February is specially reserved for Valentine's Day, when love, romance, and friendships are celebrated. We give and receive tokens of affection, like flowers and chocolates, and on this day, we only think good things and express good feelings toward one another.

Even though my children are now all grown, I still have such fond memories of preparing their friendship cards and heart-shaped candies so they could give them out to their teachers and class-

mates in school. We always made sure that all classmates, not just their closest friends, would get a gift and a card.

While every Valentine's Day is memorable, this year's celebration is about to go down in history for being extra special, complete with a surprise visit by a mythical creature from across the ocean! And, I mean it.

The fact is that this Chinese Lunar New Year starts on February 10, and 2024 is the Year of the Dragon. Since the holiday lasts for two weeks, this powerful, age-old festivity is about to have a rendezvous with Valentine's Day, creating a unique double event when hearts and fire collide.

In ancient China, the dragon represented imperial power. Today, Chinese people still consider it to be the ultimate symbol of strength, luck, and success. Of the 12 rotating birth animals in the Chinese zodiac, the dragon is the only unearthly creature. Since it is believed to possess celestial powers, its year is auspicious.

Many young people faithfully follow the old cultural traditions, choosing to get married, having a baby, or starting a business in a Dragon Year. They hope that this majestic, powerful being will bring them much luck, success, and happiness. Besides, who wouldn't want to have a dragon as a watchful guard over their important

life events?
This year, when Valentines meet the mighty powerful dragon, our world will be painted redder than ever. It will be festooned with hearts, kissy lips, lanterns, ribbons, and lots of decorative firecrackers, symbolizing the dawn of another Chinese New Year and lots of love.

Happy Valentine's Day and Happy Year of the Dragon!

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.

What Are You Leaping to Do on February 29?



By Cheryl Thode
Hello readers! OK, last month I wrote about setting your SMART goals for 2024. Were you able to get some down on

paper or at least take some time to think about some "Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Sensitive" goals? If not, no worries! This month we can have an extra bite at the apple. How? Just like that extra hour we used to experience with Daylight Savings in the Fall, this month we get an extra entire day!

Following February 28, we will not immediately start March 1, but rather we get to have the once in every four years Leap Day, aka February 29!

Why do we have Leap Day? Well, while we define a year as 365 days, the truth is that it takes 365.2422 days for the Earth to complete a full revolution around the Sun. That extra fraction of a day creates a problem for our current calendar. We are not able to just add it to the day. However, if we were to just get rid of the extra .2422 portion, after a period of time, the lost fraction would add up to a very consequential num-

ber and lead to the seasons as we know them dramatically shifting.

Basically, the months during which we normally experience each season would change (i.e., after some time, our hot Summers would be in January, and not July!) Aside from affecting our own schedules and plans, losing the .2422 would also drastically impact the growing and harvesting of crops we need to survive.

Leap Day and Year exist to provide a solution. When four separate 0.2422 days are added up, they roughly equal one full day. Thus, the birth of February 29!

Now that you know the reason behind it, what can you do with this extra day? For those of us with littles, or just wanting a break from the typical stresses of our average days, this day could be a wonderful opportunity for "leap-filled" activities.

As I mentioned above, you could continue to "leap" into 2024 and spend some time working on your future goals. Perhaps set aside 29 minutes to just sit and reflect. If you have already made some SMART goals, use this extra day to revisit them and see if you are on track to achieve them.

If you want to do a more family related activity, take the time to

discover your "leap-year age." Divide everyone's age by 4. Everyone then gets to act their leap-year age for the day.

Perhaps, you want to forecast the future! Either by yourself or with your family, set aside time to imagine what your lives will look like four years from now and record your predictions. Then, save them somewhere to be revisited at the next leap year in 2028.

If making an actual time capsule is more your style, gather items from the whole family to put in a shoe box, and then store it until the next leap year.

For those of us wanting to lighten our load, February 29 may be the perfect day to go through our clothes, toys, or items we no longer need. Find 29 items that you are ready to part with and donate them.

There are so many fun ways to experience this once every four years day. On February 29, "leap" up and enjoy it! God Bless!



- Joe Analco

Do You Recognize This Neighborhood Celebrity?

(Continued from Page 1)



Do you recognize Santa atop the famous green dinosaur on the corner of 26th St. and San Vicente in the Sinclair gas station? Recently owner John Fawcett had taken the dinosaur away to be painted. He received calls from customers who were upset saying they wouldn't buy gas from him unless the dinosaur was returned. Santa has gone back to his workshop and the dinosaur is back on the corner greeting customers.

Photo by Kathy Boole

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Free to Be Diverse



By The Rev. John Arthur Nunes, PhD

Jamaica is my birthplace. Canada, where I grew up, welcomed my family as a place of stability. But, it was here in the United States of America that 41 years ago I discovered an uncommon freedom. Many places on our planet seem stuck in a static state of conformist thinking. People are divided into permanently fixed tribes. Economic mobility is afforded only to the nobility. While far from perfect, the U.S.A. tends to aspire toward equality of opportunity: one people formed from many peoples.

More than a national motto, *E pluribus unum* is a civic gift. It animates our life together. Though it may seem ironic, seeing the beauty in our demographic diversity can lead us to an enhanced sense of national unity. We are knit together more deeply when we share a common commitment to respect the different fabrics that form our tapestry. Our survival

may depend on esteeming perspectives, identities, and experiences not our own.

Yet, it's not only for surviving, but may lead to thriving. Diversity unites us with ties that make us stronger. For example, take the fact that the U.S.A. is the winningest nation in Olympic Games history. The diversity of Team U.S.A. plays no small part in our success. We excel because of so many different kinds of people with diverse abilities to ski, swim, swing, sweep (curling), somersault, squat, sprint, jump, hurdle, hurl, hit, fence, lunge, plunge, pedal, kick, lift, volley, vault, row, throw, shoot, dive, drive, ride, slide, glide, or bobsled.

I consider myself blessed to reside in the City of Santa Monica. This community is ebullient in its practice of our rare freedoms. As U.S. Americans we value all people; even people different than we are, even the droll curmudgeons (smile) who are free to disagree with every word in this article.

**The Rev John Arthur Nunes, PhD
Pastor, Pilgrim Lutheran Church**

Discover What's Happening on the Westside

By Gigi Applebaum-Schwartz

• **Thursday, February 1 - National Geographic Live Life on Thin Ice** - Indigenous speaker Kilihi Yüyan teaches about the native peoples of the Arctic north and their relationship to the land and its animals, showcasing photography. Event will begin at 7:30 p.m. at the Performing Arts Center - Music Building, 1310 11th St., Santa Monica. For more information, visit broadstage.org.

• **Saturday, February 3 - Soundwaves Concert: Wendy Richman and Tim Feeney** - Violinist, violist, and vocalist Wendy Richman performs alongside percussionist Tim Feeney. Event will run from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. at the Santa Monica Main Library in the MLK Jr. Auditorium, 601 Santa Monica Blvd.

• **Sunday, February 4 and Sunday, February 25 - Santa Monica Airport Antique Market** - Every 1st and 4th Sunday of the month, an outdoors and dog-friendly antique market with furniture, art, collectibles, vintage clothes, and more. 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. Held at the Santa Monica Airport located next to the Museum of Flying, 2800-3200 Airport Ave. Details: visit santamonicaairportantiquemarket.com.

• **Saturday, February 10 - Montana Ave Branch Library Open House** - Celebrate the library with a storytime from author Angela Joy, reading her new picture book about the musician Prince, as well as crafts and tasty treats. Event will run from 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Montana Avenue Branch, 1704 Montana Avenue.

• **Saturday, February 10 - Craft Your Own Fortune Cookie Workshop** - Lunar New Year celebration. Write a fortune and make a paper fortune cookie. Event will run from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. in the Santa Monica Main Library lobby,

601 Santa Monica Blvd.

• **Saturday, February 10 - Lunar New Year at Cayton Children's Museum** - Lunar New Year celebration featuring a performance and parade by UCLA's ACA Lion Dance Group, as well as many hands-on arts and crafts for kids. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Cayton Children's Museum, 395 Santa Monica Place, Suite 374. For more information, visit caytonmuseum.org.

• **Tuesday, February 13 - Decoden Decoration Crafts** - Decorating picture frames or claw hair clips in the Japanese decoden decorating style. The event is for people aged 10-18, and will run from 4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. at the Montana Avenue Branch, 704 Montana Avenue.

• **Saturday, February 17 - Authors Curtis Chin & Jeff Yang in Conversation: Childhood Heroes** - Curtis Chin, author of *Everything I Learned, I Learned in a Chinese Restaurant*, and Jeff Yang, author of *The Golden Screen: The Movies That Made Asian America*, discuss childhood icons and youthful role models. Event will run from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. at the Santa Monica Main Library, 601 Santa Monica Blvd.

• **Saturday, February 24 - Smart Gardening Workshop** - Lesson on backyard and worm composting, water conservation, grasscycling, and edible gardening taught by LA County Public Works. Event will run from 3 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. in the Santa Monica Main Library's multipurpose room, 601 Santa Monica Blvd.

• **Saturday, February 24 - Black History Celebration in Inglewood** - 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Downtown on Market Street from Regent Street to Hillcrest Boulevard. Live entertainment, arts and crafts, vendors, a food court, and much, much more. Details: Daniel Medina at 310-412-8750.

Passing Through the Pico Neighborhood

What Does the Month of February Mean to Us?



By Stacy McClendon

Love is in the air ... especially in the month of love, or so it's said. Not everyone believes this is true. Sometimes Valentine's Day rolls around so soon, that you swear a year couldn't possibly have passed by.

Then, you think back to how the day went last year, which felt like yesterday. Those memories take you over for a bit, whether joyful or not. Did you get those perfectly trimmed long stem roses sent to you, have an exciting night out on the town, or get some other divine surprise or gift from the one you love, and who loves you?

If not, don't go down the rabbit hole. Pull yourself back into reality and make this time special and unforgettable with those currently around you. Plan something special just for yourself, if you're not in a relationship. Go hang out with or invite friends over for a night of cuisine and fun times. If you have children, let them choose the plan for the evening, as they'll leave you pleasantly surprised. (I know this from experience.) You can even decide to do nothing at all, and just relax with a good book, movie, and/or snacks.

Last year, one of my special girl friends sent me some gorgeous flowers (a favorite of mine). It brought me so much joy! I also like to bring treats to share with my work family to help brighten their day as well. It's the thought!

Don't let not having a relationship get you down, and forget about ALL you do have. Everyone has someone who they love, or who loves them. Sometimes neither knows this fact is true, as it hasn't been shared yet. Timing is everything in relationships, and that special someone will most likely come along when you least expect it.

And, if you don't celebrate Valentine's Day at all, use the time to do something unique and enjoyable.

Continue to do your best to remember all the people in your life who are there for you, show you love, and bring you joy. The number of people isn't as important as when those you are close to are genuine and loving in their experiences with you.

Remember, Valentine's Day is just one day. However, love is necessary and needed on a daily basis!

Stacy McClendon is a longtime Pico Neighborhood resident and Santa Monica City staff member.

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Entertaining With Ease

Tips the Guests and Host Will Love



By Maureen Molé

For a Valentine's Day brunch, lunch, or dinner, or for any party, here are some tips that will make hosts love their guests

and guests love their hosts.

Hosts should:

- Tell their guests who else is invited to the party. For all the guests know, the party could be a small intimate dinner for six or a gala for 25. Also, knowing who the other guests are prevents problems like mentioning the party to someone who is not invited. Some electronic invitations allow guests to see the full list of invitees. Finally, it is best to be intentional about who you are bringing together, such as college friends, work colleagues, neighbors, etc.
- Give the guests some idea of the food to be served. You might say cocktails and appetizers, desserts only or a sit-down dinner. I once went to a party without knowing what food would be served. So, I took a small portion of the first course to save room for the entree, only to realize that there was no second course!
- Set the table before the guests arrive and be ready for the guests on time. That will make them feel special and show how organized you are.

Guests should:

- Bring a small gift for the host; most thoughtful is something spe-

cial that the host would enjoy. Perhaps, bring a great bottle of olive oil, a box of special herb teas, imported cheese, pretty cocktail napkins, or a small houseplant. Flowers might not be a good idea because the host will have to look for a vase. Of course, a bottle of wine is always popular. It is a nice gesture to tell the host that the gift is for them alone and it is not necessary to share with the other guests at the party.

- Do not bring food of which the host is not aware. While you may think it is a nice idea to add to the menu, at best, it might still detract from the host's menu. At worst, it might be unintentionally insulting to the host and imply that their food might not be good or plentiful enough.
- Do not bring an uninvited guest or guests to the party. If you want to bring someone, call the host, and ask. Otherwise, there might not be room for a surprise guest at the table or the host might not have prepared enough food.
- Please arrive at the time the host indicates, not too early and not too late.

If you follow these little tips, hosts will love their guests and guests will love their hosts at a Valentine's Day party, or any other party.

Maureen Molé is a lecturer, product spokesperson, and the author of The Book of Entertaining at Home. Email her at MaureenMole@gmail.com.

More Couples Share Their Stories



Jerome and Pier Bruce

Pier, right, and Jerome Bruce met in Santa Monica while working at Century Cable in 1990. They became really good friends and "the rest," Pier says, "is history." They were married on Pier's birthday, December 13, 1998, recently celebrating their 25th anniversary.



Xavier and Tamara Banister

Tamara, right, a stylist, came into Xavier Banister's Cuttin' Up Barber Shop on 18th and Broadway looking for a job. Xavier teases, "I knew I was in trouble as soon as I hired her." They have been together for 19 years.

Madison's Art Corner



Here's the latest drawing from Madison Kim, Age 7.

Celebrate Fun Holidays

(Continued from Page 1)

during this holiday.

February 19 is President's Day. Arriving on the third Monday of every February, the holiday celebrates the birthdays of both George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, while (most importantly) giving many people a day off from work and school to relax.

To finish off the month, February 28 is National Chocolate Soufflé Day, so feel free to enjoy a tasty treat as you wait for March to begin!

Love Links

Our Readers Spill About Their Spouses



Mark and Qin Stubis

Waiting for Love . . . Across Time and Space

By Mark Stubis

Some loves just seem destined to be. I first heard about Qin from my parents when they returned from the trip-of-a-lifetime to China. "We found the perfect girl for you," they said. "She is a total romantic, quotes Shakespeare, Lincoln, and Keats, and just happens to be beautiful. Unfortunately, she's on the other side of the Earth."

Being a young pianist just out of Juilliard, where impossible challenges are part of the fun, I was undaunted. "I'll wait," I said. And, wait I did.

Five years later, when Qin left China and flew to the United States to pursue her master's degree, I made sure to be the first person she met, picking her up at the airport. Over the course of the next two weeks, we watched old movies, took walks in the sand at Fire Island, and talked about our very different lives: Hers, growing up in a Shanghai shantytown and mine, growing up on the Upper East Side of Manhattan.

Of course, I fell in love with her just the night before she had to leave to attend a university 2,000 miles away in Arizona. I found myself waiting again, this time for two years, and luckily, my patience paid off.

Today, we've been married 28-1/2 years, are hopelessly in love, have two wonderful children, spend our time traveling around the country promoting her book, *Once Our Lives*, and are as happy as the proverbial clams that she loves. Qin has taught me that the best things in life truly are worth waiting for.



Tess and Maurice were groovin' at The Grove last December near the Farmers Market.

Tess and Maurice Jordan, above, have been married 19-1/2 years. They met at the Hillcrest Country Club when Maurice became a sous chef and Tess managed the front office desk.



Emily Alvarez and Phil Gaimon

The Wheels Go 'Round and 'Round

Our first *Love Links* couple, Emily Alvarez and Phil Gaimon, above, stop to share a cookie on a recent bike ride.

Emily shares, "Phil and I met early 2019. Technically, via social media (specifically Instagram), but we had many friends in common since we both ride bikes so it was really a matter of time until our paths crossed. We moved in together in January of 2020 and got married April 2022."

See their wedding story in our July 2023 issue. *Photo by Harrison Alpert*



Kingsley and Joanne Fife

Kingsley and Joanne Fife are at the beach for their morning walk. He notes, "We've been married for 42 years and we still feel like newlyweds!" The couple met through mutual friends.

Downtown SM February Celebrations

Welcome the Year of the Dragon at Santa Monica Place on February 17 with lion dancers, a Chinese dough artist, and craft kits for the kids from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m.

On February 24 from 1 p.m. to 8 p.m., the Black History Month Festival on the Third Street Promenade will feature live music, local vendors, family activities, and more!




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Traveling With Tanya

Embracing the Journey: The Allure of Train Travel



Traveling by train is not just about reaching your destination, it's about slowing down to savor the journey.

By Tanya Gilbert

Train travel is experiencing a renaissance, fueled by its sustainable credentials and the promise of a scenic adventure. Uncover the profound benefits of embracing a slower pace by incorporating rail travel into your plans. It allows for some spontaneity in your journey that air travel can't match, at least not without incurring extra costs. Here are a couple of train trips that are high on my list.

While opulent trains like the Belmond's Orient-Express are alluring, a myriad of alternatives deliver comfort and something unique. After a memorable trip to Montenegro, I am eager to experience the Montenegro Express from Belgrade to Bar. It is a journey steeped in history and scenic beauty, treating passengers to a visual feast that can only be experienced from the rails. The southern route of this overnight train graces early-risers with stunning vistas worthy of setting an alarm.

Embark on a journey to the heart of Sri Lanka aboard the Kandy to Ella train. Winding through rolling tea plantations,

misty forests, and quaint villages, this journey offers a glimpse into the soul of Sri Lanka. The train, a lifeline for many local communities, represents a sustainable travel choice that maximizes cultural exchange. Sri Lanka's offerings are vast, from its diverse wildlife and culinary delights, to wellness retreats.

These are merely a glimpse into endless possibilities to explore the world by train. The resurgence of train journeys offers a hopeful path forward as we navigate more sustainable travel. By opting to slow down and enjoy the journey, travelers can reduce their environmental impact, support local communities, and rediscover the joy of the journey.

Interested in weaving train travel into your next trip? I am here to assist. Reach out to me at Tanya@MariposaTravelAdvisors.com. Meanwhile, let me share one of my favorite resources, *The Man in Seat 61*, (www.seat61.com). Mark Smith's extensive insight on train travel worldwide might just get you dreaming.

Enjoy a Memorable Wine & Food Festival While Benefitting Local Charities

The Rotary Club of Santa Monica is rolling out the red carpet for a fun night of music, dinner, fine wines, and exciting live and silent auctions on Saturday, March 9 from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m.

The Festival will be held at the lovely Skirball Cultural Center, on 2701 N. Sepulveda Blvd. just west of the top of Mulholland Drive and the 405 Freeway.

Guests will enjoy a gourmet meal of their choice accompanied by the best wines selected by the participating vendors. Join members of this service club who

spend their time and efforts to make a real difference in our local community.

The featured charity this year is the Guardian Scholars Program which provides life-changing support for students who are currently in foster care or former foster care residents who are attending Santa Monica College.

Call Andrea Gressinger at 310-940-1024 to learn more about the event, or to get your tickets today at RotaryWineFest.org.

Thoughts From a Second-Time Father

Saying Goodbye to Dear Friends



By Michael Margolin

My wife, Enjoli, and I have had discussions about how our kids will handle having their hearts broken when they get

older. It is not a frequent topic of conversation, though it has come up. The type of broken heartedness I am referring to is having a romantic relationship come to an end by choice, not by tragedy or other circumstances. And, of course there is a chance that one or both of our children does not really experience it at all. Since Alexa is 10 and Jake is seven, we probably have quite a while until it is a real possibility.

The thought of our children experiencing these emotions makes Enjoli uneasy. Having had my heart broken several times, I have used it as a lesson in life. Nobody wants to have their heart broken, but if it is going to happen, you have to find ways to move on. Because of a friend moving away, Alexa has some sense of what heartache feels like.

We live in a neighborhood that has quite a few families with at least one member of the household in the military. For some of them, they are here for several years and then orders come, and they move away.

Recently, a family that Enjoli and Alexa had become particularly close with for the last few years, had to move back across the country. This family had the house where everybody would gather. Alexa would meet her friend in the morning and the families would walk to school together.

This same friend was Alexa's best friend at school.

Alexa began to have that feeling you get when something is happening with a friend that you do not want to happen, and there is nothing you can really do about it. Her friend was moving away and that was that.

They spent as much time together as they could before the move, creating as many memories as possible. It was much tougher than I thought it would be to watch Alexa deal with it.

Our household has a tremendous amount of respect and gratitude for our service members. This was an occasion where I could remind the kids, and myself, that it is not only the people that are enlisted who are willing to make sacrifices for their country. These moves are not easy on the parent who is at home, or the growing children. These are moments Jake and Alexa will not forget.

It was also a good time to remind Alexa that she can always talk to us about new feelings or anything she feels she needs to discuss. She will be able to easily keep in touch with this friend, though it certainly will not be the same as if she was still living here. Of course, this is will be a lesson that every day the heartache will be a little lighter. She will continue to miss her friend and we will all miss having that family here.

But, the show must go on, and Alexa is learning how to make that happen.

Mike Margolin has been writing for us since his daughter Alexa was born ten years ago. Mike is also a coach for Alexa's, and his son Jake's soccer teams.

Black History Greens Festival

You and your family are invited to join Virginia Avenue Park's Black Community Group when it presents its 9th Annual Black History Greens Festival. The fun event will run from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, February 24.

The festival will include cooking demonstrations, book giveaways, crafts workshops, musical and dance performances, along with vendors, and health information.



Above is one of the food vendors who attended last year.



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Community Service on the Westside

Special Events at Lions Club Meetings



By Kingsley Fife

The Lions are especially interested in stimulating and encouraging our youth to further their education so they can reach their maximum potential. We achieve this in various ways.

Every year the California Lions hold a statewide *Student Speakers Contest* where all the clubs have high school students compete by speaking on a single topic. This year it is, "For a Better World, What would You Do?" The winners at each level earn money and scholarships as they go on. The final winner gets a \$10,000 scholarship.

We Santa Monica-Pacific Palisades Lions also give scholarships to deserving Santa Monica High School and Santa Monica College students every year. Just recently, at our monthly dinner meeting,

one of the Santa Monica College recipients was our speaker. He was Maxwell Bull, who had received our Dot Gelvin Memorial Scholarship.

He spoke to us about his educational and career plans. He just received his degree at Santa Monica College and plans to attend California State University at Northridge to receive his bachelors degree. Ultimately, he wants to work in the dermatology field and plans to enroll in a program to become a physician's assistant.

We all thoroughly enjoyed meeting this delightful young man. Seeing his enthusiasm and motivation was for all of us a very satisfying reward for this special outreach Club activity.

Are you curious about Lionism? Maybe joining us will fill that void in your life. Learn more by being our guest at one of our dinner meetings. Call Lion Kingsley Fife at 310-454-2960 or email kfife88@yahoo.com.

An Update on February Activities



By Patricia Webber

The Santa Monica Bay Woman's Club (SMBWC) celebrated Valentine's Day with our annual Valentine Making and Music Event on February 3. In pre-Pandemic years this was a well-attended signature activity for our Club. We were thrilled to be able to bring this annual event back to our Santa Monica Community, but more on this in next month's issue.

This month we are beginning a new group for writers. From seasoned to new writers, everyone is welcome to share their writing in a non-judgmental and welcoming atmosphere. More details on this group will be in the next issue.

Our book club, which meets on the fourth Tuesday of the month, is reading and discussing *The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store* by James McBride. This group continues to grow and new members and interested members are welcome.

This past month, we shared a special fundraising effort with our members for the General Federation of Women's Club Signature

Program: Domestic and Sexual Violence Awareness and Prevention.

The GFWC Success For Survivors Scholarship was created in 2012 to lend a helping hand to those impacted by intimate partner violence who are pursuing higher education. The scholarship aims to provide survivors with a means to achieve both financial and personal independence. Since its inception, GFWC has awarded more than \$97,500 in scholarship funds.

Our Club has been accepting reservations for Spring school functions, so anyone looking to have an event at our beautiful facility should contact us at soon as possible to ensure a preferred date.

We continue to enjoy our monthly get-togethers, card playing, arts and crafts and conversation, and book club. Anyone who is interested in joining should contact our office during weekday mornings at 310-395-1308, or through our web page www.smbwc.org.

Special note: Due to Club member allergies and other conditions, pets will no longer be allowed in the Club. However, Certified Service Pets will be allowed.

Watching Photographer Brendan Minto at Work



NWLA Bridal shop owner Nadia Williamson asked photographer Brendan Minto to take the photos of married couples for our special Valentine's Day issue.

Here he is at work with Pam and Scott Andrews, left. Thanks to Steve Litvack for taking this photo for us.



Couples Share Their Stories (Continued from Page 1)



Chris De Carlo and Evelyn Rudie

By Evelyn Rudie

Chris and I met at the Santa Monica Playhouse, his first day back from Vietnam. He had been in our Actors' Workshop session (ongoing since the Playhouse first opened its doors in 1960) before he was drafted, and it was the first thing he did when he returned from the war.

I had joined the class a few months previously. We were doing the Hot Seat exercise (popular at the time) where one actor sits in a pool of light and all of the other members of the class say something about them they wouldn't ordinarily say. It was my turn to be in the Hot Seat. When it was Chris's turn to comment, he got up and said, "This lady has the most wonderful smile. And her eyes light up with warmth. She is truly beautiful, inside and out."

My father happened to be watching the class that night. Afterwards, as we were leaving, he said, "Now that's a nice young man. He is the one for you." And he was right.

We will celebrate our 54th wedding anniversary on August 24, 2024.

Photos by Brendan Minto



Steve and Gail Litvack

Steve and Gail Litvack actually met at a synagogue youth group when they were 15 years old. They both went to Venice High School, but didn't start dating until age 17. They will be married 57 years in August of 2024.



Pam and Scott Andrews

Scott and Pam met while working at the Santa Monica Family YMCA in 1995. They married in 1997. They have a passion for travel and enjoy visiting new places and exploring their surroundings.



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Planning Ahead

Getting a Health Care Directive for Another Reason



By Lisa C. Alexander, Esq. Everybody should have an Advance Health Care Directive. This important document names an agent to make health care decisions for you if you cannot do so for yourself, and it allows you to express your wishes for end-of-life care. The authority of the agent ends at death, except, the agent has two important functions that continue after you die. The first is the ability to authorize organ donation. The second is to direct disposition of remains.

An Advance Health Care Directive allows you to express your wishes for burial or cremation, funeral, or memorial. Even if you don't state your wishes in the document, the agent you name has the authority to claim your body from the mortuary and make decisions about burial or cremation.

What happens if you don't have an Advance Health Care Directive? Under California law, closest relatives can claim your body. Priority is given first to a spouse, followed by children, then grandchildren, and so on. But, the relative may need a Court Order to satisfy the mortuary. The situation is so common that there is a Court-approved petition form, with boxes

to check, to obtain a Court order authorizing release of the body.

I recently helped a Successor Trustee who was the decedent's trusted friend and neighbor. The decedent died without an Advance Health Care Directive. In this case, the decedent's closest living relative was a sister living in Hungary who did not speak English.

The Court ordered the Trustee to obtain the sister's consent to release of the body to the Trustee. The Court required the consent to be translated to English by a certified translator. I had to appear at a Court hearing which lasted more than an hour until our case was called, the last on the calendar. The whole process took several weeks, and the legal fees and costs totaled more than \$1,000.

Eventually the body was released for cremation and the funeral home was able to proceed with the memorial. The experience drove home the importance of the Advance Health Care Directive, not for the obvious reason of end-of-life care, but for this other reason. The delay and all the expense incurred to obtain release of the decedent's body could have been avoided by advance planning.

Lisa C. Alexander, Esq. Jakle, Alexander, & Patton, LLP Main Line: 310-395-6555 alexander@jaklelaw.com

Oops ... We Erred



Brian Sforzo

In our January 2024 issue, we did a story on a dance class held on the Third Street Promenade led by teacher Brian Sforzo. His name was misspelled. We regret any inconvenience this error may have caused.

Brian's photo, left, was taken by Bill Lasley.

Historical Santa Monica Building for Lease



This historic space brings back many memories for local Santa Monica residents who often drive by the location.

Those of us who have lived in Santa Monica for many years have fond memories of the building that sits at 402 Santa Monica Blvd. and 4th St. Once a department store called Henshey's, it was where we shopped for clothes, gifts, books, and more. It had an elevator to take customers to the second floor. My mother actually had a part-time job there while she was going to college when my brother and I were growing up.

The original building was eventually torn down. Toys 'R' Us bought the property and built the building for their use, moving in to it in 1995. Approximately 10 years later in 2005, it closed.

The popular sporting goods store, REI (Recreational Equipment, Inc.), took a 10-year lease, with possible extensions.

The store is slated to close on

February 29.

This space currently has 32,930 sq. ft. on two levels - 17,500 on the first floor and 15,430 sq. ft. on the second level with an elevator.

Long-time brokerage company Muselli Commercial Realtors, Vince Muselli and Evan Pozarny, were selected by the current building owner to handle the leasing of this desirable location.

With the exciting growth in Downtown Santa Monica, a retail business looking for a premium high-traffic location, such as sporting goods, a gym, clothing store, or mixed-use restaurant with retailing could meet the needs of the local shoppers.

For more details on leasing the building, contact Evan Pozarny at Muselli Commercial Realtors at 310-458-4100, ext. 221.

-D.M.

Learn Line Dancing (Continued from Page 2)

a regular, weekly program at our library."

The Santa Monica Star: What do you think draws people to this particular class?

Danielle: "There are very few places to line dance on the West-side of Los Angeles so I think people are happy to have a place to dance. My classes are designed to be very beginner-friendly with a low pressure, non-judgmental environment. It's a safe space to just learn something new. There's no

competition and we are all just there to have fun."

The Santa Monica Star: What kind of feedback do you get from your dance students?

Danielle: "I'm frequently told this class is welcoming and nurturing. I have students who have been coming since the beginning. It's really wonderful to see people who seem shy and worried they won't do well, come out of their shell and become more confident and connected."

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Paws and Claws

Lily Plants Are Highly Toxic For Cats



By Dr. Frank Lavac, MS, DVM
Q: I have a two-year-old cat and was recently given a lily plant as a gift. I heard some where that lilies

might be poisonous. Is that true?

A: Yes, many lily species including the Easter Lily, Stargazer Lily, and Asian Lily are extremely toxic to cats, but not dogs. Any part of the plant, flower, or pollen, is toxic when licked or ingested. Even small ingested amounts can lead to kidney failure. Within a few hours, the cat will start vomiting and become lethargic and anorexic. There are so many causes of vomiting in cats, that a history of ingestion is very important to institute appropriate, aggressive therapy. This usually involves intravenous fluid therapy and possible oral administration of activated charcoal to absorb the toxins.

The kidney damage can progress to failure within 36-72 hours. Clearly, lilies should not be in a house where cats live.

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

Adopt a Pet



Licorice is four-years-old and loves people and other dogs. She is high energy and will benefit from an active home that will continue her training. Please contact Best FriendsLa@bestfriends.org.



From Me to You...



By Diane Margolin
 During the time I was putting this issue together, friends in various places across the country were experiencing extremely cold weather.

Some of them were used to the sunny weather we were enjoying at the same time. One living in Idaho had eight inches of fresh snow to deal with. His little dog needed booties before she would go outside. Now, he has ten inches of snow. He said the temperature of zero degrees has been an issue, but they were okay now. Another living in Indiana said it was 10 degrees outside and she was staying inside her house.

One friend in New Jersey needed



help walking down her icy driveway after the six inches of snow they had began to melt.

Another friend's car in Oregon got stuck at the base of her driveway. She had to dig it out in six degree weather. It took her 45 minutes!

Banjo, the Stubis family dog, (shown below left), had an unexpected adventure recently. He usually lets the family know he is ready to come inside from the yard by barking after he has taken care of his business. But, he chose to go through the yard gates that had been blown open on a very cold winter night in Maryland.

It was 11:30 p.m. when they realized he hadn't given the signal to come inside. Panicked, three family members put on their coats over their pajamas, put their shoes on, took flashlights, and ventured into the dark, calling out Banjo's name. They saw his pawprints in the snow by the gate and split up to cover the neighborhood. Their home is in a spacious suburban area. It took some time before he was finally located in a neighbor's yard. The family members were very happy to find their precious pet.

We are so lucky to be living in such a beautiful area. Enjoy!

Larry Bell and Pastor Carolyn Baskin-Bell

(Continued from Page 1)

Carolyn began to spend more time together. On May 29, 1982, Larry presented Carolyn a promise ring. Carolyn inquired and wanted to know, "Where is this relationship going?" Two months later, Larry proposed and Carolyn said, "Yes!"

Forty years later, they still hold a strong friendship and partner-

ship in marriage. As Carolyn explains, "We promote the three Cs: Communication with God and one another, Compassion, and Compromise to maintain any relationship." Their matchmakers still brag about their success 40 years later.

An Update From ERBA Markets

The Benefits of Drug Designations



By Stephen Freedman
 This past August, the Department of Health and Human Services recommended that marijuana be stripped of its classification as a

Schedule I drug, and reclassified as a Schedule III drug. Many have longed for this adjustment in the hopes that it would lead to more research of the health benefits of cannabis, as well as easing the restriction on sales. But how far would this adjustment go?

The Controlled Substance Act regulates and sorts drugs into five "schedules," based on medicinal benefits and potential for abuse. A Schedule I designation means that the federal government believes that there are no medicinal benefits of the drug, and a high potential for abuse. It also means cultivation and possession are outlawed except for research, and any research conducted of the drug must be approved prior to any studies. A Schedule III designation means that the drug has low to moderate potential for abuse.

This may seem like a huge win for the cannabis industry, which at first glance, it is. However, there are a few caveats. Federal officials

have argued that due to international treaties to fight drug trafficking, they are obligated to keep marijuana as a Schedule I or II drug. The rescheduling would still have some difficulty on the research side due to it not being classified as recreational. This means that testing on the products in the market, such as vapes, edibles, and concentrates, would go unstudied. It may also cause the product to be more difficult to purchase recreationally as it would be seen more as medicine.

While the reclassification would be a step forward, if for nothing else than showing movement away from grouping cannabis with other harmful, addictive drugs, it will not have the effect many wish it would. This will only occur when marijuana is removed from the scheduling system entirely, putting it on the same level as tobacco and alcohol, and eventually legalized on the federal level.

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



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