

# THE SANTA MONICA STAR

Also covering  
The Greater  
Westside

Volume XXIV Number 1

Connecting You With Your Community

January 2024



Natalie Guerboian proudly holds her winning medal at the Ironman triathlon held in Kona, Hawaii last year.

## Natalie Guerboian Fulfills Eight-Year Dream of Being in the Ironman World Championship

By Gigi Appelbaum-Schwartz

Many of you might have heard about Natalie Guerboian's family, and their famous jewelry dynasty whose members served as an active part of the Santa Monica community for many years. But you might not have known that Natalie, a special education teacher, has become famous for entirely different reasons – namely, her dedication to a pastime most people can only dream of: rigorous Ironman triathlons.

For the past eight years, this Santa Monica native has spent much of her life intensively training for and competing in Ironman triathlons – competitions consisting of 2.4 mile swims, 112 mile bike rides, and 26.2 mile runs – all done consecutively in as little time as possible. This past October, her efforts finally culminated in the ultimate race: the annual Ironman World Championship that takes place in Kona, Hawaii.

In order to qualify for the World Championship, triathletes have two options: either they can win the competition for their specific age group, or they can complete 13 total Ironmans in preparation. Natalie chose the latter, doing 13 Ironmans in the span of eight years.



Natalie's friends and family were with her on Kona to support her in the Ironman World Championship.

"There were several years where I did two [Ironmans], and several years where I did three," she shared. "My 13th one was this past year, and it validated my spot in the World Championship in Kona."

When she is not training for or competing in triathlons, Natalie works as a special education teacher. She said that she often discusses her Ironman journeys with her students, in hopes of inspiring them to face challenges with strength and positive attitudes. As she puts it, she's not much different from everyone else: what makes her special is the immense dedication and resilience that push her to work tirelessly to achieve her goals. "I'm just an average girl who had a dream and worked towards it, and did everything [she could] to attain it," she explained.

Natalie completed her first Ironman triathlon in 2015, after her cousin introduced her to the sport by inviting her to participate in an Olympic distance triathlon, which is a quarter of what an Ironman entails. She said she was completely enthralled by the competition, and never looked back.

"I really fell in love with all three sports," she said. "I had learned about what the Ironman was after completing my first marathon ... and the idea of the challenge of swimming 2.4 miles, then biking 112 miles, all before a marathon, intrigued me. So I signed up."

In order to prepare for her first Ironman, Natalie signed up for the half Ironman distance, and surrounded herself with mentors who helped her get stronger and more tactful.

"I really didn't know what I was doing," she recalled. "I just went

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## Civil Rights Attorney Lisa Holder to Speak at the 39th Annual Celebration of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

You are invited to attend the 39th annual celebration of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his legacy on January 15. The timely theme for 2024 is: "Stop the Hate, Start the Healing." The event will include inspirational remarks, music, and a brief theatrical performance, as well as education awards, a Community Light Award, and our new Nat Trives Service Award to be presented to Nat Trives.

The event planners are excited to welcome Lisa Holder as their keynote speaker. She is a truly remarkable young woman with an extensive biography. Ms. Holder is a nationally recognized, award winning trial attorney with specialized expertise in equal protection, education equity, employment discrimination, constitutional policing, and international human rights law.

Ms. Holder was recently appointed President of the Oakland based Equal Justice Society and she also recently completed her two-year term as an appointee of Gov. Gavin Newsom on the historic Reparations Task Force. In 2019, she drafted AB 241 and 242, the laws that now require all judges, attorneys, court staff, and health professionals to undertake continuing education on bias elimination.

After the celebration, you are invited to attend the Community Involvement Fair where you will have the opportunity to meet with representatives from a variety of nonprofit organizations, and enjoy light refreshments.

You are also encouraged to attend the other special events honoring Dr. King during the extended weekend of celebrations. Special



Lisa Holder will be the keynote speaker at this year's Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s celebration on January 15.

events include the national holiday celebration on Monday, January 15, from 9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. at the SGI-USA World Peace Ikeda Auditorium on 525 Wilshire Blvd. in Santa Monica. Parking is available at 1212 7th St.

Please check their website closer to the date of the event for a possible live stream link and updates: [www.mlkjrwestside.org](http://www.mlkjrwestside.org). Masks are encouraged.

Immediately following the opening celebration will be the Community Involvement Fair which will be held at the Santa Monica Bay Woman's Club, 1210 4th St., Santa Monica. For information: go to [involvementfair@gmail.com](mailto:involvementfair@gmail.com).

A tribute to Harry Belafonte, *Sing Your Song*, will be a special free screening of the documentary film on the life and times of the singer/actor/activist with Q&A to follow. It is presented by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Westside Coalition and the Santa Monica Public Library on Thursday, January 11 from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Auditorium/Santa Monica Public

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## Do You Recognize This Neighborhood Celebrity?

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# The Many Benefits of Gardening

By **Bee Parba-Padilla,**  
**California Climate Action**  
**Corps Fellow**

Can gardening improve one's quality of life and mental well-being? Research studies show a positive correlation between hours spent in contact with soil and plants with a decrease in cortisol hormones or stress levels.

Other reports, more specifically, suggest the bacteria and microorganisms in the soil strengthen our immune systems. In urban settings, and among various young people and everyday working people, how can we ensure this connection between garden soil and wellness is made and accessible to everyone? With Americans under extreme levels of stress, is now a more crucial time than ever to get more people

in gardens?

As a society, are we interested in looking at the historical and social barriers that have inhibited a community's connection to their natural environment, living ecosystems and more loosely, the soil? Can community gardens be a place where these social problems and larger questions are explored?

In a recent article, gardening did relieve stress and boost a nature connection during a COVID-19 pandemic. Dr. Monika Erger, a professor for Urban Productive Ecosystems at the Technical University of Munich, worked with a team to investigate individual motivational factors for gardeners: nature connection, stress relief, outdoor physical activity, economic hardship and food scarcity. Dr. Erger and her colleagues

advocate for green spaces and community gardens as a public health strategy.

In the coming weeks and months, the City of Santa Monica's Community Garden Program, including CSM Staff and California Climate Action Corps Fellows, will continue outreach to local community members and organizations surrounding the 19th Street Urban Farm Project. This vacant property, located at 2018 19th Street, is slated to become a long over-due green learning space for youth, families, elders, and adults in the Pico neighborhood to grow food collectively. More information about Urban Ag efforts in Santa Monica can be found at [SantaMonica.gov](http://SantaMonica.gov).



The joy of harvesting your own vegetables is worth waiting for.



The taste of fresh tomatoes that you have grown in your garden will be better than any others you have purchased.

## Dance Your Way Into the New Year



Dance Teacher Brian Forzo

By **Deborah Gray**

Trying something new can sometimes be, well, a little uncomfortable. But, it can also lead to a very welcomed adventure.

Although I've never been shy about doing my "own thing" on the dance floor, my history with choreographed dance is quite a different story, and it's one that



I am still exploring.

For example, partner dancing, as in the sultry Tango, or energetic Swing, requires you to take some lessons. Luckily, on the Third Street Promenade (Tuesday nights, at 7 p.m.), you have the opportunity to be tutored by professional dance coach Brian Forzo, a man with a passion for Swing Dancing and the talent for teaching it. Personally, I've found his instruction to be informal and fun. And, what's especially important to me is his detailed attention to partner etiquette.

If Brian observes an over-enthusiastic beginner "tugging" his partner's arm, he quickly gives corrective instruction to the group as a whole, without pointing fingers. Because my previous experience in beginner lessons occasionally left me with a sore limb, Brian's close monitoring is very much welcomed!

**The Santa Monica Star:** "So Brian, what is your background in dance?"

**Brian:** "Salsa! and several other dances – Argentine Tango, Ballet, Hip hop, Modern, Musical theater ... the list goes on. Learning many dances lends the ability to influence, enhance, and give your dancing its own style and flavor in whatever your most current joy in dance is. So, my most recent joy is West Coast Swing, and I've been doing it for ten plus years!"

**The Santa Monica Star:** "How did your passion for dance begin?"  
**Brian:** "Simply put, I can't not move when I hear music. And, adding visually artistic expression to that, complements the music. Now we're talkin'!"

**The Santa Monica Star:** "Why did you begin the Promenade lessons?"

**Brian:** "West Coast Swing is a very difficult dance to learn, especially if it's the first one you try. So we're putting it out in the open, where people can learn it in a welcoming and tangible way."  
**The Santa Monica Star:** "What have you learned through your experience as a dance teacher?"  
**Brian:** "To constantly learn to be a better teacher. Over the years I've noticed every person has their own way of interpreting the information being taught in a class, so having several methods to teach that information is crucial!"

**The Santa Monica Star:** "The recent Halloween dance that you choreographed had a good turnout. Are there more "theme" nights planned?"

**Brian:** "When we have five Tuesdays in a month, we are planning on doing more "interesting" lessons on that fifth Tuesday, which could mean that more choreography or a slightly more difficult pattern will be taught."

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Distribution: Paper Pushers LA

Special thanks to Rufus Baker and

Bernadette Lucier

**The Real Estate Advisor**

**Safeguarding Your Castle**



**By Richard Lombardi**

In the wake of a recent string of home burglaries in our neighborhood, I found myself on a mission to fortify my own home against potential intruders. It's a concerning reality, but there are practical steps we can take to beef up our home security and send a clear message to would-be burglars that ours is not the house you're looking for.

First and foremost, make it known that your home is under watchful eyes. A monitored security system is a powerful deterrent. For a comprehensive security net, invest in a top-tier home security system. Sensors on doors and windows, motion detectors, and a central control panel can be monitored remotely through smartphone apps. Stay in the know and be ready to act if a threat arises. Place security company signs strategically in your yard and affix stickers on windows near entry points. Let them know you mean business.

Fences and gates aren't just for aesthetics. They're crucial in restricting access to side and rear yards, making it harder for anyone with nefarious intentions to sneak around unnoticed.

Brighten up the perimeter with smart lights equipped with motion sensors. Not only do they illuminate dark corners when someone approaches, but some even come

with cameras, turning the tables on potential intruders.

Speaking of lights, program smart lights indoors to simulate your presence even when you're away. Nothing says "occupied" like a well-lit home, deterring any opportunistic mischief.

Upgrade your traditional locks to smart locks accessible through a smartphone app. And, don't stop there. Embrace the future with doorbell cameras featuring motion sensors and two-way communication. Now, you can keep tabs on your front door in real-time, no matter where you are.

Lastly, don't neglect your digital front. Secure your home Wi-Fi network with robust passwords and enable WPA3 encryption. A secure network ensures that your smart devices remain in your control, minimizing the risk of unwanted access.

By weaving these smart security measures into your home, you're not just adding a layer of protection, you're embracing a peace of mind that extends whether you're within your walls, or miles away. It's about more than security; it's about taking control and making safety a seamless part of your everyday life.

**Richard Lombardi 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@TheLombardiGroup.com](mailto:Richard@TheLombardiGroup.com), or call 310-903-6509.**

**Byte by Byte**

**2023 and the UAE: Looking Back at a Year of New Technology**



**By Dr. Miceala Shocklee**

I am no stranger to moving. In addition to more typical translocations like heading halfway across the country for my undergraduate degree, my geographic history has included an international move to the United Kingdom for veterinary school with temporary work placements across South America, Africa, and Asia during those four years of being rooted abroad.

Post-veterinary school, I've completed yearly specialty post-grad placements that required I relocate back "home" to the Santa Monica-West L.A. region of California, then all the way over to Florida, then back to California once more for a stint farther south in San Diego.

Throughout all of these moves, I've encountered a slew of tech-related changes, from experiencing new processes like registering for biometrics to navigating what it's like to function without the modern comfort of easy internet and GPS sat nav.

Despite that foundation, my recent move to the UAE (the United Arab Emirates) has completely thrown me for a loop when it comes to adjusting to the balance here of markedly new and surpris-

ingly old-school technology. My first few months here were mired in trying to integrate with the local digital registers in order to be able to establish my new life.

The first step was waiting on my Emirates ID. The card functions as so much more than a simple biometric visa, though its largest passkey role is likely its link to my "UAE Pass," an application that, in addition to acting as a sort of docu-sign-on-steriods, by its own description, "enables [me] to identify [myself] to service providers in all emirates through a smartphone-based authentication."

Bestowing permission on my real estate agent to access the personal information needed to register my tawtheeq, i.e. the official governmental recognition of my housing contract? UAE Pass. Utilizing secondary biometric signs for certain apps? UAE Pass. Linking my car registration with a municipal road toll system? UAE Pass.

Digital identification extends beyond just my documents and my fingerprints, though. Facial recognition is a pervasive part of society here and is often used in employment and retail settings. "Face Pass" can be used to clock in and out of work, document overtime, and activate benefits like retail discounts, for example.

**(Continued on Page 8)**



Vernon Brunson and his wife Amanda, left, in their home on 20th Street in Santa Monica, and Vernon on the right. Santa Monica History Museum Collection (36.2.2290) ca1930 Vernon Brunson, Santa Monica History Museum Collection (36.2.1013) ca1969.

**New SM History Museum Exhibit Highlights Life of Vernon Brunson**

The Santa Monica History Museum presents a new exhibition, *From the Ground Up: The Life of Vernon Brunson*, an examination of Vernon Brunson's remarkable life in Santa Monica and his impact on the community through his creative and scientific endeavors and commitment to civil rights. The exhibit will open Saturday, February 3.

Born into one of the first Black families in Santa Monica, Brunson was a poet, playwright, and columnist for the *California Eagle* newspaper. Despite encountering

barriers in aviation due to racism, he channeled his passion by becoming an electromechanical designer at Hughes Aircraft. Additionally, he founded a branch of the Black Wings Flying Club, championing inclusivity in aviation.

Brunson was a vocal advocate for equality, contributing an accessibility ramp to the design for Santa Monica City Hall, emphasizing the intersection of his work with the broader social issues of his time.

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Reflections From The East

# A Perfect Month to Travel Back in Time



**By Qin Sun Stubis**  
Living closer to the northern part of the country means having the predictable privilege of starting my new year with very cold weather. When biting winds sweep through our town and freeze our air, I am a cozy bunny in my burrow.

I easily find plenty of excuses to stay indoors, preferring to adore Mother Nature's beauty through my living-room windows. As I hold a warm cup of tea and stare at the

bare branches and flying silver-ringed clouds outside, my thoughts readily escape to a far-away place and a long-gone era.

In a comforting way, January offers me plenty of time to reflect and revisit my past. As I age, I can certainly boast that my life has amassed a lot of experiences for me to contemplate from my childhood, youth and adult life, from China to America, and from a shantytown in Shanghai to a bustling city here in Maryland.

I enjoy looking back at my life's journey, pondering what I have accomplished, what I still yearn to pursue, and once in a while, what

I regret. Sometimes, I simply want to indulge myself by replaying a particular past event, reliving a time I shared with those so dear to me who are not here anymore.

I now proudly carry in my heart a collection of my most precious memories, which I can easily pull out one at a time so I can savor them again and again, watching them unfold in my mind's eye, the way I watch my favorite old movies on an aging DVD player.

The longer I live, the more I realize the importance of my past, for it was once my present and future, a vital part of my life's timeline, an unwritten book of all the things I

have done with the people I loved, or even hated. Paying attention to my past anchors me to who I was, am, and, will be.

For those in search of meaningful New Year's resolutions, taking a trip down our own personal memory lane is an effective way to dig out our old wishes and longings. To me, it seems a perfect time to explore new ways to perfect our lives.

*You can always reach me at [qstubis@gmail.com](mailto:qstubis@gmail.com), or please visit me at [www.QinSunStubis.com](http://www.QinSunStubis.com). You can find a copy of my book, "Once Our Lives," online at [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com).*

## Getting Ready to Start This New Year



**By Cheryl Thode**  
Happy 2024 to our readers! I am so ready to start this New Year. There is something so refreshing about

beginning a new year. It feels like the possibilities are endless. Perhaps, this feeling of a crisp and untarnished new year is why there is such a need and drive to make New Year's goals and plans. The whole year is still ahead, and it feels like anything can be accomplished. You are ready to seize the day! Why should this New Year be any different?

I don't know about you, but I need a restart, and I am ready. Unlike the last couple of years, where I have felt completely drained by the COVID related events, lockdowns, scares, and overall anxiety, I am so ready to meet this year with renewed energy and joy. We have things to do, people to see, and places to go!

However, with all this untapped energy and potential, how do we approach the new year in a way that keeps our positive momentum going and helps us to avoid burnout?

Well, we set SMART goals. In-

stead of the generic, overly broad, and unrealistic goals we may have set in the past, this year let's set goals that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Sensitive.

I admit, I have struggled with New Year's resolutions most of my life, but every year I get a little better at defining them, keeping them in frame, achieving them and ultimately rewarding myself for reaching them.

I have found that a good start is to make a SMART goal, keep it in a place that is accessible daily to you, work on it in stages, and most importantly, remember to reward yourself when you achieve it.

Along those lines, here are some pointers I have found to be helpful in making New Year's resolutions. First, write down your goals and review them on a regular basis. Depending on the goal, you could tape it to your bathroom mirror, stick it to the fridge, or make it the wallpaper for your computer, or phone. Second, branch out and choose goals from different areas. Make goals for your health, work, finance, social, spiritual, and fitness aspects of your life. Next, evaluate your goals to confirm that they are realistic, possible, and measurable. The more specific

and defined the goal is, the more likely you will be able to evaluate it.

For example, I want to have more home-cooked family meals. So, rather than say I will make all the meals for my family (very broad), I am opting that during the week I will try to make at least two dinners from scratch. Finally, take time to reward yourself when you do achieve a goal. Give yourself some incentive to complete the task. While achieving your goal is a great prize, having an added benefit might just give you that extra push you need to keep it a priority throughout the year.

As a closing thought, as we all work to select and execute our goals for this new year, remember to give yourself grace and know it is okay to pivot, and change your goal along the way. We are not robots. We are human, and things are bound to come up that will require us to make a change or bend a little. If we keep this in mind, I am hopeful that we will all be a little more patient with ourselves, and ultimately with our family, friends, and neighbors in this fresh new year.

Here is to 2024 and Resolution making! God Bless!

### Do You Recognize This Neighborhood Celebrity?

(Continued from Page 1)



Maria Kuck is the mixologist at the popular Earth Wind & Flour Italian restaurant on Wilshire Blvd.

Photo by Bernadette Lucier

## Mini Message Bulletin Board

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**Clergy Corner**

**How Will You Evaluate Your Journey?**



**By Msgr. Liam Kidney, Pastor Corpus Christi Catholic Church Pacific Palisades**

Every year at the beginning of January the Church celebrates the Feast of the Epiphany, which tells of the visit of the three wise men to the Christ Child. (Matthew 2, 1-12). It is one of the oldest feast days in church tradition, and it has a message for us today in 2024.

What is the message of the story? Why talk about the wise men when Christmas has come and gone?

It doesn't matter if you refer to the three as wise men, kings, or astrologers, the point is that, as foreigners, they represented the people of the whole known world coming to visit the Christ Child, the Messiah, the newborn King.

The story then tells us that after they found the young King, they then had to go home by a different route because their encounter with the Child had changed them forever.

The Christmas season is now ending. Has our encounter with Jesus changed our journey in any way? Is this the time to re-route or, as the GPS says, "recalculate," where we are going and how we will get there?

My prayer for you as the New Year stretches before us is that you will take some time to evaluate your journey. Will you allow your encounter with Jesus to redirect you in some way?

Let us pray for each other and for new beginnings as we journey into 2024.

**Monsignor Liam Kidney, Pastor Corpus Christi Catholic Church Pacific Palisades**

**Natalie Guerboian Fulfills Eight-Year Dream**

(Continued from Page 1)

into it like, 'let's just swim, bike and run for this many miles', and somehow I managed it and did great."

Her active lifestyle definitely contributed to that initial success, but her immense motivation and passion is what pushed her to continue on her triathlon journey. She said that the hardest part of triathlons isn't necessarily the competitions, but rather the training leading up to them. "The training that leads to the race is what's more difficult, because on the weekends, we're putting in six to eight plus hours of training," she shared. "The 20 plus hours of training a week on top of being a teacher is both a physical and mental challenge."

But, despite the intensity of her training, Natalie has remained dedicated. She attributes much of her success to the support of her family, fellow triathletes, and friends, who have stood by her throughout her entire journey.

"My mom has been to every Ironman event. In Kona, my entire family was there, and I also had the support and prayers of my friends and fellow triathletes back home."

Her family's support, coupled with the intense dedication she has put into her training, ultimately led Natalie to a competition she has dreamed about for nearly a decade. Participating in the World Championship in Kona this past October was a dream come true for her, and she could not have had a better time.

"It was the time of my life. I was smiling every step of the way," she shared. "Each sport had its own challenges and obstacles to over-



One part of the triathlon is a very long bike ride. Here is Natalie focusing on this part of the event.

come that day, but I successfully got through each one of them by having experience and being so prepared, and most importantly, having a positive mindset."

Following October's competition, Natalie has set her sights on a new goal: to win her age group's competition in order to return to Kona.

"This time, I would like to work towards getting faster and stronger, because now the only way I can go back is if I win in my age group," she shared.

Natalie's main piece of advice for aspiring triathletes is to have confidence in themselves. "Don't let the fears paralyze you," she said. "Just face them and you will be surprised by how much you're capable of and what you can do."

"I have no regrets for the many years of dedication, effort, sacrifice, fear, tears shed, and soreness," she concluded. "Dreams do come true if you're willing to put in the effort it takes!"

**Lincoln Middle School Theatre Presenting Matilda the Musical**

Tickets have been on sale for *Matilda the Musical* to be held at Lincoln Middle School. There are two casts and an ensemble. The BOOKS Cast opens Friday, January 26 evening and Saturday 27 matinee. The LOOKS Cast plays Saturday evening and closes the

Sunday 28 matinee. The ENSEMBLE plays all four shows.

Please refer to the casting to choose which show you will attend: <http://tinyurl.com/matildacasts>. For more details, contact the Lincoln Middle School Office at 310-393-9227.

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*Happy Valentine's Day*

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Entertaining With Ease

Start the New Year With a Party

By Maureen Molé

Happy New Year! As the holidays come to a close, and grey skies characterize many January days, the winter doldrums may set in.

My mother would always say, "When you're feeling down, plan a party!" Instead of being sad, think about the guest list, the menu, a clever theme and what you will do to make your guests feel welcome and special. It needn't be fancy or formal, but it must be fun.

Here are a few ideas for easy entertaining in January.

**Sunday Brunch:** Include food that can be set out on a dining table or countertop before the guests arrive. The menu might include a quiche, tea sandwiches, assorted pastries, prosecco, coffee, and tea.

**Potluck Dinner:** Just set the table in advance of the guests' arrival. When extending the invitation, coordinate the menu by asking each guest to bring a dish – appetizer, main dish, or dessert. You might set a culinary theme like Mediterranean or a single focus such as Vegetable Medley. You'll be surprised by the dishes and have very little work to do as the host.

**Re-Gifting Party:** Ah, yes. We all receive some gifts that we would



Have a re-gifting party with your friends in January.

never use. Well, bring them to the party to trade with other friends. Maybe it's a sweater you received as a gift, or unopened make-up, or pink-footed pajamas with bunny ears from an aunt in another city. (Be sure not to use the gifts from the guests who are at the party.)

Bring those "re-gifts" to the party and share some laughs with friends. Serve wine and cheese and some leftover cookies from the holidays for easy entertaining. It's the new year, so have fun!

Maureen Molé is the author of *The Book of Entertaining at Home*. You can email any questions to [MaureenMole@gmail.com](mailto:MaureenMole@gmail.com).

People 'n' Pets



Danielle Valido, left, went shopping recently with her rescue dog, Renee, three months old, and her friend Lily Smalheiser and Olive, her short hair mini dachund at a local Target.

Photo by Bernadette Lucier.

How Did Your Meet Your Special Someone?  
Go to Page 5 to find out how to Celebrate Valentine's Day in The Santa Monica Star newspaper.

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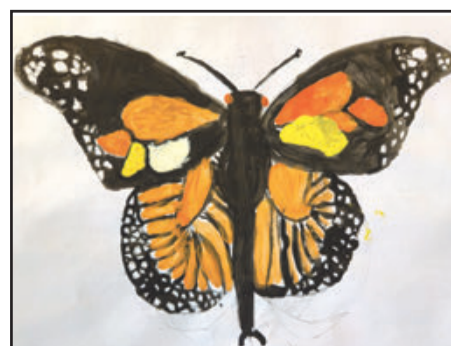
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Include your name and phone number also.

Madison's Art Corner



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



Happy New Year 2024 from Tamara, Brenton, and Xavier at Cuttin' Up! Barber Shop

**Love Links**

**Wedding Ceremony Fuses Japanese and Korean Traditions**



*Kathryn Iwata and David Lee*

**By Gigi Appelbaum-Schwartz**

Ten years ago, Kathryn Iwata and David Lee each attended a music festival called “Made in America” in Philadelphia. At the time, David was a dental student at the University of Pennsylvania. Kathryn had traveled all the way from New York City where she was a student at NYU to enjoy the festival with her friends. She and her group went to a party before the festival began, and it just so happened that David and his friends were there, too!

The two met, bonded over their shared hometowns of Los Angeles, and ultimately ended up having an official first date there when they returned to L.A. for Christmas break.

By December of 2020, the couple had been temporarily long-distance dating for six years with Kathryn living in San Diego and David living in San Francisco for their respective medical training (Kathryn is an anesthesiologist and David is a pediatric dentist).



*Kathryn and David at their ceremony in San Diego.*

That Christmas break, David decided to propose, and when he picked Kathryn up from work and brought her back to her apartment, that was exactly his intention. He blindfolded her, brought her to the front door, and hilariously, realized that he had accidentally locked them out. After four hours of waiting in the hallway outside of Kathryn’s apartment, and much distress on David’s part, a locksmith came to open the door, which revealed an elaborate collection of stations with photos and mementos representing all of the different cities they had been in together. At the last station, David was finally able to get down on one knee and propose.

Kathryn and David were married on May 6, 2023 at the Estancia La Jolla hotel in San Diego. The ceremony honored their family and heritage, fusing Korean and

Japanese traditions to create an unforgettable celebration. Kathryn handmade 1000 paper cranes in Japanese tradition and hung them from the reception chandeliers.

During the cocktail hour, they held a paebaek (a traditional Korean wedding ceremony), wearing traditional hanbok. Kathryn was able to repurpose her mother’s wedding dress for their rehearsal dinner, and David’s tux lapel pin was the Iwata family crest.

Their ceremony also celebrated another significant achievement – David’s recovery from lymphoma after being diagnosed shortly after their engagement. David went through a year of chemotherapy, and was in full remission by the time of their wedding, so the couple wanted to honor his recovery by tying lymphoma’s cancer color – green – into the ceremony.

David’s custom wedding tuxedo was green, as was Kathryn’s second look, and pops of green appeared throughout the florals and paper goods used.



*The two held a paebaek (traditional Korean wedding ceremony) during the cocktail hour.*

*Photos by Michelle Lillywhite*

Kathryn shared that these details “all served as reminders of how lucky and blessed [they] are to not only have each other, but also the most loving and supportive family and friends.”

We wish Kathryn and David much happiness and good health in the coming years, and are touched by their genuine story of dedication and love.

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## Traveling With Tanya

### Celebrate the Culture of Winter Festivals Without the Crowds



The Fairmont Tremblant hotel in Montreal is the region's top ski resort. Stay there when visiting Winterlude in Ottawa, Canada.

#### By Tanya Gilbert

Winter festivals are exciting and enriching. Celebrating with locals brings a deep connection to the people and their culture. What about for those who don't enjoy the crowds? Here are some hints to enjoy some of the festivals without sacrificing the quality of your experience.

Many festivals span several days or weeks which gives you an opportunity to go early in the morning or on a weekday.

Chinese New Year 2024 is the year of the Wood Dragon and it is an important festival that will be celebrated for a week across the country and the region. It is followed by Lantern Festivals making February an interesting time to be in Asia. Smaller villages in China, Vietnam, South Korea, or Tibet can take you off the beaten path while still enjoying the people and festivities.

Pack your parka! The Sapporo Snow Festival is one of Japan's most popular winter events which takes place in February. The festival is famous for turning the city

into a winter wonderland with its enormous and intricate snow sculptures. Besides the sculptures, there are concerts, light shows, and food stands offering delicious Hokkaido specialties.

Celebrate Winterlude in Ottawa, Canada and combine it with the region's top ski resort Mont Tremblant. The beautiful Fairmont Tremblant is perfectly situated for ski-in, ski-out and it feels like European village so much closer to home.

Do you want to enjoy the festivities without the hassle? A great way to ensure the best experience is a private guide. You gain access, a curated experience, and a wealth of knowledge from a local guide.

I always check for public holidays and major events when planning travel. Regardless of your travel style, knowing the public holidays will help smooth potential wrinkles in your travel and provide additional enriching events to plan for. Contact me for help designing your next adventure: Tanya@MariposaTravelAdvisors.com.

## Thoughts From a Second-Time Father

### Sharing the Joy of My Children's First Discoveries



#### By Michael Margolin

Sharing experiences that are new to your children with them can certainly make a lot of memories. My wife, Enjoli and I, recently spent a few days in Big Bear with Alexa and Jake.

Alexa is ten now and has really only been in snow a couple of times, and since Jake is seven, his recollection of any snow is not clear. Big Bear did not have snow, but there is a place you can rent inner tubes for and slide down their snowy hill.

There is a type of moving sidewalk that takes you up the hill and the ride down is about six or eight seconds. After the very first run, the beautiful smile Alexa had her face was quick proof of how much fun she was already having.

Not only that, we probably went up and down the hill at least 20 times. I have realized the newer or rarer the experiences are for the kids, the longer I am willing to do something myself.

When it hailed at our house several years ago, I wanted the kids to come back inside, and when they asked to stay out longer, I granted their request. The hail was tiny and it is not too often that something like hail comes down on our house. So why not

just let them experience it?

Speaking of more cold occurrences, the last night we were in Big Bear it finally froze overnight. The kids had their fishing poles and Alexa wanted to fish after we had awakened. Who doesn't want to fish in their pajamas when the temperature is somewhere around 20 degrees?

So, I put myself through that as well. Sometimes the kids do things that remind me that they are, in fact, my children. Enjoying being outside when you could turn into a popsicle is one of those times. One cool thing was that in the tiny cove where our cabin was, some of the lake had frozen.

So, we got to break some ice and see how there had been pinecones and twigs in the water that had been frozen into the ice. The amusement expressed on their faces when experiencing how nature works was fun to watch. For the most part, I cannot really ever see myself getting tired of going up a hill with them 20 times or fishing with them when my toes are numb. Being with Alexa and Jake when they see and try new things are instances that I realize I can not get enough of. The reward has always been worth the demand.

**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.**

## 2023 and the UAE

(Continued from Page 3)

Despite all of this, I've also been surprised by just how heavily life here still relies on brick-and-mortar kinds of practices. While some businesses may quickly respond and schedule appointments via WhatsApp messages (the calling function of WhatsApp is restricted on UAE servers), it's also not uncommon for businesses to be unreachable even by telephone, and to have to rely on just showing up during what my most educated guess for their business hours are and hoping for the best.

When I was first registering for my entry visa, I utilized multiple online services and smartphone options to try to take and format my government photograph, but it wasn't until I was able to find a small mom-and-pop, one-room

photography shop in downtown San Diego that I was actually able to connect with a real person who knew exactly what the words "Schengen visa style" meant and how to accomplish it.

Approaching half a year here now, I am left with the initial impression that the UAE is very much a country in transition. Learning to love the ancient landscape of hazy desert dust has been a work in progress, but I have certainly remained in awe of the dedication to pairing heritage with forward movement that technology here in the UAE has captured.

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# Community Service on the Westside

## Lions Club Members Collect Money For the Salvation Army On Red Kettle Day



**By Kingsley Fife**  
The Salvation Army was created by Methodist preacher, William Booth, in London in 1865. He was motivated to bring the spirit and faith of God to the needy and poor in London. Booth and his followers became known as "God's Army" or "Salvation Army." When he went out into the slums, he realized he had to clean and feed them before they were ready for God's word. Consequently, he inaugurated the "Three SSS" – Soap, Soup, and Salvation.

A colorful tradition is the Salvation Army Red Kettle Day, usually held during the December holiday season. The various Westside service clubs participate in this event to help the cause.

We had a wonderful time at our Red Kettle Day at Bristol Farms market. We worked both entrance doors at the market and donations were steady and brisk. Ringing the bells were Lions Rae Kameny, Kingsley and Joanne Fife, Kathy Boole, Gail Litvack, Captain James Fleming and Trainee Jordan. Stopping by and donating were Lions PDG Carol Emmitt, Linda Levee, Alan Parr, and Susan



Captain James Fleming, Alan Parr, and Kingsley Fife collected for Red Kettle Day last month.

DeRemer. Other Lions participating were Pam Andrews and Kanda Kandasamy.

The Counting Party was held that evening at the Solidarity restaurant on Lincoln. Lions Kathy Boole and Mayor Phil Brock attended representing our Club. We were all thrilled when we found out that we had collected \$1865 for this worthy cause. It turned out to be a very fun and productive day.

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 jkfife88@yahoo.com.

## Welcoming New Members in the New Year



**By Patricia Webber**  
Here it is – 2024 already! The members of the Santa Monica Bay Woman's Club (SMBWC) wish everyone in our Santa Monica community (and beyond) a Happy New Year. The Club is back to normal reservation bookings and this year looks to be busier than ever.

We did some needed repairs last year: replaced damaged tiles and painted the ballroom ceiling and gave a fresh look to our three artist dressing rooms. Watch this space for more upgrades this year. Our clubhouse is a community treasure, and we will continue to do all we can to maintain and upgrade where possible.

We're still receiving new members who attended our holiday party in early December. About 60 guests were there, a mix of current members and new friends. This is the second year we've hosted this and given the positive responses, it will likely become an annual activity. Our annual holiday luncheon, held after our quarterly business meeting, was attended by our dedicated canasta and bridge players.

The Santa Monica Bay Woman's Club has supported various organizations that assist foster children. One of those is Happy Trails for Kids, to which we've contributed for many years. This year, per the organization's suggestion, the Club and many of our members contributed \$25 Target gift cards.

Club activities continue to attract more members. Our next Book Group will meet on Tuesday, January 23 at 6 p.m. to discuss *The Heaven & Earth Grocery Store* by James McBride. This is a fun and lively group. For questions, contact Susan at sbarry1015@sbcglobal.net. For those with a creative mind, our Arts, Crafts, & Conversation group meets Tuesdays from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Activities include painting, drawing, embroidering, crocheting, knitting, making collages, and jewelry. Bring unfinished projects or start a new one or even learn a new one. For more information, contact Joan at joanie.tee@gmail.com, or call 310-390-7101.

For further details, contact us at info@SMBWC.org, and read more about GFWC at www.gfwc.org/news. You can also call 310-395-1308 weekdays between 9 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. if you would like more information on joining us.

## Dance Your Way Into the New Year

(Continued from Page 2)



Students in Brian Forzo's dance class line up on the Third Street Promenade for their Tuesday night dance lessons. Photos by Deb Gray

**The Santa Monica Star:** "What's your advice for anyone who really wants to dance but is convinced they have "two left feet?"

**Brian:** "There's no such thing. There are people who want to try and people who don't. I want everyone to try our beautiful dance. So, for those who think they have two left feet, but who really want to try, I encourage you to come check it out because we have a great bunch of welcoming people that want to help you learn!"

Brian's Tuesday night lessons are free. However, donations are accepted, which help cover the cost of sound equipment and a DJ.

Dancing could just be your right move into a more adventurous

new year. If you are ready to dive into Swing, below are some venues, which are either new, or re-emerging post-Pandemic: Rusty's Rhythm Club in Playa Del Rey, Clifton's in downtown L.A., The Moose Club in Burbank, and Crown City Dance in Pasadena. Most venues offer free lessons and some have the added bonus of live music.



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-Joe Analco

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**Planning Ahead**

**A Tale As Old As Dinosaurs**



**By Lisa C. Alexander, Esq.**

Change the names but it's the same old story, except this one has an actual dinosaur. It is the story of the Estate of Darlene

Williams. Darlene's family had a ranch in South Dakota where the skeleton of a Tyrannosaurus rex dinosaur named "Sue" was found. It was eventually sold for \$8.4 million and ended up in the Field Museum in Chicago.

Darlene died in 2020. By then, it is unclear how much of the dinosaur money was left. Darlene was survived by her four children. Before her death, Darlene made a first Will in 2017 naming her daughter, Sandra, as personal representative of her estate that included all her children and all her grandchildren. But then, just two and a half weeks before Darlene's death, she changed her Will to name Sandra as her sole heir and Executor.

Of course, a Will Contest was filed. It alleges that at the time of the second Will, Darlene was critically ill and in hospice care, and there were no witnesses because of covid restrictions limiting visitors to her room. To make matters worse, less than two weeks before her death, Darlene appeared to have sold her home and two of her other children are alleged to have misappropriated the sale

proceeds. The sale of the house is also contested with allegations that Darlene's signature doesn't match other documents.

Apparently, Darlene's children had a history of fighting so maybe this story is not so surprising. Nor is the story uncommon.

But what if Darlene really was in her "right mind" when she made her second Will? Any of us has the right to change our Wills, up until the end. What could Darlene have done differently to protect her estate plan? We don't know if Darlene had an attorney prepare the new Will.

The attorney would have counseled her on the consequences of disinheriting her children and made some assessment of her capacity. Darlene could have had a geriatric psychiatric evaluation to confirm her capacity to make a new Will. She could have located someone within the hospital to witness her signing the Will. She could have informed her family of her estate plan wishes so there wouldn't have been a hurtful surprise.

If the second Will was the result of fraud and undue influence, it will be invalidated by the Court. We must wait to see how the story ends.

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

**Celebrate Valentine's Day With Us**



Maurice and Tess Jordan, left, 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.

Send a photo of your special someone and tell us how you met.

**See Details on Page 5.**

**Santa Monica Public Library Presents  
The Art of Ikebana Workshop**

Discover modern Ikebana, the Japanese art of floral design, with author and Ikebana instructor Naoko Zaima on Wednesday, January 10 from 2 to 4 p.m. at the Main Library, Multipurpose Room, 601 Santa Monica Blvd.

Create beautiful minimalist décor that brings together nature and the inner self. Take home what you create in the workshop. Limited space available. Email library@santamonica.gov for reservations.

These programs are free and open to the public. Seating is limited and on a first arrival basis. The Santa Monica Public Library is wheelchair accessible. For disability-related accommodations, email library@santamonica.gov at least one week prior to event. Ride your bike or the Big Blue Bus. Bicycle parking racks are



*Ikebana instructor  
Naoko Zaima*

available at the Library.

For a list of the many programs in all of the Santa Monica public libraries, go to library@santamonica.gov.

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Send details to  
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January 10.



**Keep  
Moving  
This  
Month**

- Joe Analco

**New SM History Museum Exhibit**

(Continued from Page 3)

The exhibition positions Brunson within the context of Black architects like Paul Revere Williams, showcasing his collaborations and highlighting his impact on the architectural landscape. Visitors can expect to see a diverse array of his work, from architectural plans to paintings, furniture designs, and even a unique "selfie" mechanism he created for his camera.

The exhibition will also delve into the personal aspects of his life, providing a holistic view of this extraordinary individual. From the Ground Up: The Life of Vernon Brunson will be featured in the museum's Quinn Gallery, established under a partnership

with the Quinn Research Center, an archive for Black Family History. "We are so excited to continue to deepen our relationship and further our work with the Quinn Research Center through this fascinating look at the life of the extraordinary Vernon Brunson," said Rob Schwenker, Executive Director of the Santa Monica History Museum. "Brunson was a true renaissance man, and we're honored to present his story."

The Santa Monica History Museum invites the public to join in this tribute to Vernon Brunson's life and achievements, fostering a deeper understanding of his legacy in shaping the fabric of Santa Monica.

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**Paws and Claws**

# What is Wrong With My Cat?



**By Dr. Frank Lavac, MS, DVM**  
**Q: I recently adopted a cat from the shelter. She has crusty lesions and hair loss on her head**

**and ears. My other cat has also developed patchy hair loss as well. What could be the problem?**

**A:** Based on your history, my biggest concern would be a fungal infection, also known as ringworm. Certainly, an exam would be indicated to rule out the most likely possibilities. Ringworm is a contagious fungal disease that is also considered zoonotic, e.g contagious to people. If you notice raised red, itchy lesions, you should contact your caregiver.

There are several ways to diagnose ringworm, but the most efficient and accurate technique is a PCR test which looks for the DNA of the fungi. This test has a quicker turnaround time than the classic fungal culture.

If the test results are positive, then typically a regimen of either itraconazole or terbinafine is used for treatment. Topical treatment or baths may also be indicated. Environmental cleaning is important as the fungal spores can remain viable for 18 months.

The word “ringworm” often induces great fear in pet owners. This is a very treatable disease once diagnosed. The cats are not systemically ill and they respond well to treatment.

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

## Adopt a Pet



*“Lala” is a petite 11-year-old young lab who was brought into the Coachella Valley Animal shelter as a stray. This sweet senior girl was past her deadline and at risk for euthanasia. Samson’s Sanctuary rescued her and now she’s up for adoption. Please contact SamsonsSanctuary@gmail.com.*

# From Me to You...



Hopefully you had an enjoyable holiday season and are looking forward to a new year.

Both Qin and Cheryl have columns on Page 4

with wonderful suggestions for how to approach 2024.

Some people seemed to have been overwhelmed with all the plans they had made for celebrations. Others wrote about learning to say “no” when asked to do too much. Perhaps in the future, they will plan to do what they actually have the energy and time to do, and not feel badly about adapting to the changes. Others posted inspirational thoughts about the holidays and to remember to count our blessings.

On the radio I heard a talk show host ask people to call in to share what makes them happy. Think about what you would say you are grateful for. There are so many challenges in the world that we can’t control. I remember learning that we can’t change what others do to us, but we can change how we respond to the situations.

But, do you marvel over the amazing sunsets setting above the Pacific or the excitement of seeing the seeds you planted actually blossom into beautiful flowers? Do you take time to help another person out and see how good you may feel afterwards? Or, watch a child get excited about a new discovery? What about the amazing skies over us at night? We still have so much to learn.

Wishing you many amazing discoveries ahead in 2024.

## Civil Rights Attorney Lisa Holder to Speak

*(Continued from Page 1)*

Library. For information: Call Jenn Ullrich at 310-458-8316.

The MLK Freedom Celebration will be sponsored by the Santa Monica Area Interfaith Council. The theme is “How to get to Healing.” It will be held at the Mt. Olive Lutheran Church, 1343 Ocean Park Blvd. in Santa Monica on Friday, January 12 at 8:30 a.m. For information, go to [Info@smaic.com](mailto:Info@smaic.com), Attn: Kathleen Benjamin.

The Santa Monica Symphony Orchestra will wrap up the event with their annual Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. concert on Saturday, January 13 at 3 p.m.

at the SGI-USA World Peace Ikeda Auditorium. Gary Pratt will be the guest conductor with Bernard Brown, choreographer and dancer. Call 310-773-9729, or contact [renee@smsymphony.org](mailto:renee@smsymphony.org).

The 2024 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration is presented by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Westside Coalition and sponsored by the City of Santa Monica, Santa Monica College Associates, Santa Monica College, SGI-USA, Rand Corporation, and the Santa Monica Bay Area Human Relations Council, as well as a variety of other organizations and individuals.

## An Update From ERBA Markets

# Alcohol and Cannabis: A Potentially Dangerous Pair



**By Stephen Freedman**

As cannabis becomes more easily accessible in this country, the likelihood it will be mixed with alcohol increases.

While most are knowledgeable about the impairments caused by these two on their own, it’s important to know how the combination can affect you and the serious problems it can create.

Alcohol affects the nervous system, causing motor skills to diminish and impairment to grow. Cannabis affects certain receptors in the brain that cause memory loss and perception. Many people believe that mixing both increases the “high” of one, or both together, but the counter effects increase significantly.

When used in concert, the THC from cannabis is absorbed at a faster rate into the bloodstream due to the alcohol. The effects of either of these can be unpredictable, and using both increases

that risk drastically. One will be more prone to accidents and injury, and/or poor decision making. When this begins to happen, it may be difficult for you or someone else to know if the effects demonstrated are from alcohol or cannabis. This means the potential of alcohol poisoning increases greatly, and can be deadly.

As you can see, mixing substances together may have major drawbacks. If you choose to do so, it’s vital for your safety, and the safety of others, that you do so responsibly and recognize the effects as they present themselves.

Communicating properly with the people you are with is also extremely important, as well as having a designated driver or sober person with you. It’s thinking ahead that can safeguard many, including yourself, from tragedy.

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



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