

## Honoring Mothers With a Lifetime of Memories



Julia Abbott with her grandmother, Soraya Mary Nikkhoo-Hamadani.



Julia Abbott with her mother, Michelle Nikkhoo Abbott.



Grandmother Peggy O'Connell, daughter Char Lawrence, and granddaughter Pamela Lawrence.



Clara Wright, left, with daughters Gloria and Ginger.

### Who Inspires Me the Most?

By Julia Abbott

When people are asked, "Who inspires you?" the answer always seems to be one parent or another family member.

In my case, that is the only answer I have ever been able to honestly give. My mother and my grandmother are the two biggest inspirations in my life. My grandmother is the strongest person I've ever met. She is so incredibly tough and moral, with a streak of protectiveness that runs deep into her soul.

In our family, we always say that our grandma can look a person up and down and see right through them. We all trust her opinion on others more than our own. She is fierce and brave, but also sweet and kind. Sometimes, it's hard to imagine my kind grandmother, who loves cooking and dancing, as a refugee who did everything to protect her family.

When I see her bargaining, it becomes a bit more believable! Her strength is not born of anger, but of love. I hope to have half the steel that forms her core someday. I want to be just like her. In a time where women weren't encouraged to be strong, she was stronger than everyone else. However, my memories of her will always be

laced with love and tahdig (a Persian food) and hugs that make everything alright.

My mom, on the other hand, has a quieter strength. She doesn't have the same kind of toughness that is in my grandma. Instead, she wraps her arms around the people she loves, protecting them with herself. I've never, not even for a second, doubted my mom's love for me. It's constant, even through our worst moments.

I know I will always be able to count on her, and she's the first person I turn to when I need advice or have a bad day, or just want to have some fun!

She loves life with every fiber of her being, and her joy is contagious. My happiest moments all have my mom next to me. Living life with her is a different kind of being. Whenever she enters a room, it gets a little bit brighter. Happiness colors her body, and her smile is the brightest thing I've ever seen. My mother and grandmother inspire me with their strength and hearts. I'm so lucky to have them.

**Julia has been writing for our paper since she was ten years old. She is now a college student on the East Coast adapting well to the seasonal differences.**



Sarah Gehrt walking with sons Charlie and Roger.



Sharyl Szydluk and Susan Gabriel Potter with their mother, Louise Gabriel.



Charmaine Chowdhury with her two-year-old son, Joni.



Johanna Jara's grandmother Esther with Johanna's mom, Zee.



Zee with her daughter, Johanna Jara at a special occasion.

**Happy Mother's Day to all our Mothers and Grandmothers**

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





# Discover What's Happening on the Westside

By Pamela Lawrence

- **Monday, May 1 - May Day**
- **Tuesday, May 2 - Teacher's Day**
- **Friday, May 5 - Cinco de Mayo**
- **Saturday, May 6 - Conscious Market on Third Street Promenade** – Meet designers, brands, and new businesses, and support Small Business Saturday. Conscious Market, LLC is a collection of elevated brands that are for consumers who want more fitness, wellness, and health in their lives through products, experiences, and services. 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. 1351 3rd Street Promenade.
- **Thursdays in May (4, 11, 18, 25) - Tech & Tasks** - Visit this program to receive one-on-one assistance from volunteer tutors and build your skills. Staff and volunteers can assist with reading, writing, and technology-related tasks. Drop in between 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. every Thursday to get help with completing online forms and applications, resumé writing, device help, improving reading skills, email, downloading eBooks, and much more. Santa Monica Main Library, Second Floor Tutoring Center.
- **Fridays in May (5, 12, 19, 26) - Writing From the Heart: A Memoir Workshop** - Gather in a safe space to share yours. Local author Judi Sadowsky will help participants support one another on their writing journeys as they tell their own unique personal stories. 2 p.m. - 4 p.m. In person, Donald Bruce Kaufman - Brentwood Branch Library. Advance registration is required as space is limited.

- ited. Please contact the library at brntwd@lapl.org or call 310-575-8273 to register. For adults.
- **Saturday, May 6 - UCLA Gluck Fellows: Woodwind Performances** - An afternoon of music with local talent from the UCLA Woodwind Trio. 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. Performance in person at Palms - Rancho Park Branch Library. For kids and adults.
  - **Monday, May 8 - The Science of Silkworms** - Kids, come learn about silkworm caterpillars and moths. Discover how they actually aren't worms at all. Learn about the history of silk and how these creatures are responsible for making it from "The Empress and the Silkworm." 4 p.m. - 5 p.m. In person, Mar Vista Branch Library. For kids and teens.
  - **Tuesday, May 9 - Tuesday Tales: A Traveling Storytime** - 10:30 a.m. - 11 a.m. Fun series for ages two to five with stories, songs, and rhymes which travel to different library locations each week. Pico Branch, The Annex.
  - **Sunday, May 14 - Mother's Day**
  - **Saturday, May 20 to July 1 - Robin Mitchell and Lavalie Campbell Art Exhibitions** - Robin Mitchell's artwork focuses on the act of mark-making to explore how the mark, in its abstract nature, can communicate an image and transcend beyond it to suggest themes, both tangible and intangible. Lavalie Campbell works in multiple mediums including quilt making, ceramics, glass, printmaking, and sculpture. Craig Krull Gallery, 2525 Michigan Ave. Suite B3. For details,

call 310- 828-6410.

- **Tuesday, May 16 - Asian American & Pacific Islander Heritage Month Event** - Mystery Book Group Discussion: A Conversation with Author Joe Ide. Author Joe Ide discusses his writing and books, including the *The Goodbye Coast: A Philip Marlowe Novel* (2022), and his I.Q. Series with the newest title in the series, *Fixit*, coming out in May 2023. Email library@santamonica.gov for Zoom info.
  - **Saturday, May 20 - The Los Angeles Doctors Symphony Orchestra presents, "Music for Our Best Friends."** Program includes *Ballade in A-minor* by Samuel Coleridge-Taylor; *Cello Concerto No. 1 in A-minor* by Camille Saint-Saëns (John Walz, violoncello); and *Symphony No. 4 in F-Minor, Op.36* by Peter Tchaikovsky. 8 p.m. Mount Olive Lutheran Church, 1343 Ocean Park Blvd, Santa Monica. \$25 payable at the door. Children 18 and under, free. Parking in back is free.
- The Los Angeles Doctors Symphony Orchestra, now in its 69th season, led by Maestro Ivan Shulman, is one of the oldest community orchestras in the United States.
- Their mission is to provide high-quality, affordable concerts to the

- diverse communities of Southern California, to support important medical causes, volunteer musicians, including youth, in their pursuit of the joys and discipline found in musical expression, to assist emerging professional musicians, and to provide musical growth and fellowship for its performing members.
- **Sunday, May 21 - Malibu Film Festival** – This annual film festival focuses on emerging artists. Film premieres and awards are hosted at the AMC Broadway 4. The awards party will be hosted at The Independence. 11a.m. to 9 p.m. AMC Broadway 4, 1441 3rd St. Promenade and The Independence, 205 Broadway. For more info, call 424-235-3040. To purchase tickets, visit: [www.malibu.filmfestival.eventbrite.com](http://www.malibu.filmfestival.eventbrite.com).
  - **Monday, May 29 - Memorial Day**
  - **Tuesday, May 30 - Join the community discussion of Heather McGhee's nonfiction title, *The Sum of Us***, which illustrates how racism is harmful to everyone and makes the argument that we all have an interest in fighting it. Register for the discussion: <https://tinyurl.com/SumOfUs> Discussion. 6 p.m. - 7 p.m. Zoom.



## An Update on A Kidney for Amin

Dear family, friends, and acquaintances,

We are updating you on our son Amin's kidney transplant needs and status, as of April, 2023.

We are very moved that, according to UCLA, SIX loving individuals filled out the questionnaire and were consequently evaluated by the kidney transplant staff. However, for many reasons, the evaluations did not result in a viable donor. Therefore, we are again reaching out to let you know that Amin still needs a living kidney donor. We have included links, below, and would be grateful if you would consider sharing any of them. All results are confidential, and UCLA does not convey names or details to us, except for the numbers we were given. Amin's date of birth is May 30, 1983 and his bloodtype is O-positive. Anyone with any blood type can offer to be evaluated. UCLA has a kidney exchange program.

- The corresponding links are:
- UCLA questionnaire: [www.uclahealth.org/programs/core-kidney/conditions-treated/living-kidney-donors/become-kidney-donor](http://www.uclahealth.org/programs/core-kidney/conditions-treated/living-kidney-donors/become-kidney-donor)
  - "Our son Amin Charles needs a kidney" public Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100089125143355>
  - Instagram: [anneksadeghpour](https://www.instagram.com/p/mYAAQHrAoe/)

*With humble gratitude,  
Saeed and Anne Sadeghpour*

**Anne was the librarian at Roosevelt School and a past columnist of ours.**



Happy May Birthdays to:

**Ed Rich, Barbara Bishop, Michael Cates, Don Dickerson, Donn UMBER, Jack Gregory, Dick Lawrence, Gia Mickey, Jake Margolin, Savi Labensart, Steve Litvack, Jim Menzies, Bill Randle, Thomas Woods, Jane Rainsford, Ross Furukawa, Todd Lawrence, Stacy McClendon and Cathryn Litvack Dhanatya.**



- Joe Analco

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**The Real Estate Advisor**

**Real Estate Buyers' Remorse**



**By Richard Lombardi**

Over the last few weeks, you may have read in the news about film stars and their home shopping. Reports state

that the couple went into contract (opened escrow) on several homes, and ultimately chose not to move forward on each.

While contract cancellations on residential properties are not common, they also are not rare, but it is rare that one set of buyers would cancel on three in a row.

Here are some of the typical reasons for contract cancellations:

- Buyers are unable to acquire financing.
- The home requires repairs and parties would not or could not negotiate a solution.
- Sellers are unable to provide clear title.
- Buyers' vision of redesign was impossible/impractical/expensive.
- Buyers' circumstances change. (Serious illness/Job relocation/Loss of job).
- Buyers reprioritize wants and needs.
- Buyers identify another property they like better.

Cancelling during the inspection period for nearly any reason is

often possible. To minimize risk of cancellation, agents representing the seller will often try to limit the time allowed for inspections.

Canceling a purchase after the inspection period may put the buyers' escrow deposit at risk unless the reason is covered by a specific contingency detailed in the contract.

Home shopping for high profile buyers can become a real challenge, particularly when news of multiple cancellations become known. Sellers are likely to be skeptical to enter into escrow with "habitual" cancellers.

Many cancellation issues may be avoided by buyers and sellers working closely with their real estate agent and legal team to ensure all aspects of the contract are clear and understood before signing. By doing so, both parties can minimize the risk of contract cancellations and ensure a smooth and successful real estate transaction.

**Richard Lombardi has been in real estate sales since 1989, and a California real estate broker since 2005. In addition to Real Estate sales, 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.**

**From Me to You...**



**By Diane Margolin**

We heard that the Topanga Days are back. In their 48th year, the three-day festival on Memorial Day weekend

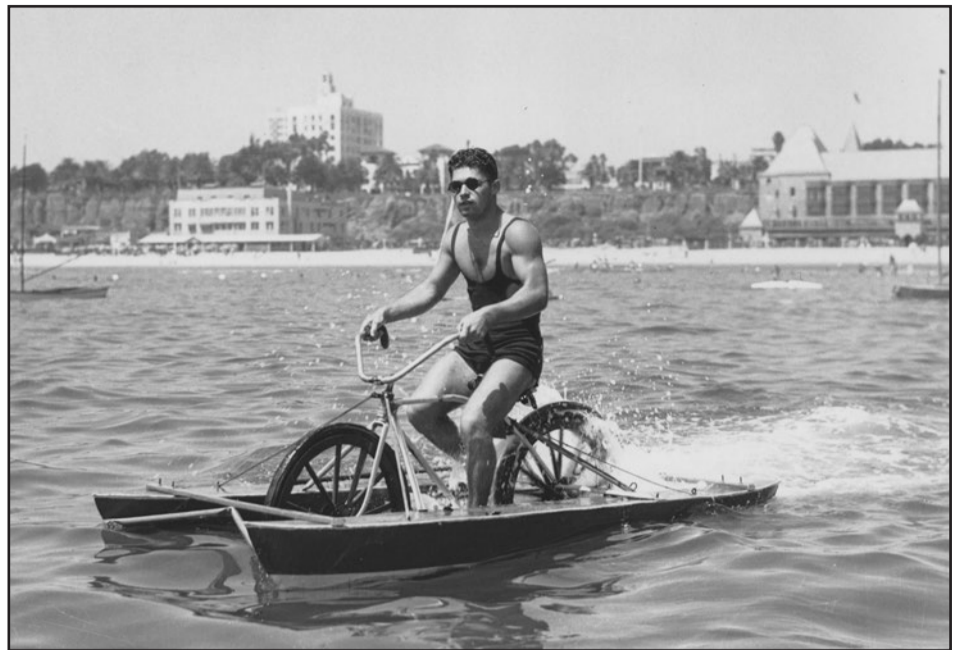
draws a diverse group of people to a very wide range of activities. There is a musical lineup of bands, local artists, and vendors bringing appealing arts and crafts to sell.

Madcap games and contests like the Sack Race, Egg Toss, and the notorious Pie Eating Contest are fun for all ages.

A highlight of the weekend is the Memorial Day Parade on Monday morning, May 29 from 8:30 a.m.-11:00 a.m. The parade features an impressive stream of floats, cars, horses, dogs, kids, fire trucks, and more. The parade ends at the entrance of the Topanga Community Center, where Monday's

*(Continued on Page 7)*

**From the Santa Monica History Museum**



One of a collection of many historical photos at the Santa Monica History Museum is this photo of water cycling in the Santa Monica Yacht Harbor. (#36.2.4576SMHM Collection 1936.)

**Byte by Byte**

**A Summer of Discovery**



**By Dr. Miceala Shocklee**

With May underway, summer holidays start for families across the nation. Whether May will prove bright and

sunny, or bring even more overcast mornings and surprise rain, when parents and kids (or anyone, for that matter) find themselves in need of an indoor escape, Los Angeles, let alone California, has a plethora of science-and-technology-related museums for exploring. For example:

- 1. California Science Center** - Located within Los Angeles's Exposition Park, the California Science Center offers free admission to its permanent exhibits, such as the space shuttle Endeavour, the "Ecosystems" section, and a whole section dedicated to appreciating fire in all its wonder and danger. For more information on the California Science Center, visit [californiasciencecenter.org](http://californiasciencecenter.org).
- 2. La Brea Tar Pits and Museum** - Both an indoor and an outdoor

space to learn and explore, the La Brea Tar Pits and Museum has been named one of the "First 100 Geological Heritage Sites" by the International Union of Geological Scientists. The museum is a place of both past and present - while it offers the traditional opportunity to learn about a time long past when dire wolves and giant sloths existed where streets and skyscrapers have now risen up, the site is also a constant work-in-progress, with scientific research happening daily. For more information on the La Brea Tar Pits and Museum, visit [tarpits.org](http://tarpits.org).

**3. The Museum of Jurassic Technology** - If ever a place deserved the descriptor of "contra-museum" or "un-museum," The Museum of Jurassic Technology would be it. The institution is the rebellious, tongue-in-cheek cousin to any other museum that could be visited. Existing at the intersection of facts and surrealism - and also off of Venice Boulevard in Culver City - The Museum of Jurassic Technology exhibits

*(Continued on Page 9)*

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Reflections From The East

# A Very Special Birth Announcement: Once Our Lives



**By Qian Sun Stubis**

Once upon a time, as they were busy delivering newborns to their expectant parents, some storks got together and made a decision that a particular brood was too large for them to deliver, so they pleaded with a kind UPS truck driver to perform this magical task instead.

And, I am proud to say that I am that lucky and rightful parent anxiously waiting on the other

end, not knowing how long that final journey would take. After some 20 years of dedication, love, and labor, I could not wait to meet my babies.

Although each of them weighs only 1.13 pounds, they have arrived in this world in multitudes, capable of being reproduced enough so I can share my pride with the world. I have named each and every one of them "Once Our Lives" and they will make their debut into the world this year on June 1!

Made from memories, tears, and

love, this literary firstborn of mine is a historical epic. It is the true story of four generations of Chinese women in my family and how their lives were threatened by powerful and cruel ancient traditions, historic upheavals, and a man whose fate – cursed by an ancient superstition – dramatically altered their destinies.

The book takes the reader on an exotic journey filled with luxurious banquets, lost jewels, babies sold in opium dens, kidnappings by pirates, and a desperate flight from death in the desert – seen through

the eyes of a man whose fate was determined before he was born, and a lonely, beautiful girl with three identities.

Stay tuned for my special invitation in next month's issue, personally asking you to join me at my book launch nearby. I cannot wait to introduce you to *Once Our Lives* and to finally meet my beloved readers after all these years. See you there!

**You can always reach me at [qstubis@gmail.com](mailto:qstubis@gmail.com), or please visit me at [www.qinstubis.com](http://www.qinstubis.com).**

# Hey Mom, Make Time for Yourself



**By Cheryl Thode**

Can you believe we are already in the month of May? We are five months into 2023. Where has the time gone?

If you're a mom of one, two, or even more kids, you know exactly where it has gone. Whether you have been changing diapers, shuttling your kiddos between sporting events, making drop-off and pick up school carlines, preparing family meals, planning vacations, helping with homework, or just being the emotional support your family needs, your time is scheduled to the brink. Sometimes it feels like every second is planned and tied-up with some parental commitment.

While you love your role, mom life can be draining. From my own experience, being a mom is the most fulfilling role I've ever had, but it also is the most taxing.

With all the family responsibili-

ties and commitments, at times taking care of yourself can fall by the wayside. Sure, everyone will tell you to "take some 'me' time" or make sure that you're "recharging yourself." However, what does that mean? Well, when I hit the month of May and see all the Mother's Day decorations and cards, I reflect on this topic a lot.

Taking time for self-care, even a little bit of "me" time, is essential for maintaining your mental and physical health. We all know why this time is important, but when and how you can get this time and what you should do with it, can be challenging to say the least.

Unless you actively make time for yourself, it will not happen. Everyone, no matter who they are, needs time to relax and recharge their batteries. However, as a mom this is easier said than done, and self-care means different things to different people. For some moms this might be a 5 a.m. workout before the kids wake up; others might want the chance to read a

book or journal; and for some just having 10 minutes to enjoy a cup of coffee while watching the birds outside is their version of self-care.

Whatever form of downtime appeals to you, you need to get it. I often struggle with what to do for this self-care. With a four-year-old and a three-month-old, I find myself constantly short-changing myself, fearing that if I take any time for myself, I am being selfish.

However, that is not the case. If I am not in a good place, my family cannot be in a good place. Self-care for mom is just as essential as making sure everyone is fed, clean, and getting sleep.

So again, what to do? Here are some ideas I've learned from other moms and hope they will be helpful for you. First, have a shower, no matter what! Standing under hot water a few minutes a day is such a needed refresh. Depending on your children's age, you can bring the baby into the bathroom

**(Continued on Page 5)**

## Do You Recognize This Neighborhood Celebrity?

**(Continued from Page 1)**



*Jeannie Kusserow, a Santa Monica High grad and mother of three sons, is well known in the community. She is a teacher, a member of the Santa Monica Breakfast Club, the IT Chapter of the PEO, and the Santa Monica Community Bible Study.*

*Photo by Anna Rogers*

# Mini Message Bulletin Board

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**Clergy Corner**

**Maintaining a Healthy Heart**



**By Pastor Carolyn Baskin-Bell**

Our heart is one of the major organs that influences the overall physiological body functioning. Maintaining a healthy heart is essential to our everyday life, as it pumps blood throughout our bodies and moves unwanted waste products out.

We are encouraged to engage in exercise, eat healthy, and eliminate stress to manage our heart condition. As we maintain our physical heart condition, the state of our spiritual heart should not be neglected.

The most powerful discipline to maintain our spiritual heart is prayer. Thursday, May 4, is the National Day of Prayer. The climate of our cities, nation, and the world signals to us that prayer should not be a one-day event, but a daily spiritual practice.

There is a necessity for consistency in our practice of prayer. Our faith encourages personal, family, and community prayer groups to communicate with God. It is imperative for intentional

prayer engagement to nurture our spiritual heart condition.

Daily prayer provides the opportunity for reflection where we observe the state of our heart and examine the level of spiritual functioning. After reflection, prayer offers us the avenue to restructure after revealing the ills that interfere with the functioning of a healthy spiritual heart.

After reflecting, restructuring, prayer imparts a celebration of renewal and spiritual wellness. Renewal opens our spiritual heart to dispense love, peace, joy, kindness, humility, and faith through our spiritual veins as we interact with humankind. Let prayer maintain a spiritual healthy heart.

**Reverend Carolyn Baskin-Bell  
Senior Pastor  
First AME Church of Santa Monica  
Community since 1921**

*Each month, we ask a member of the clergy to write a column for our readers.*



- Joe Analco

**Hey Mom, Make Time for Yourself**

*(Continued from Page 4)*

in a cot or if they are older, have your kids watch their favorite TV program. Getting this alone time (while challenging) is a must. Second, get out and walk. If you have a little one, get them in their stroller/pram and walk. Even just a 5-minute stroll around the block can be centering. Getting out of the house and into the sun is good for the soul. Third, visit family or friends. Visit anyone and everyone who will have you over or wants to see you and your kiddos. Just having other adults to talk with can be the kind of lift we moms need. Fourth, make a relaxation-only rule for when your kids, especially baby, sleep. Instead of using your kid's nap time as time to get your never-ending list of house chores done, use the precious time to just relax. Vacuuming and cleaning can wait. Your self-care cannot.

I know that these ideas may work for some and not others, but I really want to challenge you this month of May to figure out what self-care means for you and how you can have self-care throughout the year. God Bless!



*Coming in June...*

**Dads, send in pictures of you and your children to share in our Father's Day issue!**

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**Passing Through the Pico Neighborhood**

**The Extra Mile is the Norm for Ron**



**By Stacy McClendon**

I have been wanting to interview Ronald 'Ron' Scott since I started writing for *The Santa Monica Star* newspaper. We were finally able to carve out some time at the Pico Branch Library this past March to make it happen.

I used to be the assistant in the main office at Virginia Park for eight plus years. I vividly remember Ron always stopping by the front office to let the staff know what needed fixing in the park and/or anything peculiar that he had noticed. In all of my years of working at the City, 20+ years to be exact, I've never seen so much dedication from someone who was not on payroll, but just simply decided to volunteer his time to make sure that something in their neighborhood stays as it should.

This is what prompted me to interview Ron, as I wanted to know more about him, his background, and what makes him tick.

In his early years, Ron was raised in Texas by his grandparents. He was pushed to excel in life, as his mother was unable to raise him and his siblings. He also moved to California during his teenage years to live with his father.

After high school, Ron planned to go to the U.S. Air Force. However, he changed his mind and decided to apply for grants and loans so that he could attend college to study engineering.

Ron started his college journey at Occidental College. He was a student there from 1972-1975, transferred to UCLA to complete his BS in electronic engineering in 1977, and completed his MS in science in 1979.

Ron began working for Hughes



Ronald Scott

Aircraft Company in 1977, and he later retired in 1998.

He also met his wife Michiko at Occidental College in 1972. They moved to Santa Monica on February 28, 1979. Ron and Michiko were married on March 1, 1980.

Engineering is all about solving problems, and that's what Ron continues to do in his daily life. He enjoys helping out if and when he can. To him, it just takes a little extra additional effort to check up on, write something down and/or pass it on to someone who can fix it. He would also much rather offer a solution to a problem instead of complaining about it.

Ron has enjoyed living in Santa Monica for all 44 years. However, he can't remember the last time he went downtown or to the ocean. (I had him put this on his to-do list). He remembers going downtown to visit his wife when she worked at the First Federal Savings on 4th Street, prior to her retirement. Ron enjoys his home, the neighborhood he lives in, and feels blessed to be under rent control.

Ron received a Certificate of Appreciation award from the Virginia Avenue Park Advisory Board (prior to COVID) for his due diligence to the park. He explained, "People

*(Continued on Page 8)*

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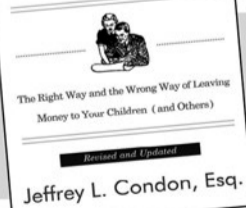


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# Santa Monica Breakfast Club Honors Paul Leoni and the Memory of his Wife Marilyn at Recent Tea

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Honoree Paul Leoni and Emcee Phil Brock



Leila Brown and Paul Leoni  
Photo by Kathy Boole



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Club Vice-President Pam Brady  
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## From Me to You (Continued from Page 3)

festivities begin with Catherine McClenahan singing our National Anthem and a flag raising ceremony honoring members of the military. All members of the armed forces, past and present,

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## Great Mom? Better Friend...



**By Erin Surace**  
As I mentioned before, I live in Denmark. But, my heart and my mind never leave Santa Monica. A huge part of that is the fact that I “Zoom” into so many calls back home. And, honestly, I can’t stop. I love being able to be in two places at the same time. But, in this time that I have been a part of the Mothers of Monica group, I have learned a lot about what kind of mom I am, and also what kind of friend I am, have been, and haven’t been.

Each week, I swear I have learned so much about myself since March 2020. Therefore, I have changed a great deal in that time. I have gained so much insight and sadly, lost some people in my life. But, I also gained some other people back into my life.

The interesting thing about living where I do is that I am able to have a very unbiased opinion and view of the parenting styles of my fellow moms and friends. In turn, this has also shaped me into being a better friend. I’m not kidding. I am a very protective Mom, but not in the way that you might imagine. But, I also realized that I am an even more protective friend.

I really want to preserve and protect the space that my friends are learning and growing in. I think there is something so beautiful about watching them organically and simultaneously walk the journey of motherhood and friendship, but doing it so differently. I’ve said it before, and I’ll stand by this always; we must be different.

How else will we get anything done? Think about it. A mother who has been a mother for 30 years doesn’t start out as the person she is now. She has to walk that path. It’s absurd to expect a 20-something-year-old to have the wisdom that say a 70-year-old would. Because of this, I back off. I observe. And, I find I learn a lot more about myself just by how I handle NOT reacting or stepping in to advise someone. To help, not hinder.

It’s so important to create a space where people can be themselves. Find stability and safety knowing a friend, or 14, are waiting for you and miss each other when one of you is not there. And, then the ultimate test of friendship? Never hold a grudge in absence and just pick up where you left off. The time you spend together should be worth it. You should feel better or maybe preserve the good feeling you had when you went to the meeting. Right? I definitely feel for me it's the combo of becoming a mom, being an expat, and being held accountable to this moms group and my friendships that have, yes, made me a great mom, but definitely a better friend. And, hopefully my daughter is learning the same lessons. Time will tell.

**Please join us at Mothers of Monica when we meet every Tuesday via zoom. Register here at: <https://stmonica.net/ministries/fellowship-groups/moms>.**



## Thoughts From a Second-Time Father

### Better to Learn From Your Parents



**By Michael Margolin**  
One of the many things Enjoli and I are positive about in raising our children is that we want to be the ones who explain certain things to them. For particular topics, we would like it to be us that they hear it from, and we who help them decipher it. Jake is about to be seven, and Alexa is closing in on double digits. And, while there are subjects I might trust the school on, there are not as many where I trust the other fourth graders that Alexa is around in class.

Such as: whether or not a certain giant, spring time animal exists, or if a particular jolly, old fat man really comes into our house towards the end of December. She was wise to the existence of the tooth fairy, which led me to believe she was skeptical about the other gift givers. When she was younger, she asked why Santa never died and wanted to know how old he was.

One of the few times I had wished she would stop asking questions was because I could not think of answers vague enough for her to not connect any dots. You want to talk about the meaning of life, kid? Great. Let’s do it.

How did Mr. and Mrs. Claus meet? Maybe your mom knows.

When I was younger I think I tried to keep the appearance that I believed in Santa as long as I could because I figured once my parents knew I stopped believing, it could lower my gift count. That was something I did not want to jeopardize.

Having said all of this, Enjoli and I discussed with Alexa that these marvelous people from her childhood did not actually exist.

We did not bring it up out of nowhere. Her apparent skepticism and that we had an inkling she had grown weary of these creatures actually existing drove us to the decision that she hear the truth from us. Not to our surprise, she had more or less already come to these conclusions.

She asked if we were upset that she did not believe in Santa because it was so much fun for us to be able to deliver such great Christmas mornings to her and Jake. Of course, we are not. And, she will play along so that Jake can live in that magical world for at least another year or two.

So there. She heard these things from us instead of one of her peers. Had these things been expounded upon by someone else, it would not have been the end of the world. Like other things, we want her standards set at home. These conversations might help set the table for future discussions that will carry much more weight.

*(Continued on Page 11)*

## The Extra Mile from Ron

*(Continued from Page 5)*

say you can’t change the world. However, I can make my little corner of it a better place,” Ron concluded.

This is Ron’s attitude, what he stands for, and will continue to exemplify!

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



Stacy McClendon and sons

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# Community Service on the Westside

## Goals of the Santa Monica Family YMCA



**By Eduardo Lowe**  
The Santa Monica Family YMCA fosters growth, inclusion, and positive connections between individuals and families, making it more than just a gym. Our spring youth basketball leagues exemplify this thriving, close-knit community. We not only focus on physical development, but also on cultivating social and emotional skills, creating a space where kids can connect and develop a sense of teamwork and community. The YMCA's commitment to being more than just a gym is further showcased in our upcoming Healthy Kids Day, which will take place at the Arts + Literacy festival. This engaging, family-friendly event is designed to spark creativity and inspire healthy habits,

encouraging children and their families to learn, grow, and connect meaningfully. We take pride in offering a variety of job opportunities that provide individuals with the chance to make a real difference in their community – each position is designed to create meaningful careers that allow people to contribute to something larger than themselves. At the YMCA, everyone is welcome, regardless of background, experience, or skill level. It's a community that supports and uplifts one another, providing a welcoming space where people can come together to achieve their goals and make a difference in the world around them.

**Eduardo Lowe is the Member Engagement Director of the Santa Monica Family YMCA.**

## Attending Fun Community Events



**By Linda Levee**  
We Santa Monica-Pacific Palisades Lions enjoyed a very stimulating program at our recent monthly dinner meeting.

Our speaker was Robert Castaneda, Santa Monica Urban Forest Coordinator, representing the Santa Monica Forestry Dept. He spoke of the challenges they face in maintaining a healthy forest mantle of trees and vegetation to keep Santa Monica a leader in urban eco-environment.

Related to this, we had a very enjoyable club tree planting on Arbor Day, April 26, at Hotchkiss Park. This is always a fun affair which we enjoy doing

every year to help keep Santa Monica a natural green haven with a healthy flora. A few days later, we participated in the annual Santa Monica Arts and Literacy Festival at Virginia Avenue Park. At our Lions' booth, we were helping kids with creative art sand crafts projects. In working with these children, it was so satisfying and gratifying to feel their enthusiasm and see the excitement in their eyes. We also recently spent a fun and entertaining evening at the Venice-Marina-LAX Lions Annual BBQ-Bingo fundraiser in Playa Del Rey.

If you are interested in learning more about Lionism, meeting new friends and getting an opportunity to help your community, we would

*(Continued on Page 11)*

## Planning for Future Activities



**By Patricia Webber**  
The Santa Monica Bay Woman's Club (SMBWC) is part of the California Federation of Women's Clubs Marina District. At the March

District Meeting, all Clubs were asked that as an April initiative, each hold food drives to support those facing food insecurity. Last year, we held two successful food drives and will again be collecting cereal for the Westside Food Bank. According to the Food Bank, cereal is the most needed food item there. Last year, Club members collected 74 boxes (that's 102 lbs.) of cereal, so we are hoping to surpass that this month.

Also this month, the Club's Elmira T. Stephens Scholarship Committee will be reviewing applications from seniors at Santa Monica High School. This program has been a key activity of SMBWC for more than 20 years.

Applicants are asked to write a short essay about their goals to support our community upon completion of their college and university education. Recipients will be notified by the high school, and winners announced in May.

Monday afternoon bridge and canasta card playing continues to

grow with new members joining the competitive fun. Members contribute \$3 and guests \$5 to play which helps to fund the Scholarship Fund.

Duplicate bridge is also played at the Club on Thursdays. Anyone interested should call the Club at 310-395-1308.

Tuesdays are for the Arts, Crafts & Conversation group, from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Research has shown that crafting helps reduce stress, depression, and anxiety. It helps build self-esteem, community, and friendship. It can also help in grief processing. So, if you have an unfinished project or want to learn a new one, feel free to stop by the Club.

Once again, the Club has been selected for a *Candlelight Concert: A Tribute Concert to Coldplay*. This will take place on Friday, June 2 with two shows at 6:30 p.m. and 9:30 p.m. Candlelight is a live, multi-sensory musical experience that shows off our beautiful historic ballroom. Tickets can be purchased at fever.com.

For any questions about renting, please call the Club at 310-395-1308 weekdays between 9 a.m. and 11:30 a.m., or go to SMBWC.org.

## Summer of Discovery

*(Continued from Page 3)*

deliver a kind of confounded delight, though to specify further would require a spoiler alert. To reserve a time to take a look behind the curtain, visit mjt.org.

**Dr. Miceala Shocklee is a full-time aquatics veterinarian and part-time science writer and freelance editor.**



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# Connect to Nature in May

By Julie Rensink Hanson

May is a time when bird migrants of all colors and sizes move through Los Angeles on their way to their summer homes. It's a magical time, as you may hear calls you have never heard before, clues to the new visitors to your backyard. Some migrants stop long enough to breed, such as the Western Tanager, but others are here just for the diverse wild foods available now before they move on.

Bird migrants even have their own day. This year, May 13 is World Migratory Bird Day and you can celebrate by learning about and observing the birds in your community. Pick up a bird guide and take a drive up the coast to the Malibu Lagoon, a popular stopping-over point for our spring and fall migrants, or simply take a walk through your neighborhood.

Migration also brings more hummingbirds. Costa's and Black-chinned Hummingbirds breed on the coast and brilliant purple-chinned Calliope Hummingbirds, the smallest birds in the USA, may migrate through here on their 5,000-mile trek to the northern Sierras and Canada. This month is peak breeding season for Anna's and Allen's Hummingbirds.

One of our most beautiful locals, Western Bluebirds, are building nests this month. What is it about bluebirds we love so much? Maybe it's their gentle demeanor. Social by nature and seldom alone, they rarely appear aggressive and seem to treat each other with the good-



Western Bluebird

natured and calm ways of an old friend. They also have a wonderful, cheerful song and their brilliant blue plumage is said to rival the sky itself. A great place to find them this time of year is Will Rogers State Historic Park and other parks within the Santa Monica Mountains.

Along the beach, some sea birds are nesting. Least Terns work to scoop small hollows in the sand as their nests, although their eggs are threatened by human foot traffic. If you visit the beach this month, please be sure to observe any signs telling you how to protect important wildlife and plants.

May will be the month for you to finally get a good night's sleep. Our Northern Mockingbirds generally stop singing their midnight songs as they finally pair-off to breed.

Call the Wild Bird Unlimited Nature Shop at 424-272-9000, or go online to [www.wbu.com/santamonica](http://www.wbu.com/santamonica) for more information.



More moms – Julie Dobkin Gilberg with her once baby daughters, Emily Rose, now 20, and Sophie, now 21.



Mom Enjoli Margolin with Alexa, who will be ten in July, and Jake, who turns seven this month!

## An Update From ERBA Markets

# Celebrating 420



By Stephen Freedman

Last month on April 20, we celebrated "420," the annual celebration of all things cannabis. While the term "420" has entered the mainstream and has become synonymous with cannabis, the origins of this term remain somewhat mysterious.

Some believe that "420" is code among police officers for "marijuana smoking in progress." Another theory is that there are 420 chemical compounds in the cannabis plant. Others equate the term to Bob Dylan's song "Rainy Day Women #12 & 35" since 12 multiplied by 35 equals 420. But the most credible story goes back to the '70s right here in California.

In 1971 at San Rafael High School in Marin County, five friends would meet at 4:20 p.m. to get high. The phrase started as "420 Louis" as the group would meet by the Louis Pasteur statue outside campus. They chose this time because all school extracurricular activities had concluded by

then. They became known as the "Waldos" and would say "420" to one another as code for marijuana.

The brother of one of the Waldos was friends with The Grateful Dead's bassist Phil Lesh and was able to get him work as a roadie. It is believed that this relationship brought the code to the band's attention, and so they helped popularize the term.

On December 28, 1990, a group of Deadheads in the Bay Area handed out flyers that invited people to smoke "420" on April 20 at 4:20 p.m. One of these flyers made its way to Steve Bloom, who was a writer for the cannabis magazine *High Times*. The magazine printed the flyer in 1991 and continued to reference the number. The term blew up and has now gained worldwide recognition for the consumption of cannabis.

We hope you had a happy and safe 420, however you chose to spend the holiday!

Stephen Freedman is the General Manager at ERBA Markets. Locations include the Woods, Los Angeles, Venice, South Bay, and WeHo.

## Mar Vista: Neighbor to Neighbor

### A Coffee Shop With a Dedicated Purpose



By Michael Byrne

Coffee. In many ways, it quite literally makes the world go round. Nearly 75% of Americans (author included) find it to be a requirement to start their day.

But, it does more than just serve as the ignition for modern day life; it creates human connection. Coffee drinkers use coffee as a reason to be with (or simply, around) other humans. As such, I don't find it too much of a stretch to say that a local coffee shop plays a role in defining its neighborhood's culture (for the coffee drinkers, at least).

All of this was in the thoughts of Evelina Godecki, who just recently opened Kind Grounds coffee shop for the Mar Vista community. The concept for Kind Grounds as a "social enterprise" coffee shop started eight years ago when Evelina was a freshman at college.

Opened in February, Kind Grounds' mission is "to invite customers to be intentional with their consumption by making an incremental social and environmental contribution through something as simple as a daily cup of coffee."

Kind Grounds accomplishes this in many ways: they handpick only ethically-sourced beans, use fully-compostable packaging, hire staff through local job support organizations, and donate a portion of their profits to local community organizations. And, in my humble opinion, the coffee is fantastic. In Evelina's words, "We want the cup to prove itself."

The shop also aims to play a large role in the community. Kind Grounds hosts events every



A new coffee shop is dedicated to being a social enterprise.

month. In April, there was a "BYO-Game" night, Trivia night, and a Coffee Tasting. (You can find a calendar of events on their website. Look out for beach volleyball this Summer!) When I stopped in to interview Evelina, there were two people outside setting up a community compost bin for anyone to contribute to.

If indeed a coffee shop can help influence a neighborhood's culture, then Mar Vista is in a better place with Kind Grounds. In so many ways, it feels like a business truly committed to improving the place and people it serves. Visit at 3759 Sawtelle Blvd., or online at [www.kindgrounds.com](http://www.kindgrounds.com).

As a fairly new resident, Michael has done a great job of getting to know his neighbors. Let us know if you have a spot in Mar Vista that our readers should know about.



- Joe Analco

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**Planning Ahead**

# Insure Your Money



**By Lisa Alexander, Esq.**

We insure our houses and our lives. The collapse of Silicon Valley Bank earlier this year was a reminder that we should pay attention to insurance on our money. The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) insures our money in the bank. The basic coverage is \$250,000 per depositor, per insured bank, for each account ownership category.

If you have more than one account in a single bank, the amounts held in each account are added together to determine insurance coverage. If you have more than \$250,000 combined in your sole name in a single bank, you may want to talk to your banker about options to safeguard your money.

When more than one person is on the account, each person's share of the account is added up. If I have a joint account with my mom and another account just in my name, my half of the joint account is added to my separate account to determine my insurance coverage. For my mom, only her half of the joint account is considered.

Then, there are ownership categories. In addition to the single person and joint accounts, there is a category called "revocable trust accounts." This applies both to formal trusts and accounts with a "Payable on Death" (POD) or "Transfer on Death" (TOD).

In the case of a revocable trust account, either in the name of a trust (such as "Suzie Q., Trustee of the Suzie Q. Living Trust") or a pay on death account in Suzie Q.'s individual name with her grandson Joey as beneficiary, the FDIC counts the beneficiaries on the account to determine coverage. FDIC provides insurance of \$250,000 for each beneficiary up to maximum of \$1,500,000.

In Suzie's case, her Living Trust leaves cash gifts to the Santa Monica Boys & Girls Clubs and the Santa Monica YMCA, and everything else to her son Jeff. With three beneficiaries, the account in the name of the Trust is insured up to \$750,000. The account in Suzie's individual name with grandson Joey as beneficiary has one (different) beneficiary and is insured up to an additional \$250,000. Suzie can even have a third account just in her name (a non-trust account) with additional insurance coverage. Using ownership categories, Suzie can have multiple accounts at the same bank with up to \$1,250,000 insurance coverage.

Of course, this is a simple overview of FDIC insurance coverage. You should talk to your banker and review the information available on the FDIC website: [www.fdic.gov/deposit/](http://www.fdic.gov/deposit/) or [www.fdic.gov/deposit/](http://www.fdic.gov/deposit/).

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**Direct Line: 310-656-4310**

## Better to Learn

(Continued from Page 8)

We want her to know that we would never steer her or her brother wrong, and that she can always ask us anything she would like to.

Happy Mother's Day to all of the wonderful mothers out there and to my mother Priscilla, stepmother Joyce, and to the absolutely fantastic, dedicated, rock of our family, my wife, Enjoli. I am very thankful for the dedication each of these ladies has shown to me and my family by being great mothers.

## Attending Fun Community Events

(Continued from Page 9)

love to have you be our guest at one of our monthly dinner meetings. Please contact Lion Yoriko Fisher at [yorikofisher@gmail.com](mailto:yorikofisher@gmail.com), or Lion Kingsley Fife at 310-454-2960 or [jkfife88@yahoo.com](mailto:jkfife88@yahoo.com).



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## Paws and Claws

# How Do I Handle a Stressed Cat?



**By Dr. Frank Lavac, MS, DVM**  
**Q: My cat freaks out when going to the veterinary hospital for an exam. Her stress makes it difficult**

**to travel with her, or have the vet perform an exam. What can I do to make it less stressful for her?**

**A:** I am sorry to hear that your cat is so anxious in these circumstances. This is a very common problem. It's not very surprising that a cat would be fearful when leaving the home or going into a veterinary hospital. In recent years, we have really tried to make the cat's experience less stressful.

Often, just the sight of the carrier can be distressing to the cat. I recommend leaving the carrier out for at least a week prior to any veterinary visit. Feed them inside

the carrier and/or place treats inside the carrier. Spray Feliway spray on a towel inside the carrier. Feliway is a calming pheromone spray.

If this is an ongoing problem, ask your veterinarian to prescribe gabapentin to help make the cat's experience less stressful. The medication is usually given a couple of hours prior to the exam, and helps gently sedate the cat. This approach has been extremely helpful for all concerned: cat, owner, and veterinarian.

In more extreme cases of anxiety or aggression, a Board Certified Veterinary Behaviorist may need to be consulted to determine other options.

**Dr. Frank Lavac can be reached by calling 310-828-4587.**

## Adopt a Pet



I'm "Eddie," and I'm an adorable tan chihuahua mix born around 2/3/23. I'm a silly and fun pup who will do best in a home that is prepared for the rewards and challenges of raising a young puppy. [Info@wagsandwalks.org](mailto:Info@wagsandwalks.org).



- Joe Analco

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