

THE SANTA MONICA STAR

*Also Covering
The Greater
Westside*

Volume XXV Number 4

Connecting You With Your Community

April 2026

Rotary Club of Santa Monica 2026 Annual Wine Fest Fundraiser Benefits Several Nonprofit Organizations



Celebrating the wonderful French-themed annual wine festival last month, were from left, Mike and Karin Wallerstein, Judith, with husband, Alex Parajon, who is Rotary 5280 District Governor, and Past President of the Santa Monica club Monika White.

Imagine Moulin Rouge and Can-Can dancers, attendees dressed in feathers and bangles, all complemented by fine wines and fantastic auction items, and you'll get a sense of the Santa Monica Rotary Club's 2026 Wine Fest. Wines were generously donated by California Wineries Arnot-Roberts, Enfield Wine Company, and Limerick Lane. Guests enjoyed a delicious meal while being entertained by rising pop star Elle Baez, the LA Follies Dancers, and lively auctioneer Larry Snyder, capped off by a heartfelt speech from the head of the featured charity, School on Wheels. The Wine Festival is the Club's signature fundraiser supporting multiple local



Event Co-chair Andrea Gressinger, left, with her guest Marci Schoenbaum.

charities and international causes. Not shown, Event Co-chair Vicky Curtis.

Lessons From the Fire: Insurance Actions to Protect Your Assets Before the Next Disaster

By Richard Lombardi

One of the hardest lessons my wife Julia and I learned after the fire is that the time to understand your insurance policy is not after a disaster – it's long before one occurs.

Like many homeowners, I believed I had solid coverage. I knew my premium, trusted my carrier, and assumed that if the worst happened, the policy would do what it was supposed to do. What we discovered in the months following the loss of our home is that insurance is far more complicated than most of us realize, and the details matter.

In conversations with neighbors, clients, and others going through similar experiences, a few important lessons have emerged. These are things every homeowner should review now – before the next emergency arrives.

The first lesson is simple, know what your policy actually covers. Many people understand their monthly premium but not the

structure of their coverage. Terms like dwelling coverage, personal property coverage, and additional
(Continued on Page 10)

Do You Recognize This Neighborhood Celebrity?
(Answer on Page 11)



Notice the clouds overhead and how they affect our earth.

Consider the Effects of Earth Day

By Michelle Li

Earth Day didn't actually start as the global "plant-a-tree" day we know it as today. Back in 1970, it was essentially a massive national "teach-in" on the environment. Senator Gaylord Nelson started the movement after witnessing the absolute devastation of a massive oil spill in Santa Barbara, California.

It's hard to imagine now, but at the time, we didn't have the EPA, the Clean Air Act, or the Clean Water Act. There were basically zero legal rules or regulatory mechanisms protecting the planet from industrial damage.

That first year, 20 million Americans (which was about 10% of the entire U.S. population at the time) hit the streets to demand change. It remains one of those rare, powerful examples of a holiday that started as a literal protest and ended up as a permanent fixture of our legal and cultural framework. This massive grassroots energy is what forced environmental issues onto the national agenda and made "ecology" a household word.

Today, the National Earth Day Network has expanded that reach to over 190 countries, but the real
(Continued on Page 6)



The Santa Monica Elks are proud to support students who exemplify academics, leadership, and financial need. Recent scholarships ranged from \$1,000 - \$2,000.

Santa Monica Elks Present Student Scholarships

The Elks' most valuable student scholarship awards were presented to Angelina Chow, Samantha Chyn, Jack Musitano, Matthew Blute, Eric Gu, and Chana Fink. Also pictured, Gloria Half-

acre, Santa Monica Elks Trustee and Scholarship Chair, and Michelle VanLerberghe, far right, Santa Monica Elks Exalted Ruler.

Read the Elks column on Page 9 to learn more about their events.

Take a Look Inside

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Discover the Arts and Activities

Elemental Music School Has New Home

Monika White, right, with her twin sister, Gitta Morris, was honored by Elemental Music School for her support of their fundraising efforts over the past four years at their annual Tasting Notes event held at the Santa Monica Hilton Hotel in February.



Gitta Morris and Monika White and Olympic, with a significant grant from the Santa Monica/Westside Legacy Fund for Women and Girls, which helped fund a capital campaign. The students perform two concerts each year for the community.

The school provides music lessons for 600 children each year, many from low-income families. The non-profit organization offers scholarships, giving many families the chance to give their children the gift of music.

After more than 20 years of using borrowed space in several public schools, Elemental School secured its own building at 19th

An Artist's View of Our Neighborhood

Billis Williams Gallery, at 2716 S. La Cienega Blvd. is pleased to present Patricia Chidlaw, the gallery's fifth showing of the Southern California artist's oil paintings through May 2. The exhibition features her new urban landscape paintings focusing on the greater Los Angeles region.

Patricia Chidlaw is endlessly attracted to light – to the changing light of morning and evening, to shadows at play over Los Angeles, to the subtle shades of the color in the sky and clouds. While natural light is omnipresent in her work, she is deeply drawn to the concrete and steel of the constructed

world. The interaction of the natural and human-made is at the core of Chidlaw's work – powerlines, painted out graffiti, shadows of palm trees, and angles of architecture come together in the compositions in her distinctive portraits of Los Angeles.

Patricia Chidlaw (b.1951) received her BA from the University of California, Santa Barbara and has exhibited extensively on the West Coast and at numerous art fairs throughout the U.S.



Patricia Chidlaw
Late Night by the Pool, 2026
oil on linen, 30x30 in.

Pollinator Spotting in the Garden

By Sarah Caso
California Climate
Action Corps Fellow

As a native bee ecologist, I am often met with both awe and confusion when I tell people about the diversity of bees. Most people think only of the honey bee or bumble bee, and don't know about long-horned bees or mason bees.

People ask me: How can there be so many different types of bees that I've never seen before? If this sounds like you, I encourage you to spend five or ten minutes sitting outside, just watching flowers. Once you know



Flowers in bloom at Marine Park Community Garden in early Spring.

what to look for, you'll start noticing more and more bees. Start by looking for the larger bees, like huge, black carpenter bees. Carpenter bees are the largest bee genus in California, about an inch long, and are not the most graceful flyers. You might even be lucky enough to see the male valley carpenter bee, lovingly nicknamed the teddy bear bee because they are golden brown and can't sting. Actually, male bees of all species cannot sting.

Pollinators are all around us, but can be confused with one another. Metallic green sweat bees are mistaken as green bottle flies, and small carpenter bees mistaken as gnats. It goes the other way, as well. There are many flies that resemble bees, with fluffy hairs or black and yellow stripes. Since both are pollinators, once you start spending time just watching insects fly around and land on flowers, you'll start to notice differences. Flies have one pair of wings and big eyes that take up almost their entire head, whereas bees have two pairs of wings and more proportional head-to-eye ratios. Whether you spot bees or flies, it's exciting to

(Continued on Page 6)



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What's Happening on the Westside

By Pamela Lawrence

• Thursdays through Sundays (Ongoing through May 3) - Under One Roof at Santa Monica Airport Arts Center Studios 3026 -

View an exhibition of current artwork by Santa Monica Studios 3026 artists. The show, curated by Los Angeles-based writer, art critic, and curator Peter Frank features work by 32 artists, as well as guest artists. The exhibited work spans multiple disciplines including sculpture, painting, textile, photography, ceramics, prints, and drawing. Thursday-Sunday, 12 p.m.-5 p.m. Studios 3026, 3026 Airport Ave. This event is free and open to the public.

• Saturday, April 4 - Water is a Currency Exhibition Opening -

This exhibition traces and defines diaspora as a water-based system of spiritual transmission - where value is generated through movement, knowledge survives through circulation, and attunement operates as ancestral intelligence. The works in this exhibition engage water as a material force that remembers movement, labor, prayer, and survival. Situated at the edge of the Pacific, the exhibition unfolds as a living current - an offering that invites viewers to slow their bodies, tune their senses, and recognize themselves as participants within an ongoing system of transmission that is at once ancient and unfinished. 1 p.m.-3 p.m. Annenberg Community Beach House, 415 Pacific Coast Highway. Free event.

• Tuesday, April 7 - Palms-Rancho Park Library Teen Book and Movie Club presents: *The Princess Bride* - based on the book by William Goldman. Read the book before the meeting, watch the movie at the library, and then discuss both with your fellow teens! 4:15 p.m.-6:30 p.m. *The Princess*

Bride (1987, PG) will begin at 4:20 p.m., with discussion to follow at 6 p.m. Refreshments will be provided and are funded by the Friends of the Palms-Rancho Park Library. For ages 12-17.

• Wednesdays, April through October - Stargazing in Westwood: UCLA Planetarium -

UCLA's Planetarium will resume its weekly public shows this Spring, offering evening programs that explore astronomy and the night sky. Shows begin at 8 p.m. Each event typically runs about one hour and is divided into two segments: a 30-minute feature focused on a specific astronomy topic, and a 30-minute star show highlighting current night sky observations. The UCLA Planetarium is located on the eighth floor of the Mathematical Sciences Building at 405 Hilgard Ave. More information can be found at the UCLA Planetarium website. While the tickets are listed as being fully booked, tickets will be released an hour before the show.

• Saturday, April 11 - Saturday Morning Book Discussion - Come enjoy wide-ranging conversations about books from the New York Times' 100 Notable Books of the Year. 11 a.m.-12 noon. Palms - Rancho Park Branch Library. The book for April is *Abundance* by Ezra Klein & Derek Thompson. Copies are available at reference and as ebooks. For adults, seniors. For more details, call 310-840-2142.

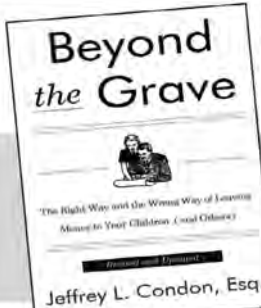
• Saturday, April 11 - Orchestra Nova LA presents "Where the Sun Sets" - Enjoy an inspiring and powerful concert of new and classical music. Orchestra Nova LA was established in 2023, under the baton of Maestro Ivan Shulman. The audience is invited to immerse themselves in the rejuvenating capacity of music, to leave

behind the travails of everyday life while enjoying great music. This performance is made possible, in part, by a grant from the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors through the Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture. 8 p.m. Mount Olive Lutheran Church, 1343 Ocean Park Blvd., Santa Monica. Free (Suggested Donation \$20) and parking is free. For more information, email info@orchnovala.org or call 310-259-9604.

• Sunday, April 19 - Palisades Earth Day & Veg Fest 2026 at the Palisades Village Green - Join Palisades residents for a joyful, family-friendly Earth Day celebration. For years, residents gathered on the Palisades Village Green to celebrate the land, the food, and each other. After everything the town has faced, returning to this space together feels

powerful. This is more than a festival. It is a homecoming. 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Palisades Village Green, 15280 Sunset Blvd., Pacific Palisades. Plants, food, music, healing activities, and real climate solutions. Whether you are rebuilding, restoring your garden, or simply looking to reconnect with neighbors, this event is for you. You can expect a beautiful native plant sale, many vegan food vendors, face painting for kids, healing activities for all ages, music, and space to simply reconnect. This gathering is part of the two year Community Healing and Restoration initiative, Replanting Roots, supported by the California Community Foundation Wildfire Recovery Fund. This joyful event is also about recovery, resilience, and rebuilding together. Free event is put on by #ResilientPalisades.

(Continued on Page 11)



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Jeffrey L. Condon, Esq.


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Thoughts From a Second-Time Father

The Traits of Children's Various Ages



By Michael Margolin

I have told people that the one thing that makes me feel like I am really getting older, besides random aches

and pains and the standing appointment that I have with the restroom every morning at 3 a.m., is watching my kids get older.

I was not super young when we had kids. I was 34 and 37 when Alexa and Jake were born, respectively. Telling people that my son is going to be 10 this year is fun. Double digits and all of that. I have been through that before with Alexa. What I have not been through is telling somebody that my child will be 13.

There is something categorically different, to me at least, about telling somebody your kid will be one or seven or even 10. The number even looks more intimidating than the other ones. Her birthday is not until July which means I have several more months of anticipation.

And, then it will move to telling people that I actually have a teenage daughter. People told us that

the twos would be terrible. But they were not. Or, that when a child is three, they were three-nagers. The threes were not so bad, either. And, I do not necessarily figure that Alexa will be an impossible teenager.

At least when Jake turns 13, I will have an idea of what he will be dealing with. Thankfully, I have a wife who was a teenage girl at one time her in life so we are covered there as far as life experience goes.

As I have written before, every stage of Alexa's life has been uncharted waters for me and Enjoli, since she is our oldest. We are off to a great start with Alexa though. She is a great kid and has a great relationship with both of her parents. This will be the first, and only, teenage daughter I will ever raise. Since she will not turn 13 until the Summer, this is definitely not the last time I will be writing about or mentioning Alexa's age.

Mike Margolin has been writing for us since his daughter Alexa was born 12 years ago and son, Jake, nine years ago. He also coaches each child's soccer team.

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Spring Cleaning From the Inside Out



By Cheryl Thode

Every parent has heard the familiar message on an airplane: Put your own oxygen mask on first before helping others. It's simple advice, but

when you're raising kids, it can feel almost impossible to follow.

Parents, especially moms, often run on empty. We juggle school schedules, sports, meals, work, activities, homework, birthday parties, permission slips, and the endless logistics of family life. By the time Spring rolls around, many of us are overwhelmed and buried under a mental to-do list that never seems to end.

This is why I've been thinking about Spring Cleaning a little differently this year. Not the closets. Not the garage. Not even the toy bins.

I'm talking about a different kind of Spring Cleaning – one that starts with us. Before reorganizing the playroom or labeling another storage bin, I'm asking myself a simple question, what would happen if I cleared some space in

my own life first?

Because the truth is, kids don't just live in our homes. They live inside the systems we create. When our days feel chaotic, rushed, and cluttered, our kids feel it too.

So, my first step this Spring will be taking a hard look at the family calendar. I want to ask a question that can feel surprisingly uncomfortable, do we actually need to be doing all of this? Some activities will stay, but others may quietly disappear. Even removing one extra commitment each week might create something we don't often have enough of – breathing room.

My guess is that kids benefit from that space just as much as we do. When every afternoon isn't packed with somewhere to be, they have time to decompress, play, read, or even be bored for a while – something creativity tends to grow out of.

Another place I'm hoping to do some Spring Cleaning is the mental load that so many parents carry. We all have that running checklist in our heads: Who needs new sneakers? Is the field trip

form signed? What day is the science project due?

Instead of trying to hold everything in my head, I'm experimenting with putting more of it somewhere visible – a simple weekly board in the kitchen where everyone can see what's coming up. My hope is that when information is out in the open, kids can begin to take a little more ownership. A reminder about library books becomes their job. A practice schedule becomes something they can check themselves. Even younger kids can start to see how the family rhythm works when it isn't hidden inside a parent's brain.

Finally, I'm planning to lean more into something that helps kids grow in confidence – real responsibility. Not just clean your room, but meaningful ways to contribute to family life. My three-year-old can help put toys back in a basket, carry napkins to the table, or match socks from the laundry pile; and my seven-year-old can help set the table, pack his backpack for school, or help wipe down the table after dinner. These simple tasks may seem small to

us, but to a child they can feel important.

These small responsibilities send an important message: they are not just passengers in the family – they are contributors. And contributors tend to grow into capable, confident people.

In truth, while Spring will always bring the urge to organize closets and scrub baseboards, the reality is that the most important reset is really not inside our cabinets. Rather, it's the clearing of space in our routines, our schedules, and even our minds.

So, here's a small challenge for this month – pick just one non-cabinet space to organize. Maybe it's removing one activity from the calendar, writing the weekly schedule where everyone can see it, or giving a child a new responsibility at home. It doesn't have to be perfect, it just has to be a start.

When we make a little more room to breathe, our families will grow into that space together. God Bless.



Reflections From The East

A Life Lesson From an Old English Idiom



By Qin Sun Stubis

When I first became a student of English literature in the late 1970s in Shanghai, I was obsessed with English idioms. I considered them to be the authentic wisdom of the west, and through them I thought I could discover a different cultural perspective.

Among the phrases I copied down in my notebook was the saying, "Honesty is the best policy." I used to read it aloud again and again, pondering why the Western world thought honesty was a good human attribute.

Growing up, I never thought being honest could be good at all. During the Cultural Revolution, my father was jailed repeatedly for

speaking his mind. Whenever my parents fought about the troubles his candor brought them, my mother always challenged him, "Why are you so honest? Why couldn't you keep your own thoughts and feelings to yourself? Why couldn't you make up a better response?"

Although my father was a laborer with only a few years of elementary school education, being truthful, somehow, had always been an integral part of who he was. He would never lie or make a false statement even after he was jailed and physically tortured for telling things the way he saw them.

Witnessing his plight traumatized me greatly. Starting at the tender age of eight, I knew what starvation and abandonment by

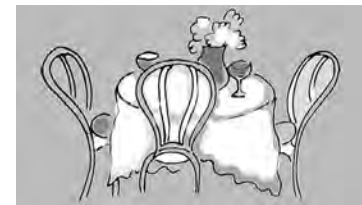
friends and relatives felt like. Most of all, I was scared to death about going to prison like my father. I knew I couldn't be honest like he was, but I didn't want to lie either. So, I coped by not talking to anyone and learned to survive in a very lonely world.

It took me a long time to shed this protective shell and live like a normal person. After many years of contemplating how to walk on a fine line between honesty and deceit, what the world around me wanted me to say versus my inner voice, I have finally been able to get my spontaneity back, now free to be honest with myself, free to express my emotions and opinions, free to act whimsically, and say what I want when I want.

Having lived for decades of my life on two different continents

I have realized that honesty has not always been the best policy for me. Still, being truthful to myself and my family and friends helps lighten my emotional baggage and physical stress. It makes me a brighter and more wholesome person. Considering all that, when the world permits it, honesty is the better policy.

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



Mini Message Bulletin Board



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Maria Shriver to be Keynote Speaker at the Annual Think Pink Fundraiser



Maria Shriver has created so many inspiring projects.

Maria Shriver, an award-winning journalist, author, and leading advocate for women's health, will be the keynote speaker at the 20th annual Think Pink for Women's Wellness, an educational event for Providence Saint John's Health Center. The event will take place Wednesday, April 29, at the Bel-Air Bay Club in Pacific Palisades.

"Maria Shriver is a longtime supporter of Saint John's as well as an activist for women's health, and we are delighted she will be participating in Think Pink in such a prominent role," said Janis Gallo, president of the health center's Irene Dunne Guild, which produces the event. "We're also pleased to be returning to Pacific Palisades and the Bel-Air Bay Club, Think Pink's home of many years." In the aftermath of last-year's Palisades Fire, Think Pink was moved to another location in Santa Monica.

Maria's personal and philanthropic connection to Saint John's spans decades. The hospital honored her role as a patron – and her devotion to children and family – by naming its specialized newborn care unit the Maria Shriver Nurs-

ery in 2004. Her four children were also born at Saint John's. She is a former first lady of California, founder of the nonprofit Women's Alzheimer's Movement, and co-founder of the Cleveland Clinic Women's Comprehensive Health and Research Center.

Maria Shriver will join Think Pink for a featured conversation about the state of women's health and the new Maria Shriver Labor, Delivery and Family Wellness Center at Providence Saint John's Health Center.

Think Pink for Women's Wellness is the primary educational and fundraising event of the Irene Dunne Guild, which is marking its 39th year as major supporters.

The event will run from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. and feature morning speaker sessions on unlocking the mysteries of menopause, the surprising health benefits of beautiful skin, why self-care can be heart care, and the importance of understanding your gut microbiome. A luncheon will follow in the Upper Bel-Air Bay Club's dining room overlooking the Pacific Ocean.

Boutique shopping will be available throughout the day, with net proceeds benefiting a wide array of programs and services at Saint John's, including women's health initiatives, nursing scholarships, funding for caregivers and family support services, and the purchase of medical equipment.

Tickets for Think Pink are \$195 per person and are expected to sell out. For more information on Think Pink or joining the Irene Dunne Guild, please visit irene.dunneguild.org.

Enjoy National Poetry Month This April

By Stacy McClendon

National Poetry Month celebrates the integral role of poets in our culture, and the fact that poetry matters. This celebration was launched by the Academy of American Poets back in April, 1996. It has now become the largest literary celebration in the world, with tens of millions of readers, showcasing that poetry is indeed necessary and an important part of our lives.

I, myself, am a poetry lover who writes and shares whenever I get the chance. It is such a powerful tool and form of expression, as it offers both the writer and reader a chance to blossom and expand their mind mentally, spiritually, emotionally, and physically.

Poetry & the Creative Mind is poetry's biggest night celebrating National Poetry Month. This year's virtual event will be held on Tuesday, April 28 at 7:30 p.m. EDT.

The event is free.

This event has been held annually since 2003. It is open to all, and features award-winning actors, musicians, artists, and noted public figures sharing classic and contemporary poems. It is the largest annual poetry reading in the U.S. The signature event raises funds through donations and sponsorships to support the Academy of American Poets and its K-12 education programs, which serve 100,000 students each year.

There are also virtual and in-person poetry events and resources offered nationwide that can be found at <https://poets.org/poetry-near-you>.

To find out how to get involved with National Poetry Month, locate additional poetry resources such as <https://poets.org/national-poetry-month>.

Senior Care

Age and Driving: Knowing When to Stop



By Tim Petlin

For many people, car keys represent far more than transportation. They symbolize independence and freedom. When age-related changes begin affecting driving ability, older adults may feel fearful or reluctant to give up the keys because it can mean a major lifestyle change.

As we age, physical changes can affect driving safety. Glare from oncoming headlights may become harder to manage, and eye conditions such as glaucoma, cataracts, or macular degeneration can reduce vision. Hearing loss may make it harder to notice horns or sirens. Slower reflexes and joint stiffness can also make it difficult to turn the head or react quickly to road conditions.

Ideally, seniors will recognize when driving becomes unsafe and discuss their concerns with a doctor or family members before a dangerous situation occurs.

• Warning Signs of Unsafe Driving
Some drivers may not realize their abilities have changed. Family members should watch for warning signs such as:

- Multiple minor crashes, near misses, or new dents and scrapes on the car
- Two or more traffic tickets or warnings within a short period
- Increased car insurance premiums due to driving incidents
- Concerns raised by friends or neighbors about unsafe or erratic driving

These signals may indicate that it's time to evaluate whether driving is still safe.

• Evaluating Driving Ability

When concerns arise, a professional driving evaluation can provide objective guidance. Some assessments include an in-car driving review, while more detailed evaluations are conducted by spe-

cialists who assess how medical issues may be affecting driving skills. These professionals can also recommend strategies or training to improve safety if continued driving is possible.

• Starting the Conversation

Talking about driving can be difficult for families, but it's an important conversation. A good way to begin is by asking simple questions such as, "How comfortable do you feel when you're driving?"

Follow-up questions about night driving, highways, unfamiliar routes, or recent close calls can help guide the discussion.

In many cases, it helps to involve the older adult's healthcare provider. Doctors can explain how medical conditions – such as arthritis, vision problems, or hearing loss – may affect safe driving.

• Planning Transportation Alternatives

If it's time to stop driving, having a "Plan B" helps seniors maintain independence and mobility. Options may include rideshare services, community transportation programs, senior center shuttles, or help from family and friends.

Some families create their own solutions, such as sharing driving responsibilities or arranging regular rides for errands and appointments.

• Looking Ahead

For older adults, staying honest about driving abilities is an important part of staying safe. For families, starting the conversation early can prevent a crisis later. With thoughtful planning and supportive alternatives, seniors can remain active and connected, even if someone else is behind the wheel.

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Atom X



Audien Hearing

Early Learning Center Gala Brings Community Together for the Y



By **Araceli Alejandre**

The Santa Monica Family YMCA came alive last month as parents, teachers, and supporters gathered for the third annual Early Learning Center Gala, a special event dedicated to supporting the YMCA's mission of service to the community.

Organized by Early Learning Center Director Christy Corsinita and the center's incredible team of teachers, the gala welcomed 80 guests for an evening of connection, celebration, and giving back. Parents and educators enjoyed a rare opportunity for some well-deserved "grown-up time" over dinner while supporting a cause close to their hearts.

A highlight of the evening was the silent auction, which featured an exciting variety of items generously donated by families and local businesses. Guests had the chance to bid on prizes including a Barbie Dream House, a golf set, a signed rookie card by NFL legend Junior Seau, gift cards to local businesses, and several other

popular items.

Perhaps the most meaningful pieces in the auction, however, were the one-of-a-kind artworks created by children in the Early Learning Center program. These colorful and creative pieces were a reminder of exactly who the event supports and why the YMCA's work matters so deeply to families in our community.

All proceeds from the gala – including ticket sales and auction funds – will go directly toward the Santa Monica Family YMCA Annual Campaign, which aims to raise \$121,000 this year to provide YMCA scholarships. These scholarships ensure that individuals and families throughout our community can access YMCA programs regardless of financial circumstances.

The YMCA is truly grateful for staff, parents, and local businesses whose donations and support made the evening possible. Those interested in contributing to the YMCA's Annual Campaign can learn more, or donate at <https://ymcasm.org/annual-giving>.

Consider the Effects (Continued from Page 1)

impact is still felt in the small, local stuff. Whether it's a community garden in a city center or a volunteer beach cleanup along the coast, the day serves as a reminder that environmentalism isn't just about high-level global policy – it's about the actual soil under our feet. As we move further into the 21st century, the vibe has shifted from just raising awareness to taking direct action. It's a call to look at our local habits and realize how they ripple out to impact the global climate. It started with a spill and a protest, but it continues through the small everyday choices we make to keep the planet livable.

If your feed is looking like a total time capsule lately, there's a reason for it. That specific 2016 "Main Character" energy is making a huge comeback. People are bringing back ultra-reflective highlighters, weirdly blurry photo filters, and a general obsession with the mid-2010s. It's a phenomenon known as "nostalgia bait," and it's changing how we look at fashion and media. Gen Z, who were mostly in elementary or middle school back then, is leading the charge to bring these trends back.

Before TikTok made trend cycles

move at a million miles an hour, subcultures actually had time to exist. Now, everyone is tech-savvy, but they're choosing to spend \$50 on old film cameras or hunting for "vintage" digital cameras just to get that low-res, grainy Snapchat look from years ago. It feels like a massive reaction to the "infinite scroll." Everything is so high-definition and perfectly picked by an algorithm now that people are genuinely craving something tactile. A physical photo or even just a pair of wired earbuds feels "real" in a way that an iCloud file never will.

But there's a cynical side to this, too. Brands have totally caught on, using "throwback" marketing to sell stuff to a generation that wasn't even there for the original wave. It creates this weird loop where, instead of moving forward, we're just constantly remixing the past. Whether it's a genuine love for the 2016 aesthetic or just a clever marketing ploy, it proves that in a digital world, sometimes the fastest way to feel connected to the present is to keep looking backwards.

Michelle Li is a Santa Monica High School student.

Pollinator Spotting (Continued from Page 2)

If you're interested in learning more about different types of pollinators, stop by one of our monthly Community Garden events. You'll find all the resources you need to begin your exploration of polli-

nator communities, as well as plenty of flowers on which you can spot pollinators. Learn about Community Garden events at santamonica.gov/events.

Celebrations in April

April 1 - April Fools' Day, National Fun Day, Passover begins, National Walking Day; April 2 - National Burrito Day, National Ferret Day, World Autism Awareness Day; April 5 - Easter Sunday; April 6 - California Poppy Day;; and April 7 - National Beer Day.



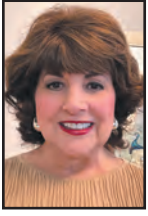
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Entertaining With Ease

Serving Beverages at Your Party



By Maureen Molé

Let's talk about serving drinks. Whatever style or size party you are hosting, from a formal sit-down dinner for six to a casual backyard party for 20, beverages will be available.

For starters, here's what not to say to your guest, "What would you like to drink?" Surprised? That's because it is such an open-ended question. The guest may ask for a Tequila Sunrise, and you may not have tequila on hand. Or, they may be too shy to ask for the drink that they really want for fear that you may not have that drink in the house.

A better idea is to offer some suggestions of what you do have available. You might say, "I'd like to offer you a drink. We have white or red wine, beer, and vodka with some mixer, or perhaps you'd like to have a nonalcoholic beverage."

It is always important to have nonalcoholic drinks available and openly displayed. After a guest has one or two alcoholic drinks, they may want to switch to a nonalcoholic beverage. If those drinks are not displayed on the bar, the guest may be too embarrassed to ask.

Additionally, most hosts do not hire a bartender to serve the drinks. Most hosts display the beverages for the guests to help themselves. I suggest offering the first drink and then inviting the

guests to help themselves thereafter. Guests may feel uncomfortable helping themselves to another drink if the host doesn't specifically invite them to do so.

I always serve the first drink and then tell the guests that this is a "help yourself" party. At sit-down dinners, where there's usually only wine at the table, I tell the guests the same thing, "Please help yourself."

Another key factor regarding serving drinks is where you set up the bar. Generally, the room with the bar will attract the most people. In advance, plan where you'd like that place to be. If you don't want guests to congregate in the kitchen, then don't set up the bar in the kitchen. If you want guests to gather on the deck outdoors, then that's where to set up the bar. At really large parties, I may set up two or three separate wine-only bars.

Some hosts today are offering a signature cocktail, a special concoction sometimes of their own making with seasonal fruits and creative ice cubes served in a fancy dispenser. That's kind of fun and I've seen that guests really like to try the signature cocktail.

Serving glasses are also important. Even a cold glass of water seems to taste better in a stemmed glass rather than in an ordinary paper cup. Paper or plastic cups are fine to use, especially outdoors, but it is also fun to drink a beverage from a special glass.

(Continued on Page 9)



Congratulations to Kalina Silverman

At 16, Kalina Silverman became an intern for our paper when she was a student at Santa Monica High School. No matter what the age of a group of people we met, she would engage in fascinating conversations with them. It was such a joy working with her.

She went on to pursue her skills of meeting new people and learning more about them. After graduation from Northwestern University, she became a Fulbright Scholar, went to Singapore, gave Ted Talks, and brought her ideas of having serious conversations with people to a variety of community organizations.

Kalina is now promoting her new book, Big Talk, through book stores and media outlets all over the country. Big Talk is available for purchase at Zibby's Bookshop on Montana Avenue. Be sure to get your copy to read. —D.M.



Kalina Silverman gave a book talk at a packed Zibby's Bookshop on Montana Avenue last month.

Photo by Pam Andrews

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From the Santa Monica Pier

Save the Pier! – The Play



By Jim Harris

A year ago, I wrote in my April column the story of the local community's 1973 grassroots fight against City Hall to save the Santa Monica Pier from demolition. This April at the west end of the Pier, you can enjoy the retelling of that story through the Pier Corporation's annual live production of the melodrama, *Save the Pier!*

That's right, a melodrama, complete with cheers and whistles, boos and hisses, heroes and villains, and laughs, fun, and important lessons – all packed into just one hour! Oh, and it's free!

Come witness the plight of a plucky group of dedicated Pier lovers that includes bumper car operators, restaurant workers, arcade attendants, shop clerks, surfers, and fishermen and fisherwomen – as they take on the seemingly impossible task of outsmarting shrewd government officials and defeating their plans for a poorly-conceived development project. And – spoiler alert – that plucky group wins!

How did they win, you ask? Well, it's best for you to venture out to

the west end of the Pier, sit on the bleachers and first take in an extraordinary sunset, then enjoy the full telling of the story. The atmosphere is perfect, and the story is wonderfully told (shameless self-promotion: it's written by the same old pier rat that writes this column!)

The play is directed by lifelong Santa Monican and Tony award-winning actor Paul Sand, whose own unique style and humor highlight the fun tale. Producer Carolyn Yost, whose husband Larry Barber helped lead that aforementioned plucky group of Pier heroes, has assembled a lively and talented cast and crew. And, the atmosphere of the venue is ... Well, it's the Pier and it's perfect!

Show dates are April 16, 17, 18, and 19. Start time is 8 p.m. Admission is free. We'll see you at the west end of the Pier!

Jim Harris is the Executive Director of the Santa Monica Pier Corporation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to the preservation and enhancement, of the pier visitor experience. Also known as the "Pier Historian," he is the author of "Santa Monica Pier: America's Last Great Pleasure Pier."

How to be a Smart and Safe Traveler



By Scott Andrews

Becoming a safe traveler in a foreign country begins long before boarding your flight.

Comprehensive preparation involves researching the destination's local laws, cultural norms, and current safety advisories through official resources like the U.S. Department of State Travel Guidance.

The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) is vital, as it allows the nearest embassy to contact you during emergencies and provides real-time security updates. Prepare your documents, such as a Passport, and depending on where you go, the ETA (Electronic Travel Authorization) Visa.

Once arriving, maintaining a low profile is essential for avoiding unwanted attention. Dress to blend in with locals, avoiding flashy jewelry, and refraining from speaking loudly in your native language in public spaces. Situational awareness is the best defense against petty crime such as staying alert in crowded tourist hot-spots and transit hubs where

pickpockets often operate. It's wise to keep valuables, such as a passport and credit cards, in a secure money belt or hotel safe, and to carry only the cash needed for the day.

Transportation and health safety also require careful planning. Stick to licensed taxis or reputable rideshare apps, and avoid walking alone in poorly-lit or unfamiliar areas at night. To protect your health, always watch drinking in social settings and research food and water safety for the specific region. Digital safety is equally important; avoid using unsecured public Wi-Fi without a VPN, and wait until you're home to post travel photos to avoid signaling that your residence is empty. Combining these proactive measures with a keen sense of intuition can significantly reduce risks and focus on enjoying your international adventure.

Learn more about traveling safely by tuning into our latest podcast #233, *Staying Safe While Cruising*.

Scott Andrews, an experienced world traveler, is the co-host of The Cruise Dudes Podcast.

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Community Service on the Westside

Santa Monica Elks Lodge Members Celebrate Work of Local Youth



By Ilene Knebel

A great celebration of youth in our community took place recently at the Santa Monica Elks Lodge. Over 150

youth and their parents attended to acknowledge their accomplishments. Awards were presented for Elks Scholarships, Drug Awareness and Americanism Contests, the new Elks Legacy of Service Award, Student of the Month, and Teacher of the Year programs.

In Mahjong news, The Westside Winds Mahjong group meets at the Santa Monica Elks Lodge on Wednesdays, April 15 and 29, from 6 p.m.-8:30 p.m. Our special event for the month is Bams and

Bubbles Brunch on Saturday, April 4 from 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Events are open to Elk members and their guests. Sign up for all Mahjong Events at <https://elks-westside-winds.cheddarup.com>.

In other Lodge happenings, don't miss our Big Band performance on Sunday, April 16 from 2 p.m.-4 p.m. Open to Elk members and their guests (\$5 admission fee), all can enjoy local musicians in a comfortable setting. We offer convenient, ADA accessible, free parking!

We also have renovated facilities available for your next event. Call our office at 310-452-3557 to schedule a visit.

The Santa Monica - Pacific Palisades Lions Are Always on the Go



By J. Kingsley Fife

April is the month highlighted by Easter, which of course is one of the holiest days on the Christian calendar. However, I've al-

ways wondered how the Easter Bunny tradition got involved with it. Checking this out, I find that the Easter rabbit or hare was an ancient folklore figure dating back to the late 1500s among German Lutherans. He originally played the role of a judge going to the homes of "good" children, giving them colored eggs, candy, and toys from his basket.

Speaking of children, this reminds me that a big event for children is coming up soon. On Saturday, April 25, Santa Monica is having its Annual Arts & Literacy Festival at Virginia Avenue Park from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. We Santa Monica-Pacific Palisades

Lions, as usual, will have a booth there. The theme, this year, is "The Farm." Lion Brian Ransom is our chair of this event and under his direction we plan on having games, projects, and puzzles for the youngsters to learn from and enjoy.

Another big event our Club is preparing for is our annual fundraiser. It will be a "Comedy Night" on Sunday, May 17, 7 p.m.-9 p.m., featuring the Crow Comedy Club at Bergamot Station. Five or six comedians will provide an evening of entertainment. The bar will serve beer, nonalcoholic beverages, and a variety of snacks. Tickets are \$75 or \$150 for VIP seating, and may be purchased through Eventbrite, crowdcomedy.com, or at the box office. All funds raised will go to the various Westside organizations we help and support. For further details, emailsmplionsclub@gmail.com.

An Update From the SMBWC



By Patricia Webber

The General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC), of which the Santa Monica Bay Woman's Club

(SMBWC) is a longstanding member, has invited members to participate in writing contests.

April is National Poetry Month, and May is National Short Story Month. Members are encouraged to submit their poems and/or short stories to The General Federation of Women's Clubs state chapters. The GFWC Writing Contest generally awards first, second, and third-place winners with certificates and gift cards, from places that encourage reading and writing. Entries are typically judged on creativity, with winners selected at club, state, and national levels.

The SMBWC is hosting a "Wine & Bites" Event at our club on April 22. We especially wish to welcome all the new members who joined this past year, as well as our renewing members. This is a relaxed occasion for us to chat and introduce ourselves to each other while enjoying potables and munchies. Questions about this event should

be directed to Alicia Syres, Events Chair by leaving a message at 310-395-1308.

Canasta Anyone? This much-loved card game is enjoying renewed popularity. Although there are many, many versions of this game, the SMBWC canasta version is one of the easiest to learn. The Club hosts this every Monday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. SMBWC member Sue Price-McGough is the contact for questions. Please leave a message at 310-395-1308. Along with Sue, several other weekly players will also be happy to teach you.

Mahjong is popular now when bridge players also meet at the club on Mondays to play. Again, for questions on joining any of these activities, please call 310-395-1308.

Artists & Crafts & Conversation group meets each Tuesday from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. If you paint, draw, collage, embroider, sew, crochet, make jewelry, or create masterpieces in any of these activities, you are encouraged to bring your unfinished projects, or start a new one. Feel free to come and go as you like. For more information, contact Joan Temple at 310-395-1308.

Celebrating Our 18th Wine Festival



By Mitchell Kraus

The Rotary Club of Santa Monica's annual Wine Festival was once again a tremendous success, bringing together

more than 200 guests for an evening of great wine, community spirit, and meaningful impact. Held in March at the Skirball Cultural Center, the event delivered exactly what Rotary does best: combining fellowship, fun, and philanthropy in support of important local causes.

This year's festival raised more than \$100,000 for the nonprofit organizations supported by the Rotary Club of Santa Monica. Those funds will help the club continue its long tradition of service, supporting programs and partnerships that make a real difference in the lives of people throughout our community and beyond.

A special highlight of the evening was the recognition of School on Wheels as the featured charity. School on Wheels provides free tutoring and educational support to children experiencing homelessness, helping give students the confidence, stability, and encouragement they need to succeed in school. Their mission deeply resonated with attendees and served as a reminder of the life-changing work that charitable support can make possible.

Guests enjoyed a lively and elegant evening of wine tasting, conversation, and connection in the beautiful setting of the Skirball. The festival reflected the Rotary Club of Santa Monica's ongoing commitment to service above self, while also creating an event that was welcoming, memorable, and genuinely enjoyable for everyone who attended.

The success of this year's Wine
(Continued on Page 10)

Entertaining With Ease (Continued from Page 7)

For example, I like to drink beer in a stemmed glass. So, think about your serving glasses and use ones that are fun to drink from. Cheers!

product spokesperson, and lecturer. Follow her on Instagram #Entertain_at_Home_with_Maureen, or email her at MaureenMole@gmail.com

Maureen Molé is the author of The Book of Entertaining at Home, a



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Lessons From the Fire (Continued from Page 1)

living expense coverage all serve different purposes, and the limits attached to each can significantly affect your recovery after a loss.

Another critical issue is the difference between market value and replacement cost. In Los Angeles, the price someone might pay for a home and the cost to rebuild it can be very different things. Construction costs, permitting delays, and new building code requirements can all increase the cost of rebuilding. If your dwelling coverage hasn't been reviewed in several years, it may not reflect current realities.

Documentation is another area many homeowners overlook. After a disaster, insurance companies often require an itemized inventory of lost possessions. Reconstructing that list from memory while dealing with the emotional and logistical challenges of displacement can be incredibly difficult. Julia and I often talk about how helpful it would have been to have a simple video walk-through of every room in the house saved to the Cloud.

Additional Living Expense coverage, often called ALE, is another area worth examining. When homes are damaged or destroyed, families may be displaced for far longer than expected. Debris removal, permitting, design, and

construction timelines can stretch into many months or even years. Understanding the limits and duration of ALE coverage before you need it can prevent unpleasant surprises later.

Finally, there are policy details that many homeowners never think about until it's too late: debris removal limits, coverage for landscaping and outdoor structures, and protection for building code upgrades.

None of this is meant to alarm anyone. Insurance is one of the most important tools we have to protect our homes and our financial future. But, like many things in life, its effectiveness depends on preparation.

Julia and I certainly wish we had taken the time to understand more of these details before the fire. If sharing these lessons encourages even a few homeowners to review their coverage, document their homes, and ask better questions of their insurance professionals, then something positive will have come from a very difficult experience.

Preparation today can make all the difference tomorrow.

Richard Lombardi is a Pacific Palisades resident, Real Estate Wealth International Realty, 2nd Vice Commander of American Legion Post 283, and Vice Chair of the Pacific Palisades Long Term Recovery Group

Historic Broadway Spotlight

Lillian Hughley's Legacy on Broadway



Lillian Hughley and her husband

By Carolyn Edwards

In 1927, Lillian Meshack arrived in Santa Monica from Smithville, Texas. By the early 1930s, Lillian Hughley and her husband had purchased their family home near 18th Street and Broadway.

She went on to own multiple commercial properties on the north side of Broadway between 17th and 18th Streets, including a barber shop, beauty salon, and malt shop. Later, she reinvested in single-family homes along 20th Street and acquired property in Los Angeles and Val Verde.

This was decades before the Fair Housing Act outlawed housing discrimination. It was long before federal law ensured equal access to credit for women. In an era shaped by redlining and racial restriction, a Black woman in Santa Monica was accumulating land, moving houses, securing permits, and building economic stability.

Family members described her as industrious and strategic. She reinvested earnings into additional property and supported Black-owned businesses by renting

within the community. She was also active in civic life as a member of the Philomathian Club, helping strengthen Santa Monica's Black social and cultural institutions.

At a time when segregation limited opportunity, ownership meant power. It meant stability. It meant the ability to shape who could operate and thrive on Broadway.

Over time, Lillian sold her commercial properties and shifted her investments. As laws changed and housing options expanded, the Black enclave that had formed along Broadway was no longer sustained by necessity alone. Properties changed hands. Businesses changed. Public memory faded.

Lillian Hughley's story reminds us that neighborhoods do not build themselves – people build them. And, when ownership changes without memory, history can disappear. Preserving her legacy is about recognizing who shaped Santa Monica's past, and understanding what it takes to carry that history forward.

Celebrating Our 18th Wine Festival (Continued from Page 9)

Festival is a testament to the generosity of sponsors, donors, volunteers, and guests who came together to support the club's philanthropic mission. With strong community support, the Rotary Club of Santa Monica continues to show how a great evening can also do a great deal of good.

Visit www.rotaryclubofsantamonica.org to learn more information.

Paws and Claws

What are Common Health Problems with Ferrets?



By Dr. Frank Lavac, MS, DVM

Q: Ferrets are fun and mischievous pets. What are their unique health problems?

A: Virtually all of the ferrets that are adopted in the U.S. come from a single breeder, Marshall Farms. They are spayed or neutered, and descented at a young age prior to adoption. This

early neutering can later predispose them to adrenal gland stimulation.

Increased adrenal hormone production can lead to fur loss over the entire trunk of the body, itching, and muscle atrophy. Currently, there is a slow release hormonal implant, called Deslorelin, that blocks the excess hormone production from the adrenal glands to help control this problem.

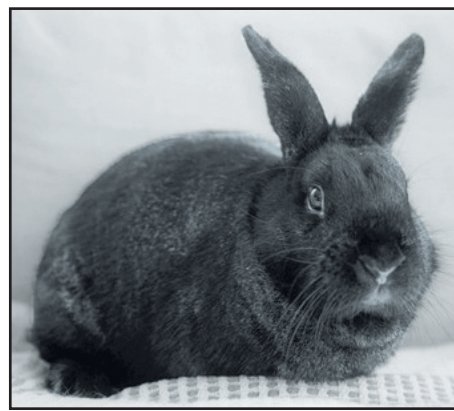
Ferrets will eat a wide range of foreign materials including ear plugs that can lead to intestinal obstructions. They are highly susceptible to canine distemper virus. Therefore, they need to be vaccinated for that disease.

Another common disease is called an insulinoma, which is a tumor of the pancreas. The increased insulin production leads to a low blood sugar. They can show signs of weakness, are a bit wobbly, and can sometimes have seizures. This occurs because the pancreas continues to produce insulin unregulated. There are both surgical and medical treatments.

Ferret life expectancy is five to eight years of age. Ferrets are happy, clownlike, and unique pets.

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

Adopt a Pet



Bonnie's an intelligent, beautiful black rabbit who prefers cats to other bunnies (but you just never know, she might bond with the right rabbit). Her foster mom says that she loves to be petted and responds to her voice. Bonnie is spayed, vaccinated for Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus 2 (RHDV2), microchipped, and litterbox-trained. Can you help her? Contact www.larabbits.org.

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Planning Ahead

Trust and Will – So Confusing!



By Lisa Alexander, Esq.

For most people, their revocable living trust is the centerpiece of their estate plan.

They will also have a Will, but it is intended only as a back-up to the Trust. This back-up Will is often referred to as a “pour-over” Will because it is used to pour over to the Trust any assets that aren’t in the Trust when you die.

Without a pour-over Will, the assets not in the Trust will be distributed as if you had no estate plan at all. In a recent case, the decedent left a Trust but no pour-over Will. The assets of the Trust went to a life partner according to the decedent’s wishes. The assets not in the Trust had to go through probate and were ultimately distributed to relatives according to the laws of intestate succession, not at all what the decedent planned for.

The Trust can be thought of as a Will replacement. Instead of the Will directing distribution of a decedent’s assets, all the gifts and division and distribution of assets are directed in the Trust. The pour-over Will is only a back-up that leaves assets to the Trust in case any assets are left out. The pour-over Will does not have any of the “who gets what” provisions – those are all in the Trust. Since there should be no assets left outside the Trust, the Will is intended

never to be used. There should be no reason to probate the Will.

That’s where the confusion starts. We still tend to think of the Will as the primary estate plan document. It gets more confusing trying to differentiate between the Executor and the Trustee. The Executor is the person named in the Will who would be appointed to administer the estate in a probate. But if probate is avoided, no Executor will ever be appointed.

The Trustee is the person named in the Trust whose job it is to administer the Trust for your benefit while you are living, (especially in case of incapacity), and to settle your affairs and distribute your assets according to your wishes after your death. We can think of the Trustee as the Executor, since the Trustee does the job we normally associate as the job of the Executor. But there is a distinction, the Executor is different from the Trustee.

We have seen do-it-yourself estate plan documents attempting to change the Trustee, but the documents refer only to the Executor and the Will, and are only effective to change the Executor. We know what was intended, but in a recent case, it required a petition to the Court to confirm the change of Trustee. The confusion resulted in an expensive Court proceeding.

Lisa C. Alexander, Esq.
JAKLE, ALEXANDER & PATTON, LLP
 2001 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 420
 Main Line: 310-395-6555

What’s Happening on The Westside

(Continued from Page 3)

- **Saturday, April 25 - 12th Annual Arts and Literacy Festival** - Presented by The City of Santa Monica, in collaboration with SMMUSD. This year's festival is farm-themed and the event will host over 30 different community organizations offering games and activities that align with the Santa Monica Cradle to Career Building Blocks for Kindergarten campaign. Event activities include: Farm Friends Costume Parade, Various Performances on the Main Stage, Arts and Craft Stations, Discovery Stations, Games and Activities, and Storytime Stage featuring books read by local librarians. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Virginia Avenue Park. Free event. All ages.
- **Sunday, April 26 - Mad Hatter Tea Party** - Come attend the annual fundraiser for the Santa Monica Breakfast Club to help

them provide necessary dental treatments for the Santa Monica school district’s younger students. 12 p.m.-3 p.m. Santa Monica YMCA, 1332 6th St. This year the honoree is Jim Harris, the Executive Director of the Santa Monica Pier Corporation. Tickets are \$95. Email santamonicaclub@gmail.com for more information. (See ad on Page 8.)



—Joe Analco

Answer to Our Neighborhood Celebrity

(Continued from Page 1)

The Buena Vida Tea Bar and Garden has been welcoming guests for four years. Owner Mayra Vasquez is a wonderful hostess. She serves a variety of teas, cold, and hot drinks, and tempting pastries.

Call 424-268-4138 to make reservations for a relaxing time in her garden in the back of the restaurant. A full-service tea is served as well as Mayra’s heritage Mexican cuisine, iced and hot teas. The Buena Vida Tea Bar and Garden is located at 726 Montana Avenue.



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